

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ACADEMIC INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

This chapter examines more fully some of the historiographical issues that are germane to the discipline of political science in general and international relations in particular and that inform the historical investigation in this book. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the historiography of political science. One of the salutary results of the recent attention to the history of political science is that many of the important theoretical and methodological issues concerning how the exercise of investigating the past should be conducted have been raised to the forefront of discussion. The manner in which the development of political science is recounted may be as significant as the actual history itself. In order to introduce these historiographical issues, the first section examines the intellectual exchanges among some of the leading disciplinary historians.¹

Attention turns next to the historiography of academic international relations and to a review of existing histories of the field. There has not only been a paucity of such history, but most conventional accounts of the development of the field of international relations contain two historiographical assumptions that have led to a serious misrepresentation of the actual history of the field. One assumption is that the history of the field can be explained in terms of a classical tradition of which modern academic practitioners are the heirs. The second assumption is that events in the realm of international politics have fundamentally structured the development of international relations as an academic field of study. After discussing these historiographical problems, my alternative, the *critical internal discursive* approach to writing the history of the field, is described.

At the end of this chapter, the general substantive theme, which I have termed the political discourse of anarchy, that has constituted the internal discourse of academic international relations is discussed. Although it would not be difficult to demonstrate that today anarchy is the most important theoretical concept in the field, this book seeks to demonstrate the manner in which the development of the study of

international relations has always been guided by a conception of politics without central authority. This theme of anarchy is not an external category of historical description, but an idea that has served as a connecting discursive thread throughout the field's evolution.

The Historiography of Political Science

Although post-positivist developments in the philosophy and history of science have contributed to a renewed interest on the part of political scientists in investigating their disciplinary past, both activities have been rife with controversy. Despite a consensus about the value of disciplinary history for establishing the identity of political science, there has been little agreement with respect to how the activity of historical investigation should be pursued. The historiography of international relations raises issues that are strikingly similar, but historical introspection in the field has not reached the same level of sophistication.

There are several factors that have contributed to the historiographical controversies in political science. The first is that historical accounts of the field have become closely allied with claims about disciplinary identity and legitimacy. Unlike the methodological, and essentially ahistorical, controversy associated with the behavioral revolution in the 1950s, the post-behavioral era in political science has resulted in the discipline becoming much more sympathetic to historical analysis. Disciplinary history, like references to the philosophy of science, has come to fulfill an important validation function with respect to justifying and legitimating present academic research programs. John Dryzek and Stephen Leonard, for example, have argued that "disciplinary history in political science, as in other fields, is generally used to legitimate a particular perspective while delegitimizing competing approaches."² And John Gunnell has claimed that "existing contributions to the history of political science have not freed themselves from the partisanship associated with intellectual struggles within the field."³ There is a tendency for these partisan struggles to raise the stakes with respect to how the past is interpreted. This has especially been the case when the issue has been one of demonstrating scientific advance. A second explanation for the historiographical disputes in political science is the increase in the number of approaches that can be used to investigate the history of the discipline, which is in part a reflection of wider controversies among intellectual historians and others who study the history of ideas.⁴ There are a variety of approaches available for investigating disciplinary history, including those associated with the history of natural science;⁵ contextual approaches such as those of J.

G. A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner;⁶ post-structural and postmodern analyses represented in the work of Michel Foucault;⁷ and, most recently, approaches linked with the new-institutionalism.⁸ Finally, because political science is home to numerous approaches and research agendas, a plurality of histories and methodological positions have emerged.

In order to gain a sense of the historiographical issues involved in the study of the history of political science, it is instructive to review a symposium that included some of the leading scholars in the area.⁹ The exchange was in response to an article by John Dryzek and Stephen Leonard that called for "context-sensitive" histories in political science. Following the lead of post-positivist philosophers and historians of science such as Imre Lakatos, Dryzek and Leonard argued that disciplinary history could contribute to scientific progress even if pursued for legitimating purposes. They maintained that "disciplinary history and prescription for identity are properly understood as but two moments in the same reflective enterprise."¹⁰ Dryzek and Leonard reached this conclusion by observing how recent work by philosophers of science have utilized history to underwrite the progress of natural science.

Dryzek and Leonard claimed, however, that the methodologically pluralistic and non-paradigmatic structure of political science created unique historiographical difficulties. Unlike the case of the theoretically hegemonic character of natural science, there would always be a multiplicity of histories in political science that corresponded with the plural identities that existed at any particular time. They argued that it would be impossible to have one orthodox history so long as political science was the home of mutually competing schools of thought. They also argued that disciplinary history would inevitably be written either to legitimate or delegitimize a specific research agenda. According to Dryzek and Leonard, this was to be expected, since both challengers and defenders of the status quo always seek to write the history of the field in a manner that suggests a particular disciplinary identity.

