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The history of a lesson: Versailles, Munich and the social construction of the past

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Abstract. The article investigates the concept of lessons in IR. By means of a constructivist critique of the 'lessons literature', the article analyses one of the most important of IR lessons: that of Munich. Examining how the Munich lesson came about, the article shows the praxeological nature of lessons and emphasises the need to study the history of lessons rather than the lessons of history. This approach shows that Munich is the end point of a constitutive history that begins in the failure of the Versailles treaty to create a durable European order following the First World War. The Munich lesson is thus one element of the lesson of Versailles, which is a praxeology that defines how the West is to make peace, and against whom peace must be defended. The lesson of Versailles has been, at least in part, constitutive of the outbreak of the Cold War, and it continues to define the Western conception of what defines peace and security even in the 'war against terrorism'.

> 'When a president faces a decision involving war or peace, he draws back and thinks of the past and of the future in the widest possible terms'
>
> Lyndon Baines Johnson

In the spring of 1999 Western officials met in London to determine a strategy for how to deal with Yugoslav repression in Kosovo. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright argued that military force was the only alternative if the Milosevic government did not give in to Western demands at the upcoming conference at Rambouillet. Not everybody agreed. In the end the Czech-born secretary of state felt she had to remind her colleagues what was at stake. 'This is London, remember, not Munich,' she told them.[1] Shortly after, NATO started bombing Yugoslavia.

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[1] Quoted in Timothy Garton Ash, 'Kosovo: Was It Worth It?', *New York Review of Books*, 21 September (2000), p. 6.

More than 60 years after Chamberlain's fateful encounter with Hitler in Munich 'the accusation that a given policy amounts to a "new Munich" is generally regarded as a knock-down argument'.[2] Why? This article inquires into the nature of lessons in international relations (IR). Firstly, the article does so by reviewing the 'lessons literature' that regards analogies, the Munich analogy being one of the most potent of these, as cognitive measures that enable actors to learn from the past how to deal with the present. Reviewing the lessons literature is interesting from a theoretical point of view because the lessons literature's analysis of perceptions in many ways runs parallel with constructivist analysis, but the two schools seldom engage in debate. However, the debate about lessons is important because history plays a significant part in determining what policies are believed to be possible and effective in IR.

I conclude that the Munich lesson was constitutive of the development of the lessons literature. Therefore, the second part of the article investigates how the lesson of Munich became a lesson. The history of the Munich lesson shows how the appeasement policy of the 1930s evolved from a strategy for peaceful change to a lesson in the need to fight to keep the peace. Thus the Munich lesson was a correction to the appeasement policy rather than a new departure on the question of how to make and keep peace. The history of the Munich lesson shows that appeasement and Munich constitute a coherent narrative which I term the *lesson of Versailles*.[3]

The analysis will proceed in four stages. First, the theoretical foundation for understanding lessons is discussed. It is argued that rather than just being a link to history, lessons are history themselves. Therefore, the second stage of the argument is to analyse the history of the lesson of Versailles. This part of the analysis concludes with the Second World War. The third stage of the analysis focuses on how the outbreak of the Cold War was, at least in part, constituted by the lesson of Versailles. The article concludes with a brief discussion of the role of the lesson of Versailles following the Cold War, and speculates on its future after the events of 11 September 2001.

The lessons literature

The present asks us what to do. Perhaps history offers an answer. According to the lessons literature, a careful study of history provides answers that suit the present; according to constructivism the answer is history itself. Following a review of the argument of the lessons literature, this section presents a constructivist answer to what a lesson is. The review shows that 'the lesson of Munich' is the defining lesson for the lessons literature. Therefore, the lessons literature's analysis of the Munich lesson is used to discuss the merits and background of the lessons argument itself. The discussion shows that a lesson is a product of the present rather than the past, and it poses a new research question: the history of the Munich lesson.

[2] David Chuter, 'Munich, or the Blood of Others', in Cyril Buffet and Beatrice Heuser (eds.), *Haunted by History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), p. 65.

[3] This article does *not* evaluate whether appeasement may in fact be an effective foreign policy in particular historical situations. For an example of this approach, see Stephen R. Rock, *Appeasement in International Politics* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000).

The lessons literature explores the tension between two main points: (1) that one can learn by experience, and therefore one knows one's world and how to act in it mainly by analogy, while (2) one's experience, and the analogies derived from it, may turn out to be inapplicable in a new situation.

The lessons literature is based on the insight that perception determines action. It explores that insight by use of theories of cognitive psychology. From this point of view, a lesson constitutes a cognitive mediation, in the present, between past events and future events. As the human mind is finite and information is infinite, the argument goes, you use the lessons of previous experience to structure information about a present situation.[4] Robert Jervis presents the argument by means of the formula 'event→lessons→future behavior'.[5]

A lesson is a way to structure knowledge in time. Immanuel Kant observed that time is the basis of causality because the relationship between cause and effect is determined on the basis of which event came first.[6] The lessons literature points to a more complicated role for time in the equation of action: an act's cause may not only be the result of calculations about the present situation, but may be the result of experience of analogous situations in the past. Analogies 'provide a useful shortcut to rationality'[7] because they transcend the temporal relationship between cause and effect, as experience makes it possible to anticipate the effect of certain actions. What you do now is a result of what you did in the past. On the one hand, that means it is possible to learn from the past. In case you find yourself in the same circumstances from time to time, you might learn to act more effectively in these circumstances. On the other hand, time may invalidate experience.

The lessons literature holds that historical events are distinct. It is analogy, not history, which connects events. History may make a lesson inapplicable, thus making it necessary to start the learning process anew, but the lessons literature points out that actors often do *not* realise that the time of a lesson is up. Focusing on the criteria that make actors apply lessons of the past to present actions, the lessons literature seeks to answer the question '*what* is experience?', and finds that experience is the stuff tragedy is made of. Experience is a guide that makes states repeat their history, rather than create a better present. To Jervis, lessons, and the perceptions they convey, is the reason why states end up in the security dilemma. Thus cognitive psychology becomes a means to restate, in 'scientific' terms, the realist notion of international relations as a tragedy.

Constructivism asks a different type of question. The constructivist genre is drama, as constructivism focuses on *how* lessons are learned and *how* they are put to political use.[8] Central to the lessons literature is the notion of mediating past and present. Actors have no choice but to apply lessons (that is the way cognition works according to the lessons literature). Tragically, actors often get the past wrong, and

[4] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 217.
[5] Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, p. 222.
[6] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).
[7] Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, p. 220.
[8] On the constructivist use of 'how-questions', see Roxanne Lynn Doty, 'Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of US Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines', *International Studies Quarterly*, 37 (1993), p. 298.

therefore apply the wrong lessons of the past to the present. But what if there is nothing to mediate? The lessons literature insists that the past plays a cognitive function in the shape of lessons, but what if the past is nothing but the lesson? The constructivist position is that the past exists only in the lessons we draw from it. 'It's through our accounts that the actual events of the past are *brought back* into the present and into existence', Erik Ringmar notes; 'the past does not exist unless we *make it exist*'.[9]

The lessons literature points to the fact that there is infinite information to shape our perception of events. To the lessons literature, the past serves as a lesson in what is important information and what is not. However, the past was no less complicated than the present. The past, too, entails infinite information, the interpretation of which presents actors with an infinite number of possibilities. In the present, however, the events of the past *have* occurred, and therefore they provide the possibility of telling a simple story that leaves out the indeterminism of past events by merely telling a story of outcomes. The account of the past does not tell of the past as it was, but as it turned out from a present point of view.[10] As Søren Kierkegaard notes, 'life is lived forwards, but only understood backwards'.[11] By constructing a simple past we make the present simple, and thereby we create an imperative for acting in a certain way. Thus, the present gains meaning through an understanding of the past: what we have to do, now, is the plot in a *narrative* about how we arrived at this juncture in time and space.[12]

From this point of view, lessons are much more than analogies. Lessons are *praxeologies* communicated by means of a narrative that makes past events an example for the present. By identifying the time and space of actions, lessons provide a way to structure our environment by prescribing the appropriate rules for acting within that environment. John Searle argues that social reality exists by virtue of constitutive rules that determine the conduct of social activities.[13] A classic example is the game of chess: without the rules of how to play chess there would be no game to play, and the chess board and pieces would not only be useless; they would not have been made in the first place. There is no game (no action) without the rules, and thus the rules of action constitute action itself. In the words of John

[9] Erik Ringmar, *Identity, Interest and Action. A Cultural Explanation of Sweden's Intervention in the Thirty Years War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 24 – italics in original. For more on time, narrative and identity, see David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 153–85. For other statements for the constructivist position on lessons, see Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests. The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 98–103, 215–17; K. M. Fierke, 'Multiple Identities, Interfacing Games: The Social Construction of Western Action in Bosnia', *European Journal of International Relations*, 2 (1996), pp. 467–97; and David Campbell, *Politics Without Principle: Sovereignty, Ethics and the Narratives of the Gulf War* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1993), pp. 7–28.

[10] Counterfactual history is an attempt to recreate the indeterminism of the past. As the term itself suggests, however, it does so only by telling the story of *what if* the result we know had not taken place. Thus, it points to the indeterminism of the past, but it does not change the fact that history is written backwards. Niall Ferguson (ed.), *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (London: Macmillan, 1997).

[11] In Danish, 'Livet leves forlæns, mens det kun forstås baglæns'. Søren Kierkegaard, *Stadier på Livets Vei,* Samlede værker, vol. 7–8 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1962).

[12] Ringmar, *Identity, Interest and Action,* pp. 71–5.

[13] John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), pp. 31–57.