Dryzek and Leonard did not claim, however, that one can "write a disciplinary history in any way one chooses," nor "that all disciplinary identities are created equal."¹¹ They argued that a contextually focused approach would both contribute to judging the degree of progress within a particular research tradition and to evaluating the utility of past methods. In addition to the contentious issue of how to gauge the progress of political science, the emphasis on a contextual approach to disciplinary history has provoked a number of different responses among disciplinary historians.¹² Dryzek and Leonard argued that disciplinary histories "should, above all else, attend to episodes of polit-

ical science in context," so that "practitioners, approaches, research traditions, theories, and methods" could be "apprehended and adjudged for their success or failure according to how well they understand and resolved the problems *they* confronted."¹³ They argued, for example, that the progress of the behavioral research agenda could be judged adequately only within the context of the "placid fifties." Dryzek and Leonard assigned disciplinary histories that did not adequately consider the contextual dimension of inquiry to two mutually exclusive categories: "Whigs" and "skeptics."

In Herbert Butterfield's classic study, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1959), he described Whig history as "the tendency in many historians to write on the side of the Protestants and Whigs, to praise revolutions provided they have been successful, to emphasize certain principles of progress in the past and to produce a story which is the ratification if not the glorification of the present."¹⁴ George Stocking, in an influential article that appeared in the first volume of the *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, claimed that "the approach of the professional social scientist is more likely to be Whiggish or, more broadly, 'presentist,' and his motivational posture 'utilitarian.'"¹⁵ He argued that the tendency for disciplinary histories of the social sciences to be burdened with the vices of anachronism, distortion, misinterpretation, and neglect of context stemmed from the fact that there was "a sort of implicit whiggish presentism virtually built into the history of science and by extension, into the history of the behavioral sciences."¹⁶ Another elucidation of this historiographical principle has been provided by a recent group of intellectual historians who, nevertheless, explicitly expressed displeasure with presentist history. They claimed that the essence of Whig history

[C]onsists in writing history backwards. The present theoretical consensus of the discipline, or possibly some polemical version of what that consensus should be, is in effect taken as definitive, and the past is then reconstituted as a teleology leading up to and fully manifested in it. Past authors are inducted into the canon of the discipline as precursors or forebears, and passed in review as though by a general distributing medals.¹⁷

Dryzek and Leonard were sharply critical of all histories that distorted the historical ledger by failing to take the historical contingencies of the past into account when they praised or blamed the disciplinary present. While Whigs interpret the history of the discipline as one of the triumph of present approaches over those of the past, skeptical historians, according to Dryzek and Leonard, "find little to commend in

the present and still less to approve of in the modern history of the discipline." Dryzek and Leonard alleged that skeptics such as David Ricci, Raymond Seidelman, and John Gunnell "write the history of political science in terms of unremitting error."¹⁸ They claimed that the historiographical errors of the skeptics were the obverse of the Whigs, since rather than attempting to demonstrate how the present has overcome the weaknesses of the past, the skeptic seeks to substantiate how the failures of the past have contributed to the ever "darkening skies" of the present. Dryzek and Leonard argued that skeptics had also failed to devote proper attention to past contexts.

In replying to Dryzek and Leonard, James Farr challenged the apparent exclusiveness of the poles of Whigs and skeptics and argued for the incorporation of an intervening "skeptical Whig" category that would include Dryzek and Leonard, "who want to hold on to progress but with attention to historically relative contexts."¹⁹ By introducing a third category, Farr indicated that there is considerably more diversity in disciplinary history than Dryzek and Leonard had suggested. Farr also questioned the manner in which Dryzek and Leonard rejected the possibility of writing a "neutral" history of the discipline. Although Farr agreed that "writing a history of political science is very much a partisan activity," he was less than supportive of the idea that there can be no neutral stance from which to uncover these histories.²⁰ Farr acknowledged that identity in political science is largely dependent upon how we understand our history, yet he argued for an approach that is more neutral than Dryzek and Leonard deemed possible. Farr suggested that, "although neutrality is doubtless impossible with respect to how one does history at all, it seems that we can be rather *more neutral* with respect to such diverse things as the appropriation of individual figures in research traditions, the professional identity of the discipline, the actual practices of inquiry, and even contemporary ideology."²¹

Seidelman also questioned the categories of Whig and skeptic and argued that Dryzek and Leonard's approach to writing the history of the field ended up duplicating many of the same vices they sought to overcome. Seidelman claimed that although Dryzek and Leonard protested against the historical distortions that resulted from writing history backwards in defense of a present position, they, at the same time, committed many of the same errors with their own postempiricist context-sensitive approach. Seidelman argued that "while they want to reject the alleged presentism of current disciplinary histories, they only reflect presentist claims when they look at the discipline's history as simply a number of competing research traditions developed in specific political contexts."²²

Gunnell agreed with Dryzek and Leonard's "conclusion that his-

torical reflection is in some way constitutive of identity," but he argued that "it is considerably more contentious to claim that a less presentist historiography, eschewing the extremes of Whiggism and skepticism, can provide 'guidelines for research' and intersubjective measures of disciplinary progress."²³ Gunnell claimed that part of the difficulty with Dryzek and Leonard's position stems from the manner in which they transplanted historiographical arguments found in the philosophy and history of science to political science. He suggested that "if there is anything historians of social science might learn from approaches to the history of science, it is as likely to be problems to be avoided as it is answers about how to conduct disciplinary history."²⁴ Gunnell, however, has probably provided the strongest criticism against disciplinary histories that distort the past simply for the instrumental purpose of legitimating or delegitimizing a partisan position in the present.