Ruggie, 'constitutive rules are the institutional foundation of all social life'.[14] The environment of action, or the social world, is constituted by rules. A lesson identifies the rules applicable to a certain situation and thereby provides the narrative that gives identity to the social world. As such, a lesson defines what James March and Johan Olsen describe as a 'logic of appropriate action'.[15] Lessons define the spatio-temporality within which rules are applicable, and thus prescribes the actions appropriate.

The lessons literature presupposes that the past exists as a reservoir of knowledge that when used correctly can guide us through the present. At this point, the lessons literature is misled by its use of cognitive psychology. It is important to note that cognitive psychology is one thing *not* applied by analogy in the lessons literature. This may be justified when the political personality in question is that of individual decision-makers.[16] If you recognise, as does Yuen Foong Khong, that lessons of the past shape the outlook of an entire administration, however, lessons no longer refer to the frame of mind of a particular person. Then they refer to what Paul Kennedy terms the 'official mind': the way a certain political establishment regards the world and the political options it presents.[17]

An 'official mind' exists on terms radically different from those of an individual mind. The formula of 'event→lessons→future behavior' presupposes the limited time frame of 'biological time'.[18] Cognitive psychology deals with the way individuals learn lessons and show how learning lessons fills up the tabula rasa of an individual mind. The history of states is different from the history of individuals, and therefore states construct lessons differently from individuals. States do not live lives the way individuals do, and therefore their past is a social product quite different from the psychological product that constitutes individual identity. In other words, governments do not live the result of their state's past the way individuals, trapped in their body, live the results of their past. A state does not have cognition the way individuals do, and therefore cognitive psychology cannot explain the actions of a state.

Regarding states as individuals, the lessons literature takes the notion of lessons quite literally. Education is a practice of gaining experience (from how to connect letters into words to the simulated experience of discussing different theories' explanations of the Cuban Missile Crisis).[19] The lessons literature holds that states, and state decision-makers, can be taught to reflect on their use of lessons and

[14] John Ruggie, 'What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarism and the Social Constructivist Challenge', *International Organization*, 52 (1998), p. 233.

[15] James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, 'The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders, *International Organization*, 52 (1998), pp. 951–2.

[16] Constructivist psychology has pointed out that, although the socialisation process of a child will procure a certain personality, human beings transform their identity from time to time, thus redefining their history to support a new understanding of themselves. For an introduction see Kenneth J. Gergen, *An Invitation to Social Construction* (London: Sage, 1999), ch. 5. Kenneth J. Gergen, 'The Self in the Age of Information', *The Washington Quarterly*, 23 (2000), pp. 201–14.

[17] Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980), pp. 432–7.

[18] Barbara Adam uses the concept of biological time to describe the way time defines the rhythm of life – from ageing to jet lag. Barbara Adam, *Time and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

[19] Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

thereby make an informed choice between lessons. Richard Neustadt and Ernest May's *Thinking in Time* is thus based on their experience of teaching US government officials how to learn from history.[20] But the authors of the lessons literature seem to be disappointed teachers because most of them focus on 'how often statesmen misguess because they expect patterns of the past to repeat themselves'.[21] This focus has either led to descriptions of international relations in terms of misperceptions[22] or to self-help books for 'those who govern' on how to use the 'right' analogies.[23] More recently, a new generation, numbering scholars like Yuen Foong Khong, has engaged actors' perception of lessons on the actors' terms, seeking to explain how lessons are used rather than how well they are used.[24]

The focus on the practical policy of lessons, as well as misperceptions of their application, testifies to the origins of the lessons literature: the debate about the United States' intervention in Vietnam. The Munich analogy dictated American military involvement in Vietnam. Therefore, assessing the proper use of that analogy became a means to evaluate American foreign policy in the wake of Vietnam. For that reason, the lesson of Munich is the pivotal lesson of the literature. President Johnson's argument for intervening in Vietnam was the continuity in the threat of aggression faced by the Western world:

> Three times in my lifetime, in two world wars and in Korea, Americans have gone to far lands to fight for freedom. We have learned at a terrible and brutal cost that retreat does not bring safety and weakness does not bring peace [. . .]. Nor would surrender in Viet-Nam bring peace, because we learned from Hitler in Munich that success only feeds the appetite of aggression.[25]

The way the president made America's experience his own makes you understand why the lessons literature equates personal and political lessons. Yet, Johnson's call to experience served primarily to tell the story of how the United States learned that security could be found in 'isolation'. Roosevelt and Truman used military force to reclaim a world order favourable to the United States, and so would Johnson. Telling the story this way, the president dared anyone opposing intervention in Vietnam to argue against his conception of the world and the United States' role in it, and the rules of security policy that followed with it. Rules which the United States had followed at 'a terrible and brutal cost'. To go against intervention in Vietnam was to deny the plot of twentieth century American history; it was, to press the point, to deny the GIs killed in action in the world wars, Korea and, soon, in Vietnam a cause to die for.

[20] Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), preface.