Although Gunnell acknowledged that historical inquiry is often motivated by present concerns, he argued that this should not lead directly to the conclusion that all histories will, therefore, be put in the service of validation and legitimation. He argued that "presentism is not a one-dimensional notion," and that "history may be written to explain identities without judging or seeking to transform them."²⁵ He maintained that there is a fundamental distinction between writing a history of an academic field in which the purpose is to shed some light on a contemporary issue, or concern, and writing a history for the primary purpose of criticizing or defending a particular disciplinary identity. It is the latter type of "presentism" that Gunnell strongly rejects, for under that scenario writing a "neutral" history of the field does indeed become inconceivable. Gunnell suggested that "it might be worthwhile, even if we believe that there are no neutral narratives, just sorting out and reporting the results of our probings of the past" for "truth is often more dramatic than fiction and carries as much rhetorical and critical force."²⁶

Gunnell has advocated a distinctly internal approach for investigating elements of the history of political science and has argued that the discipline itself, rather than the wider world of politics, is often the most appropriate context. He has explained that "internal history is an attempt to provide a theoretic corrective to past research efforts, to inject a little Mendelian thinking and focus on discursive evolution."²⁷ To better facilitate the recovery of the history of political science from a more intrinsically derived standpoint, Gunnell has put forth an approach for doing disciplinary history that he has designated "as genealogical and methodologically archaeological, and as a study of discourse and discursive evolution."²⁸ The intention of this approach is to reconstruct the evolution of political science as a discursive practice.

His arguments and historiographical framework are particularly applicable to the field of international relations, but before proceeding to discuss the historiographical approach adopted in this book, which has many similarities to the approach advocated by Gunnell, it is necessary to examine the historiography of international relations, that is, the literature that recounts the history of the field and the assumptions that have informed this literature.

The Historiography of International Relations

In 1966, Martin Wight wrote a widely noted essay in which he stated that "it can be argued that international theory is marked not only by paucity but also by intellectual and moral poverty."²⁹ In offering an explanation for why there was such a quantitative and qualitative contrast between political theory, which he understood as speculation about the state, and international relations theory, Wight insisted that it was a manifestation of two internal factors: "the intellectual prejudice imposed by the sovereign state," and the fact that "international politics differ from domestic politics in being less susceptible of a progressivist interpretation."³⁰ Notwithstanding the increasingly indefensible basis of his bifurcation between political theory and theories of international relations, Wight's recognition of the importance of internal factors for explaining the condition of international theory is instructive for examining the historiography of academic international relations.

There have been few attempts by either scholars within the field or by intellectual historians to examine systematically the history of academic international relations. Earlier attempts, such as those by E. H. Carr and Kenneth Thompson, to recount the history of the ideas that have come to inform "the science of international politics" or "the main currents of an American approach to International Politics" are not really an exception to the general reluctance of international relations scholars to investigate their disciplinary past.³¹ These general synoptic accounts were not intended to provide a disciplinary history, and difficulties are created when they are mistaken as historical descriptions of the development of the field. The few works that do attempt to describe the history of international relations are so readily and uncritically accepted that scholars have not deemed it necessary to investigate further either the substantive history of the field or the underlying historiographical assumptions. These assumptions entail a host of interpretive biases which raise numerous methodological issues. One difficulty is that disciplinary history in international relations, like political science, has often been written for purposes of legitimation and

critique; that is, history has been cast to support or undermine a particular interpretation of the state of the field. With the hegemony of realism seemingly cemented, the field's past, from World War I to the present, has been pervasively inscribed in these terms in college textbooks, introductory chapters to "state of the discipline" monographs, reviews of the past and present trends in the field, and obligatory footnotes. The history of the field appears to be self-evident, and this explains, in part, the dearth of disciplinary histories.

There is a prevalent notion that the history of the field can be explained in terms of a series of successive phases or, in Kuhnian terminology, paradigms. This is especially apparent in conventional disciplinary histories that depict a great divide between an earlier "idealist" and a more recent "realist" period. The successive phases of idealism and realism are presumed by many practitioners to represent the actual history of academic international relations, but they are really little more than reified intellectual constructs. Some illustrations of this common image of the field's development will be instructive before turning to the explanations that possibly can account for this erroneous conception of history. In writing about the history of the field, Hedley Bull claimed that

[I]t is helpful to recognize three successive waves of theoretical activity: the "idealist" or progressivist doctrines that predominated in the 1920s and early 1930s, the "realist" or conservative theories that developed in reaction to them in the late 1930s and 1940s, and the "social scientific" theories of the late 1950s and 1960s, whose origin lay in dissatisfaction with the methodologies on which both the earlier kinds of theory were based.³²

Bull, however, is merely one representative of the popular view that the history of the field can be explained in terms of successive idealist, realist, and behavioral periods. John Vasquez has alleged that "the twentieth-century history of international relations inquiry can be roughly divided into three stages: the idealist phase; the realist tradition; and the 'behavioral' revolt."³³ In one of the field's popular introductory texts, *World Politics: Trend and Transformation*, Charles Kegley and Eugene Wittkopf described the history of the field in terms of idealist, realist, and behavioral periods.³⁴ This sort of synoptic history of the field as evolving through a sequence of distinct phases or periods is endemic to most introductory texts.

A somewhat similar, albeit peculiar, form for writing the history of the field is in terms of a series of disciplinary "great debates." This not only reinforces the image of the field as developing through a series of

successive phases but also endorses more explicitly the notion of scientific advance. C. R. Mitchel, for example, has argued that "it is possible to distinguish three very broad schools of thought within the general debate about the bases of the social sciences in general, and international relations in particular, namely, the 'classical'; the 'behavioral' (or 'scientific'); and the post-behavioral' (or paradigmatic)."³⁵ When approached in this manner, the history of the field becomes reduced to a series of disciplinary defining debates. Arend Lijphart has argued that two great debates mark the history of the field: "the realism-idealism debate in the 1930s and in the decade following the Second World War and the traditionalism-science debate of the 1960s."³⁶ The historical overview provided by Ray Maghroori exemplifies this view. He claimed that

Since the close of World War I, two extensive debates have taken place. The first was evidenced by the clash between the realists and the idealists. The second involved the traditionalists and the behavioralists.³⁷

Maghroori argued that a third disciplinary defining debate between realists and globalists recently had arisen, which encompassed the two earlier debates. This is the same framework that Michael Banks adopted in his attempt to "survey the evolution of thought in the field." He argued that "there have been three so-called 'great debates' which have arisen during the history of the discipline." In characteristic fashion, he writes:

First, there is the realist v. idealist debate that has permeated the last four centuries. Second, there was the brief behaviouralist-traditionalist debate of the 1950s and 1960s. Third, there is the inter-paradigm debate of the recent past, the 1970s and 1980s.³⁸

There is little need to extend this review of the conventional accounts of the development of the field of international relations. The chronological ordering of the history of the field in terms of idealist, realist, and behavioral periods is a story that most students of international relations have come to accept. In order to understand why there is such a ubiquitous tendency to reduce the history of international relations to a simple succession of disciplinary paradigms, it is necessary to scrutinize some more general unexamined assumptions that have informed most of the histories of the field. There are two pervasive assumptions that encumber the intellectual activity of writing the history of the field: first is the assumption that the history of the field can

be explained by reference to a continuous tradition that reaches back to classical Athens and extends forward to the present; and second is the idea that the development of the field can be adequately explained by viewing it in the context of international politics.

Traditions: Analytical and Historical

A casual reading of the international relations literature in academic journals, scholarly books, and textbooks reveals numerous references to the idea that there are epic traditions of international thought that have given rise to coherent schools or paradigms such as realism and liberalism. Furthermore, and more importantly for the discussion at hand, there is a widespread conviction that these ancient traditions represent an integral part of the field's past and, therefore, are relevant for understanding the contemporary identity of the field. The idea that these epic traditions have informed the contemporary study of international relations serves as an unreflective orthodox regulative ideal for research and teaching.³⁹

Nowhere does the idea of the existence of a venerable tradition of thought have more acceptance than in the field of political theory. Regardless of the particular manner in which scholars such as Leo Strauss and Sheldon Wolin have depicted the great tradition in the history of political thought, there is a pervasive idea that the academic study of political theory is the heir to a tradition that began in classical Greece and continued up to the present.⁴⁰ This belief continues to be held by many political theorists today, and is also widely accepted in the field of international relations. Wight, for example, argued that there was no mistaking the meaning of political theory, for he claimed that everyone knew that it was "the tradition of speculation and the body of writings about the state from Plato to Laski."⁴¹ Recently, some international relations scholars such as R.B.J. Walker have argued that this dubious notion of a "great tradition" of political theory has contributed to the impoverishment of international relations theory.⁴² For the past two decades the so-called great tradition of political thought has been a focal point of Gunnell's critical analysis of political theory, and it is instructive to discuss briefly the difficulties that he has identified with this idea before turning to the situation in international relations. While the idiosyncrasies of the various accounts of the tradition in theories of international relations may differ in their construction from those put forward by political theorists, they nevertheless embody many of the same inherent difficulties.