[21] Ernest May, *'Lessons' of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 179.

[22] Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*.

[23] Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time.* The second part of May, *'Lessons' of the Past*, is devoted to prescription.

[24] Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War. Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 9.

[25] Lyndon B. Johnson, 'We Will Stand in Vietnam', News Conference Statement by the President, 28 July 1965, *Documents on American Foreign Relations 1965*, Richard P. Stebbins (ed.), Council of Foreign Relations (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 179.

President Johnson used the Munich lesson to tell a story of continuity in American security policy. The United States had 'learned from Hitler in Munich' and followed that lesson ever since. It is true that 'the Munich analogy magnified the stakes of Vietnam for the United States because it envisioned a 1930s syndrome in Southeast Asia,' as Yuen Foong Khong concludes. 'In this sense, the Munich analogy was the intellectual basis of the domino theory'.[26] However, the Munich analogy was so powerful because it formed the intellectual basis not only for the domino theory, but the basis for the security praxeology of the United States, and the rest of the West, since the beginning of the Second World War.

The main argument of the lessons literature was that this praxeology no longer applied. The comparative approach of the lessons literature was to show difference, and thereby imply discontinuity. By focusing on the analogy between isolated events the lessons literature undermined the continuous narrative by which the lesson drawn from Chamberlain's fateful meeting with Hitler in Munich was connected to the United States' strategy in the Cold War. As such, the lessons literature went against the narrative of American foreign policy that had existed since the Second World War. The Munich lesson was not only a cognitive means applied to a given situation, but the very basis for how the United States knew how to identify a danger and how to achieve security. The Munich lesson had become constitutive of what Jutta Weldes terms the 'security imaginary' of the US government.[27] In her analysis of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Weldes shows how the Munich analogy strengthened US resolve: '[W]eakness on the part of the free world, and especially on the part of its leader, was understood to breed aggression'.[28] The only appropriate way to act in face of 'communist aggression' was to intervene. To do otherwise would have been a radical break with the American 'security imaginary'. Therefore, it would have been surprising if President Johnson had *not* intervened in Vietnam.[29]

A constructivist approach tells us that the Munich analogy not only reminds decision-makers of the 'failures of appeasement', but that the use of the Munich analogy itself has a history. A history that shows how the Munich summit became a lesson in the first place, and shows how that construction of events shaped a security praxeology. The lessons literature has another story to tell. It focuses on analogies in order to stress discontinuity. This was the purpose the past served when the main body of the lessons literature took issue with the American engagement in Vietnam. Their account of the Munich lesson deals with the United States involvement in Vietnam, it does not account for how the lesson of Munich became a constitutive story of Western security policy. The constructivist approach to lessons thus points to an empirical gap in the literature on the Munich lesson: how it became a lesson in the first place. The next section deals with that issue focusing on British policy, because the British experience constitutes the defining part of the narrative of the Munich lesson, especially in the United States where decision-makers believed that having taking over the role as 'leader of the free world' from the British, they could learn from Britain's mistakes.

[26] Khong, *Analogies at War*, p. 184.
[27] Weldes, *Constructing National Interests*, p. 11.
[28] Ibid., p. 216.
[29] March and Olsen, 'The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders', pp. 951–2.

From Versailles to Munich

The narrative presented in 'the lesson of Munich' existed before September 1938 when Chamberlain returned from Munich promising 'peace in our time'.[30] For some time the opponents of appeasement had been arguing that the government's policy went against the lessons of history. 'History warns us,' Basil Liddell Hart noted in June 1938, 'that nothing has proved more upsetting to peace-seeking calculations than the temptation of buying peace'.[31] Josiah Wedgewood's description of appeasement could pass for a textbook definition of a much later date were it not for the political rhetoric which the Labour politician applied against the government in July 1938:

> Every time you sacrifice one of your potential allies to this pathetic desire to appease the tyrants you merely bring nearer and make more inevitable that war which you pretend you are trying to avoid.[32]

At the time, textbooks did *not* warn against appeasement. On the contrary, the 1939 version of E. H. Carr's seminal *Introduction to the Study of International Relations* argued that appeasement was the only 'realistic' British foreign policy.[33] Appeasement was a legitimate policy for a British government to pursue. The opposition's argument that appeasement was contrary to the rules laid down by history had not yet the status of a praxeology. How did 'anti-appeasement' turn from a policy into a praxeology? In order to answer that question, you have to analyse the ends appeasement were to achieve. Anti-appeasers shared these ends, and thus the failure of appeasement came to 'prove' by what rules these ends could be achieved.

The transformation of appeasement from a policy to a lesson becomes clear when you consider how the meaning of the term itself changed. In the 1930s, appeasement simply meant to make peace, but as the term became increasingly identified with the European policy of the Chamberlain government it became associated with a certain way of peacemaking. By 1939, appeasement had come to refer to an erroneous belief in how peace could be achieved.[34] Appeasement had become an abusive term.