Gunnell has insisted that what is commonly taken to be "the tradi-

tion" of political theory, consisting of the conventional chronology of classic works from Plato to Marx, is nothing more than what he terms the "*myth of the tradition* or the imposition on the framework of the classic works of an elaborate story of the rise and fall of political theory and the implications of these events for the modern age."⁴³ He does not suggest that there is no such thing as a Western tradition of political ideas or that there are no discernible traditions of political thought, but he does insist that the grand narrative that is imposed upon the classic canon as a whole is a myth. Fundamental to the origin and construction of the myth are the very unhistorical claims that support its existence. Gunnell has argued that "the very idea of *the tradition* is an a priori concept, and its general and unexamined acceptance is a crucial aspect of the myth." He notes that there is very little, if any, attempt to demonstrate the actual historical dimension of "the tradition." The distinguishing feature of the myth of the tradition, which Gunnell has argued to be responsible for a host of interpretive and historiographical problems, is the tendency to view an *analytical* tradition as an actual *historical* one: "at its core is the reification of an analytical construct. It is the representation of what is in fact a retrospectively and externally demarcated tradition as an actual or self-constituted tradition."⁴⁴

Since the word, *tradition*, is open to conflicting interpretations, it is useful to consult *The Oxford English Dictionary*, which offers the following meaning: "the action of transmitting or 'handing down,' or fact of being handed down, from one to another, or from generation to generation; transmission of statements, beliefs, rules, customs, or the like, esp. by word of mouth or by practice without writing." A historical tradition is one that closely approximates the definition given above. It is, in a fundamental sense, a preconstituted and self-constituted pattern of conventional practice through which ideas are conveyed within a recognizably established and specified discursive framework. A historical tradition can entail continuity as well as innovation within a fairly well-defined realm of discourse. Based on these criteria, Marxism is a clear example of a historical tradition. An analytical tradition, on the other hand, is an intellectual construction in which a scholar may stipulate certain ideas, themes, genres, or texts as functionally similar. It is, most essentially, a retrospectively created construct determined by present criteria and concerns. Failure to recognize the difference between a historical and analytical tradition poses significant obstacles when attempting to trace the actual historical development of an academic discipline.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty that results from viewing a retrospectively constructed analytical tradition as an actual historical tradi-

tion is that attention to the individuals and academic practices that have contributed to the development and current identity of the discipline are cast aside for a more epic rendition of the past. Gunnell has maintained that academic political theory's "built-in historical self-image" as mediated by the great tradition has obstructed efforts to investigate the real history of this scholarly practice. The pantheon of classic texts in political theory has also been accepted by many as representing the actual ancestral lineage of contemporary political science, and this, Gunnell argues, has inhibited attempts to investigate the history of the discipline. There are a number of reasons why an analytical tradition is such an appealing device for describing disciplinary history, and they are apparent in the literature that makes reference to a "great tradition" for explaining the history of the field of international relations.

The multiple references to the classic authors in political theory as representing authoritative traditions of thought in the field of international relations is in some respects an anomaly. The works customarily elevated to the classic canon have been understood as being primarily concerned with achieving the good life inside the confines of the territorial sovereign state and only, if at all, marginally interested in the external relations between states. This was recognized by Wight when he asked whether it was "more interesting that so many great minds have been drawn, at the margins of their activities, to consider basic problems of international politics, or that so few great minds have been drawn to make these problems their central interest?"⁴⁵ Mark Kauppi and Paul Viotti take this point a step further when they write that "the reason it is questionable even to conceive of international relations as a 'discipline' is the fact that even such luminaries as Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau were primarily interested in domestic politics."⁴⁶ This has not, however, prevented scholars such as Wight from referring to classic political theorists as constituent figures in the history of academic international relations.⁴⁷

Walker has observed that "although references to a tradition of international relations theory are common enough, they are far from monolithic."⁴⁸ Notwithstanding the different typologies that have been used to classify the diverse classic traditions that supposedly exist in international relations, it is possible to discern two pervasive constructions. There is, first, the claim that the writings of political theorists such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, and Grotius reveal the essence of inter-state politics.⁴⁹ This is what allows their writings to continue to serve as the theoretical foundation for thinking about and investigating international politics. Following Wight's triad of Realist, Rationalist, and Revolutionist traditions, Bull claimed:

Throughout the history of the modern states system there have been three competing traditions of thought: the Hobbesian or realist tradition, which views international politics as a state of war; the Kantian or universalist tradition, which sees at work in international politics a potential community of mankind; and the Grotian or internationalist tradition, which views international politics as taking place within an international society.⁵⁰

Others have sought to build upon Wight's and Bull's classification of traditions in international relations. Ian Clark has argued that Kant's solution to the state of war in *Perpetual Peace* qualifies him for a "Kantian tradition of optimism."⁵¹ Kant's apparent optimism is also the basis for his placement in what is commonly referred to as the liberal tradition of international relations.⁵² This reading of Kant takes on added significance when it is contrasted with the tradition represented by Rousseau, which Clark and others have delegated to a "tradition of despair."⁵³ K. J. Holsti, for example, has claimed that "Rousseau's insights and hypothesis have formed the basis of innumerable studies of general international politics, providing the foundation of what is called the 'realist' tradition."⁵⁴

The realist tradition is certainly regarded by an overwhelming majority of scholars to be the definitive tradition in the field of international relations. The writings of political theorists such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau are repeatedly mined for statements that purport to demonstrate realist principles. In a recent contribution to the history of the field, Jack Donnelly argued that "the tradition of political realism has a long history, going back at least to Machiavelli or Thucydides." He suggested that "tracing the fate of realism provides a partial yet still useful survey of the development of the field of international relations."⁵⁵ This statement, which portrays the disciplinary history of the field in terms of chronologically ordered luminaries cumulatively contributing to a conventional pattern of thought, provides a quintessential example of the tendency to confuse an analytical retrospective tradition for a genuine historical tradition.