It has been argued that the appeasement of the 1930s was the culmination of a strategy founded in the nineteenth century, by which Britain had attempted to keep its dominating international position by essentially buying off opposition.[35] 'Whether

[30] 'Peace in our time' was itself an analogy, as Chamberlain compared his deal with the Germans to Disraeli's diplomacy at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, William R. Rock, *Appeasement on Trial: British Foreign Policy and Its Critics, 1938–1939* (New York: Arcon Books, 1966), p. 139.

[31] Quoted in Rock, *Appeasement on Trial*, p. 104.

[32] Ibid., p. 106.

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

[34] George A. Lanyi, 'The Problem of Appeasement', *World Politics*, 15 (1963), pp. 317–19; Rock, *Appeasement on Trial*, Appendix 1.

[35] The continuity argument echoes Carr's assertion that the Western powers pursued a European policy based on nineteenth century traditions: Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*. From that point of view appeasement is a viable strategy in itself, it was the Chamberlain government's timing that was wrong because it applied appeasement at a moment when the powers Carr referred to as 'dissatisfied' were not prepared to compromise. Martin Gilbert, *The Roots of Appeasement* (New York: New American Library, 1966). Paul M. Kennedy, 'The Tradition of Appeasement in British Foreign Policy, 1885–1939', *British Journal of International Studies*, 2 (1976), pp. 195–215.

or not appeasement was a 19th century tradition', J. L. Richardson notes, 'there is no doubt of the continuity of British policy toward Germany from shortly after 1919'.[36] The Versailles treaty had ended the war without creating peace. Appeasement was to succeed where the treaty had failed by modifying the Versailles settlement in ways that would satisfy Germany. As Martin Gilbert notes, 'appeasement and the treaty were linked inextricably'.[37] But how were they linked?

Appeasement was a policy of order aimed at achieving the 'peace without victory' which had not been made in Versailles. Appeasement sought to create an order which also Germany would find just and secure. If Germany was so satisfied, it would have no reason to start another European war, and peace would thus be secured. The belief that Germany needed to be accommodated rested on the British conception of the treaty as harsh and unfair. In France, the treaty was constructed differently, and therefore French and British policy diverged in the 1920s and early 1930s.

The British had gone back on the treaty even before Count Brockdorf-Rantzau signed it in Versailles on behalf of Germany. Wary of the uncompromising nature of the peace terms he had agreed with President Wilson and Prime Minister Clemenceau, Prime Minister David Lloyd George confronted his colleagues with the notion that they had gone back on the promises for a 'peace without victory'.[38] Although Lloyd George achieved some modifications to the treaty, this was not what the Anglo-American public had imagined when President Wilson spoke of a new world order that, by replacing the balance of power with cooperative international institutions, would ensure 'a just and secure peace'.[39] Harold Nicolson recorded in his diary: '[W]e came to Paris confident that the new order was about to be established; we left convinced that the new order had merely fouled the old'.[40] Few were more bitterly disappointed than John Maynard Keynes who, as a member of the Treasury delegation, found the Paris Peace Conference 'a nightmare'.[41] Keynes tried to rouse public opinion against the treaty by outlining *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*.[42] The reparations Germany was to pay would not only cripple the

[36] J. L. Richardson, 'New Perspectives on Appeasement: Some Implications for International Relations', *World Politics*, 40 (1988), p. 306.

[37] Gilbert, *The Roots of Appeasement*, p. 56. See also Rock, *Appeasement on Trial*, pp. 3–20.

[38] *The Paris Peace Conference*, Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, vols. I–IX, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1942, pp. 139–58.

[39] *The World War*, Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917, Supplement I, vol. I (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1932), p. 26. Few expressed these hopes more clearly than Norman Angell; Norman Angell, *The Political Conditions of Allied Success: A Plea for the Protective Union of the Democracies* (London: C. P. Putnam's Sons, 1918). For an analysis of how the possibilities for a new world order were imagined and how such an order was believed to be the condition for a new and more enduring peace, see Andrew Williams, *Failed Imagination? New World Orders of the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 51–9, and Hidemi Suganami, *The Domestic Analogy and World Order Proposals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 79–93.

[40] Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, 2nd edn. (London: Constable & Co, 1945), p. 153.

[41] John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1919), p. 3.

[42] Winston Churchill noted that Keynes' book was one of the books most influential on the public perception of the treaties. Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis: The Aftermath* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1929), p. 156. For an account of Keynes' work on the book and the debate it sparked, see Robert Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes.* vol. I: *Hopes Betrayed 1883–1920* (London: Macmillan, 1983), chs. 15 and 16.

German economy, Keynes argued, but estrange Germany from the West, and thus the consequences of the peace treaties would undermine peace itself.