A second pattern of references to the tradition, which is also evident in Donnelly's historical account, involves the idea that modern academic scholars such as E. H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, and Kenneth Waltz have built upon the ideas of the classic political theorists and are themselves a part of this grand continuous tradition of thought. In Jacek Kugler's survey of the literature about conflict and war that appeared in the latest volume of *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II* (1993), he claimed that "the classic account of international war comes from the realist tradition in world politics." He then proceeded to argue that

"this approach to the study of war has a very long tradition that can be traced from Thucydides (400 B.C.) to Machiavelli (1513), to Hobbes (1651), to Hume (1741), to von Clausewitz (1832), to Morgenthau (1948), to Organski (1958), to Waltz (1979), and to Gilpin (1981)."⁵⁶ This provides another clear example of the tendency to confound an analytical and a historical tradition.

In an essay addressed to the recent history of international relations, Robert Keohane declared that "for over 2000 years, what Hans J. Morgenthau dubbed 'Political Realism' has constituted the principal tradition for the analysis of international relations in Europe and its offshoots in the New World."⁵⁷ Keohane analyzed contemporary structural realism in terms of Imre Lakatos's work in the philosophy of science dealing with the evolution of research programs, but he began by explicating the research program of realism as extending from Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* to Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations*. Keohane found that

The three most fundamental Realist assumptions are evident in these books: that the most important actors in world politics are territorially organized entities (city-states or modern states); that state behavior can be explained rationally; and that states seek power and calculate their interests in terms of power, relative to the nature of the international system that they face.⁵⁸

These three assumptions, which were allegedly derived from the work of Thucydides and Morgenthau, were defined by Keohane as "the hard core of the Classical Realist research program."⁵⁹

With the historical foundations of realism affirmed, Keohane proceeded to his primary task of evaluating the degree to which Kenneth Waltz's structural realism and his own "modified structural realist program" conformed to the criteria that Lakatos established for scientific progress. There are many questionable meta-theoretical assumptions about the philosophy of science and its applicability to evaluating theories within international relations in Keohane's work, but it is his unsubstantiated claim about the existence of an actual "realist tradition" that is most problematic. Although Keohane insists that "Realism, as developed through a long tradition dating from Thucydides, continues to provide the basis for valuable research in international relations," there is very little, if any, attempt to demonstrate the actual historical existence of this tradition.⁶⁰ Neither Keohane nor Kugler demonstrate that academic international relations scholars have been the receivers and participants of an inherited pattern of discourse originating with the writings of a banished Athenian military officer in the fifth century

B.C. While they both provide a general definition of what constitutes a "realist tradition," the criteria are both vague and contentious.⁶¹ Simply because Keohane and Kugler have retrospectively posited certain attributes of realism does not in any way establish a coherent tradition that can explain the genealogy of the academic field of international relations. Moreover, the real intention of Keohane's disciplinary history was to validate and legitimate his own version of realism. It is a clear example of Whig history. His purpose was clearly not one of uncovering the past to understand better the contemporary character of the field. In Keohane's presidential address to the International Studies Association in 1988, he forwent a historical argument and based his defense of the superiority of the realist approach on empirical method, but his work illustrates the legitimating function that appeals to retrospectively constructed analytical traditions serve in seeking to establish disciplinary identity.⁶²

Robert Gilpin has also insisted that "the realist tradition is an old one" that predated academic scholars such as Morgenthau and Waltz. Yet when it comes to specifying the criteria for this "old" historical tradition, Gilpin simply states that "there have been three great realist writers" and that it would be difficult for anyone to "deny them inclusion in the tradition."⁶³ The three writers that Gilpin identifies are Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Carr. Once again, however, no attempt is made to elucidate the actual historical basis of this tradition or the manner in which writers in different centuries and intellectual contexts can be regarded as participants in an inherited pattern of thought. The very idea of the realist tradition, as articulated by Gilpin, is nebulous. This is because Gilpin is more concerned with validating contemporary neorealism than he is with understanding the history of the field of international relations. And this helps to account for the common practice of locating modern academic scholars within a much older ancient lineage without demonstrating the historicity of these claims.