'For thirteen years', Martin Gilbert notes, 'Keynes' message was constantly and powerfully reinforced'.[43] Britain entered the postwar world in the belief that its foundation, the Versailles treaty, was insecure and unjust. As Churchill argued in the 1920s and Niall Ferguson restated in the 1990s, the treaty could have served as the foundation for a just and secure European order.[44] The most disastrous outcomes of the treaty were, the argument goes, brought about by Germany itself, when the German government deliberately let inflation run wild in order to avoid paying the indemnities stipulated in the treaty.[45] 'The real problem with the peace was not that it was too harsh,' Ferguson concludes, 'but that the Allies failed to enforce it.'[46] At the time, however, Britain neither found the treaty worthy of enforcement nor wanted to risk another European war. The plot of Keynes' narrative was that, although the Germans might have been guilty of starting the war, the British were guilty in not delivering peace. In the 1920s, the lesson of Versailles was to transcend the enmity of the war and include Germany in the League of Nations on terms that the German people would find just and conducive for its security.

By accusing 'the allied and associate powers' of the West of having failed to deliver on the promise of peace, Keynes' argument against the treaty became an argument against the utility of war. In 1917, when the costs of the war had become so high that they were justifiable only by ends more worthy than the European balance of power, President Wilson had offered a vision for a new world order after the war. In the absence of the realisation of that order, the sacrifices of the war seemed in vain. And if the war to end all wars had been in vain, what could possible be the purpose of another war? Keynes' narrative of the Peace Conference thus came to define not only the construction of the Versailles peace,[47] but of the First World War itself. The League's focus on 'collective security' illustrates how the Western powers tried to develop policy options short of war to deal with the questions of European order.

In the 1920s and early 1930s, there was a consensus in Britain on appeasement. Therefore it should be no surprise that even Anthony Eden argued that 'it is the appeasement of Europe as a whole that we have constantly before us.'[48] Writing about the World War and its aftermath in 1929, Churchill concluded that the appeasement of Europe had indeed been achieved by the series of agreements that had terminated reparations and made Germany join the League.[49] It is from this point that the differences between Eden, Churchill and the other critics of

[43] Gilbert, *The Roots of Appeasement*, p. 66.

[44] As Churchill noted, 'in these blunt paragraphs [of the Versailles treaty] there is an appeal to the intellect of Germany'; Churchill, *The World Crisis*, p. 216. Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, p. 419.

[45] Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, pp. 407–28. Inflation is traditionally identified as a factor that contributed to the rise of the Nazi-party, as it destroyed the German middle classes, Martin Kitchen, *Europe Between the Wars: A Political History* (London: Longman, 1988), pp. 168–83.

[46] Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, p. 419.

[47] Of course, it was not 'Keynes' narrative exclusively. Keynes' book is a paradigmatic example of the general discourse on the war; even if *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* undoubtedly was important for constituting this discourse in the first place.

[48] Quoted in Lanyi, 'The Problem of Appeasement', p. 317.

[49] Churchill, *The World Crisis*, pp. 457–9.

Chamberlain's policies on the one side and Chamberlain and his fellow appeasers on the other developed. Chamberlain believed that the appeasement of Europe required that new German demands were met, whereas the opposition increasingly came to feel that European order had to be defended rather than subject to compromise.

At the time of Chamberlain's trip to Munich, appeasement was no longer the only possible conclusion to the lesson of Versailles. This was made clear by the fact that appeasement no longer could be regarded as the plot of a narrative starting in 1919. Appeasement was increasingly seen as a policy that by allowing German rearmament, reoccupation of the Rhineland and, eventually, the annexation of Sudetenland, made it possible for Germany to challenge the European order on which British security depended. From that point of view, appeasement could no longer only be understood in terms of the First World War and the inadequate peace that followed. The consequences of the government's actions had to be put into a broader context of British history and the first principles to be learnt from that. Using the grand narrative of British identity and the duties that followed, the anti-appeasers argued that British society and security was in danger. Resigning from the government in protest of Chamberlain's deal with Hitler, Duff Cooper argued that 'the day when we are not prepared to fight for it [the European order] we forfeit our Empire, our liberties and our independence.'[50] Appeasement was no longer creating peace, but was rather undermining the European order on which peace and Britain's security depended. At that point, the defining question of the debate became, as George Lanyi has noted, 'what kind of outlook on international affairs, what kind of world view, favors the adoption of a policy of appeasement?'[51]

The opposition blamed Chamberlain for not realising that Hitler's aim was not merely the readjustment of the Versailles treaty, but the overthrow of the entire European order. Chamberlain believed Munich proved them wrong. Munich was the proof of success of the government's European policy, and for that very reason Munich ultimately became the symbol of that policy's failure. It began as an argument in which other instances of 'giving in' were used as analogies to show that the Munich agreement would not last (Liddell Hart's argument is an example of this). When Hitler broke the Munich agreement by invading the remaining part of Czechoslovakia, Munich became part of the narrative itself.

By March 1939, the lesson of Munich had crystallised even among the appeasers themselves.[52] Lord Halifax told the House of Lords that the immediate purpose of the Munich agreement had been to solve the particular crisis created by the Sudeten question. However, crisis diplomacy had only been a means, Lord Halifax argued,

> to build a Europe more secure, upon the basis of freely accepted consultations as the means by which all future differences might be adjusted; and that long-term purpose, my Lords, has been, as we have come to observe, disastrously belied by events.[53]

[50] Quoted in Rock, *Appeasement on Trial*, p. 106.
[51] Lanyi, 'The Problem of Appeasement', p. 320.
[52] This is clear from William Rock's meticulous account of the appeasement debate, see Rock, *Appeasement on Trial*, p. 203 et seq.
[53] Lord Halifax, 'Extracts from Statement by the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 20 March 1939, Arnold J. Toynbee (ed.), *Documents on International Affairs, 1939–1946*, vol. I, March–September 1939 (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. 78–9.

The Foreign Secretary believed events had taught him a lesson: appeasement did not create peace. Thus appeasement was discursively transformed from a policy to a lesson. This was not only an admission of failure by Lord Halifax; it was an admission that the rules by which the government had believed it could operate did no longer apply – if they ever had.

Lord Halifax needed to justify why he had believed it possible to appease Germany in the first place. He did so by arguing that appeasement was the natural policy for a British government to follow. Thus he pointed to the fact that many of his critics had previously supported appeasement, but more importantly, he made appeasement a question of British identity. Appeasement, Lord Halifax argued, was the product of the British 'instinct' of 'shaking hands and make up after a fight'.[54] This illustrates how the lesson of Versailles was constituted by an understanding of British, and more broadly Western, identity. In this sense, the Munich experience serves to turn the lesson of Versailles into a 'constitutive story' in Erik Ringmar's understanding of the term; a story that tells the West who it is and what it ought to do. 'We can *be* someone today since we were someone yesterday and since *we will* be someone tomorrow', Ringmar notes, 'our present has meaning since it relates to a beginning, to an end, and to the different sections or scenes into which the plot is divided'.[55] The narrative of the lesson of Versailles showed the British were a people of 'appeasers';[56] a peaceful people willing to transcend enmity in favour of a fair, and thus stable, international order. 'Our people were not backward in recognising some of the mistakes of the Versailles Treaty that required remedying', Lord Halifax stated.[57] The problem was that the British desire for peace was not reciprocated; it was the Germans that made 'progress' impossible.[58]

This had been Churchill's argument all along: the nature of the German regime was such that 'that Power cannot ever be the trusted friend of the British democracy'.[59] As appeasement was defined by the British 'instincts', or identity, it followed from Germany's rejection of the British 'peace policy' that German identity was different from the British – or, in more inclusively terms, Western – identity: it was non-peaceful. The cause of the war, Rene Albrecht-Carrie argued in 1940, was 'the ideas of this military power [Germany] on the subject of peace, and unfortunately these ideas had had an opportunity of translating themselves into actual practice'.[60]

Munich was made a lesson on the limits of appeasement: enmity could only be transcended and peace made with a nation of the same identity. Germany did not want peace because the German regime or German society (depending on how irredeemable one believed Germany to be) did *not* share 'instincts' of how to overcome enmity with the British. This was a radical departure from the way Germany had been constructed in the 1920s and early 1930s. Keynes' point was that British policy alienated Germans otherwise more than willing to make peace. In 1929,

[54] Lord Halifax, 'Extracts from Statement', p. 80.
[55] Ringmar, *Identity, Interest and Action*, p. 77.
[56] 'Appeasers' in the original, positive meaning of the term, which Halifax of course employed.
[57] Lord Halifax, 'Extracts from Statement', pp. 78–9.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Quoted in Rock, *Appeasement on Trial*, p. 147.
[60] Rene Albrecht-Carrie, 'Versailles Twenty Years After', *Political Science Quarterly*, 55 (1940), p. 18.

Churchill had believed that appeasement had already been achieved by the deals made with a democratic German government. Churchill changed his mind about the possibilities for appeasing Germany because Germany ceased to be a society with which Britain had a common identity; after Hitler came to power, Germany was no longer a civil democracy, but militant and totalitarian. From this point of view, the Chamberlain government had failed to realise that it could not deal with the Third Reich in the way previous governments had dealt with the Weimar republic.

Appeasers as well as anti-appeasers believed that peace was created on the basis of an international order that offered equal justice and security for its constitutive states. They also shared the belief that equal justice and security could only be achieved by states of equal 'instincts' (that is, states that shared a common identity). Being a civilian democracy, Britain had a hard time perceiving a militant, totalitarian government as a partner in peace. Or rather that was the conclusion. The Chamberlain government did actually seek to deal with Hitler's Germany, as it would have dealt with, for example, Roosevelt's United States. That conflicted with the way people with an acute sense of British identity, like Churchill, perceived the world, but it also went against the Nazi government's perception of the world.