This is evident in Holsti's *The Dividing Discipline* (1985), which surveyed the current trends in the field. While he may be correct in arguing that "international theory is in a state of disarray" enabling "new conceptions and images of the world" to arise, this development was understood by Holsti in terms of the breakdown of a hegemonic realist paradigm that "goes back to Hobbes and Rousseau."⁶⁴ Holsti made no attempt to demonstrate the actual historical basis of the classical tradition which, he argued, included such diverse figures as Hobbes, Rousseau, Bentham, Carr, Wight, and Morgenthau. There was also very little, if any, effort to illustrate the manner in which this tradition has been transmitted across different generations and intellectual contexts. Instead, Holsti argued that a similar *raison d'être*, focus of

analysis, and image of the world united these scholars into a coherent tradition—namely, that the most fundamental issue in the subject of study concerns matters of war and peace, that nation-states are the most important actors, and these sovereign actors exist in a milieu characterized by anarchy. It was on the basis of his review of the classical works in international relations theory, along with an overview of the modern scholars who have contributed to the development of the field of international relations, that Holsti concluded: “we can legitimately claim that the main figures in the classical tradition have operated within a single paradigm, and that their modern successors have only expanded, but not altered the fundamental features, of that paradigm.”⁶⁵

The most striking implication of Holsti’s uncritical acceptance of a reigning “classical tradition” is that the field is given a false sense of coherence and continuity. Yet one of the purposes behind Holsti’s historical survey of international relations theory was to demonstrate that the field had a sense of continuity throughout the idealist, realist, and behavioral phases that was only now beginning to become undone with the work from a group of scholars “whose normative priorities differ fundamentally from those inhabiting the classical tradition.”⁶⁶ He also wanted to defend the essential continuity of the classical tradition against the claim that the behavioral agenda and the ensuing second great debate in international relations represented, in Kuhn’s terminology, a scientific revolution where one paradigm was replaced by an incommensurably different one.

Arend Lijphart has advanced the alternative thesis that the behavioral revolution in international relations did in fact represent a profound paradigm shift. Yet his account of this episode of disciplinary history was also informed by the prior belief that “traditional theory was, in fact, governed by what Kuhn called a paradigm,” which revolved “around the notions of state sovereignty and its logical corollary, international anarchy.”⁶⁷ According to Lijphart, the elements of the traditional paradigm first began to be systematized in the writings of Thucydides, Hobbes, and Rousseau. He argued that this paradigm was carried over when international relations was born as a discipline after World War I, and it continued to dominate “the field until at least approximately the time of World War II.”⁶⁸ Lijphart maintained that the behavioralist agenda in international relations, with its emphasis on the concept of “system” and unwillingness to divorce domestic from international politics, represented a rival paradigm. He concluded that the second great debate was more significant than the previous debate between idealism and realism, and offered the promise of scientific advance.

Holsti rejected Lijphart's assessment and argued that the behavioralists accepted all the fundamental assumptions of the classical paradigm and merely sought methodological rearrangements. The more significant point, however, is that both of these accounts of the second great debate are based on the dubious notion of a reigning classical tradition. In many ways, Holsti's argument was an extension of the thesis first put forth by John Vasquez, who claimed that following the anomaly of World War II, which he argued led to the displacement of idealism and the dominance of realism, "the field has been far more coherent, systematic, and even cumulative than all of the talk about contending approaches and theories implies."⁶⁹ Vasquez also found compatibility between the "normal science" paradigm of realism—defined by the recognition that nation-states are the most important actors, a sharp distinction between domestic and international politics, and the realization that international politics is most fundamentally about the struggle for power and peace—and the behavioralists who "only attempted to bring the scientific practices of the field more in line with the practices of the physical sciences."⁷⁰ In other words, according to both Holsti and Vasquez, the second great debate was over method and not about the theoretical adequacy of the realist paradigm. This was sufficient for Holsti and Vasquez to conclude that there was an essential continuity between the realist paradigm and the behavioral project and that both flowed from an ancient tradition.

At this point, it is appropriate to ask how these accounts can contribute to an understanding of the disciplinary history of international relations when the narratives are cast in terms of a retrospective analytical tradition that obscures the individuals and academic practices that have constituted the discursive development of the field. One cannot read the work of Morgenthau or Bull and not be struck by the thoroughly damning indictment they gave to the central tenets of the behavioral project.⁷¹ And the issue for Morgenthau and Bull was not construed as a methodological one but concerned ontological claims about the nature of social reality. That these views have been so easily misrepresented within the conventional accounts of the history of the field indicates a serious shortcoming in the historiography of international relations.

The crux of the matter is that most of the attempts to reflect on the history of the field are largely done for "presentist" purposes rather than with the intention of actually reconstructing the past. The primary concern of many disciplinary histories of international relations, like those in political science, is really to say something authoritative about the field's current character. Disciplinary histories that attempt to explain the development of the field of international relations by postulat-

ing the existence of a "historical" tradition transmitted from the ancient past to the present are legitimating mechanisms that are employed to validate present claims to knowledge. Many of the references to a presumed tradition of thought in the field of international relations are really nothing more than retrospective analytical constructs that are elicited for instrumental legitimating purposes. As Eric Hobsbawm has noted, "'traditions' which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented."⁷² Perhaps the greatest shortcoming of this approach is the tendency to substitute a mythical epic history for the real disciplinary history of the field. Instead of a history that traces the actual lineage of scholars who self-consciously and institutionally understood themselves as participating in the academic discourse of international relations, these accounts present a version of the past in the form of a tradition stretching from ancient Athens or Renaissance Italy to the present. While such epic renderings of the field's evolution may serve a variety of rhetorical functions, they do not, in any way, contribute to an understanding of the actual disciplinary history of international relations as an institutionalized academic study, or provide a basis for a critical examination of the past and present character of the field.

A second assumption that abounds in many accounts of the history of the field is the notion that the development of international relations can be understood in light of exogenous events in the realm of international politics. The assumption is that contextual factors such as World War I or the collapse of the League of Nations can account for the particular path of disciplinary development in the field of international relations. Yet there are a number of problems that a contextual approach to disciplinary history raises. First, contextual approaches are still burdened with presentism and second, it raises historiographical issues. The next section examines the problems associated with contextualism.

Contextual Approaches to Disciplinary History

Proponents of contextualism have argued that their approach to disciplinary history, and intellectual history in general, avoids the vices of presentism by locating authors and texts in their proper historical context. A contextual approach to disciplinary history requires that consideration be given to examining the impact of the external milieu on individuals, schools of thought, and academic disciplines. There are several accounts that make an effort to explain the development of the field of international relations by reference to contextual or external factors. It is a common belief that external events in the realm of international politics have more fundamentally than any other set of factors

shaped the development of the field. Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach, for example, have argued that “dominant schools of thought in international relations are as much a part of the *Zeitgeist* of their age as are dominant theories of art and literature.”⁷³ However, a review of some of the contextual explanations that have been provided to account for the history of the field reveals their shortcomings for explaining the disciplinary history of international relations. Contextual accounts participate in the presentist agenda of legitimation and critique and, in one way or another, reinforce the conventional image of the field’s history in terms of successive idealist, realist, and behavioral phases.

A prominent contextual explanation of the history of the field was provided by Stanley Hoffmann in his seminal essay “An American Social Science: International Relations.” Although Hoffmann did claim that he was simply offering “a set of reflections on the specific accomplishments and frustrations” of the field rather than “a complete balance sheet” or a “capsule history,” one of his specific aims was to explain how the field of international relations arose full-blown in the United States as a consequence of World War II.⁷⁴ While he did give recognition to the path-breaking work of Carr and Morgenthau, and dubbed the latter the “founding father” of the discipline, Hoffmann argued that the actual “development of international relations as a discipline in the United States results from the convergence of three factors: intellectual predispositions, political circumstances, and institutional opportunities.”⁷⁵ The intellectual predispositions and institutional opportunities that Hoffmann identified are not unlike those that have been mentioned by a number of other intellectual historians in accounting for the tremendous growth of American social science after World War II. These factors included such things as the pervasive faith in the ability to apply the scientific method to the social realm, the transformative role of the ideas that émigré scholars transplanted to America, the tremendous increase in institutional opportunities that resulted from the expansion of the university system, and the formal interchange that developed between the academy and the United States government.

Although Hoffmann maintained that these were all important factors for explaining why the field of international relations arose as a quintessentially American one following the Second World War, he most fundamentally emphasized the external political circumstances that accompanied the rise of the United States to a position of world power. He argued that “the growth of the discipline cannot be separated from the American role in world affairs after 1945.”⁷⁶ In other words, the external context of the postwar power position of the United States and its expansive political-economic role in managing the West-

ern alliance through the Cold War with the East were argued to be decisive for understanding the internal developments within the field of international relations. Hoffmann claimed that there were two important factors in explaining the convergence of external context and internal development. First, he suggested that the customary fascination that political scientists had with power led to the growth of the field that directly studied the preponderance of international power which accrued to the United States after World War II. Second, he argued that the school of realism created by Morgenthau and other realists provided foreign policymakers with the rationale and justification they needed to promote America's new role as a global superpower. The net result for Hoffmann, and one that he greatly lamented, was that the political preeminence of the United States led to the overwhelming American dominance in the field of international relations.

Although there are obviously important relationships between the internal changes within the field of international relations and the developments in international politics, it is another thing altogether to suggest that general references to the external context can explain specific theoretical and methodological changes inside the discipline. Yet it is very common to describe the evolution of the field exclusively in contextual terms. It is often suggested that the external context provided by "real world" political events can be conceived as an independent variable that explains the character of the field at a specific historical juncture. This contextual formula is, for example, the main historiographical premise from which most accounts seek to explain the origins of academic international relations along with what is described as the field's early reformist or "idealist" approach. According to Ekkehart Krippendorf, the field of international relations "was born as a side-product of the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919."⁷⁷ This sort of contextual explanation is so pervasive that one historian recently remarked "as everyone knows it [the academic field of international relations] grew out of the liberal reaction to the First World War."⁷⁸ World War I and the Peace Treaty of Versailles are taken to be the explanatory context for the origin and early development of the American field of international relations. Fred Neal and Bruce Hamlet have commented that "international relations is an American invention dating from the time after World War I when the American intellectual community discovered the world."⁷⁹

Steve Smith's historical analysis of how international relations has developed as a social science closely parallels the agenda set by Hoffmann. Smith's entire overview of how the field has developed was framed exclusively in contextual terms. He declared that "International Relations developed as a response to events in the real world and