The failure of the Versailles treaty to transcend the enmity of the First World War became the beginning of a narrative about how peace had to be made by transcending enmity and integrating the vanquished enemy into the European order. The failure of the Munich agreement came to define with whom transcending was possible, and integration would serve to strengthen order rather than devalue it. Whereas the Versailles story was about the need for inclusion, the lesson of Munich was about who could possibly be included. As such, the lesson of Munich did not contradict the lesson of Versailles. The lesson of Munich was not possible without the lesson of Versailles, but the lesson of Munich crucially redefined the lesson of Versailles. As the narrative that constitutes these lessons starts with the Paris Peace Conference, the Munich lesson must be understood as an element of the lesson of Versailles. The lesson is constituted by two elements: the need for order and the need for a determined defence of that order if peace is to be achieved.

A lesson of realism

'Now ten years later', Churchill argued in his account of the beginnings of the Second World War, 'let the lessons of the past be a guide'.[61] When the Second World War ended, the West needed a guide on how to navigate safely in the new security environment. The lesson of Versailles became that guide, the praxeology that constituted the rules by which the West believed order and security were to be achieved in the postwar world. Thus, following the Lesson of Versailles the West made a new world order. The way the lesson of Versailles had become a praxeology clearly shows in the creation of the United Nations.[62] The Charter of the United Nations, which

[61] Winston S. Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, vol. 1 of his The Second World War (London: Cassell, 1948), p. 199.

[62] For an account of the negotiations and the conceptions of how the new world organisation was to operate, see Robert C. Hilderbrandt, *Dumbarton Oaks: The Origins of the United Nations and the Search for Postwar Security* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

was to restore international order after the failure of the League of Nations created by the treaty of Versailles, defined its function primarily in terms of maintaining 'peace and security'.[63]

The construction of peace and security as separate but equally constitutive was the plot of the lesson of Versailles. A plot, Erik Ringmar argues, constitutes a lesson in how the world works: '[B]y joining earlier events to later ones, the plot keeps the story together and gives integrity and coherence to the people participating in it'.[64] The lesson of Versailles thus served to define a common history for Britain, continental Western Europe and the United States at a time when the powers had to define their future relationship. Explaining the outbreak of the Second World War in terms of the failure of the democratic governments to recognise the irreconcilable difference between democracies and totalitarian regimes, the plot of the lesson of Versailles was that the Western powers should make a durable peace with Germany and form a strong alliance to defend that peace. When the Soviet Union did not appear to share that ambition, it was the lesson of Versailles that provided the framework for understanding the Soviet threat and the need to counter that threat. Furthermore, the plot of the story was very much how the British government failed to live up to the dominating power's responsibility to guard international order. This could be used by Europeans as well as Americans who wanted to make sure that the United States committed itself to the defence of Western Europe in particular against the Soviet Union. The lesson of Versailles thus became an important element in the narrative of what the Western alliance was all about, because it defined the rules by which Western states should deal with each other and the rules by which they should deal with their enemies, while emphasising that they could only find security by cooperating.

The way the Second World War made appeasement and security part of the same plot is apparent in the way 'realism' was redefined after the war. In 1939, E. H. Carr's *The Twenty Years' Crisis* was based on the argument that appeasement was the only realistic policy for Britain to pursue.[65] As his critics noted at the time, Carr used realism in an ontological as well as an epistemological sense; realism described the world as it really was, as well as the policy options in that world.[66] In 1939, Carr's ontological stand was that international order was little more than the result of the power of the *status quo*, and that the weakness of the *status quo* meant that the primary *status quo* power, Britain, had to pursue a policy of appeasement.[67] The 1946 version of *The Twenty Years' Crisis* was edited to fit a new plot.[68] Little editing was necessary, however. Although the arguments for appeasement were still to be found by the watchful reader, Carr's book was now read by a generation with an altogether different plot in mind. Now, the realism of *The Twenty Years' Crisis* reflected the lesson of Versailles.

[63] Article 1 of the UN Charter thus states that the first and foremost end of the UN is 'to maintain international peace and security', Charter of the United Nations, <http://www.icj-cij.org/icjwww/ibasicdocuments/ibasictext/ibasicunchart.htm> (3 December, 2001), Article 1.

[64] Ringmar, *Identity, Interest and Action*, p. 72.

[65] Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*.

[66] Peter Wilson, 'Carr and his Early Critics: Responses to *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, 1939–46', in Michael Cox (ed.), *E. H. Carr: A Critical Appraisal* (London: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 177–8.

[67] Wilson, 'Carr and his Early Critics', p. 184.

[68] E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2nd edn. (London: Macmillan, 1946).

'Everyone is a Realist nowadays', Martin Wight concluded in the 1950s, 'and the term in this sense needs no argument'.[69] This remark can hardly be understood without the context of the British debate about appeasement in the 1930s. Now, few disagreed that power considerations were important for keeping the peace. As Wight noted, however, everybody had become a realist because the concept had come to encompass more than it once had.[70] The new concept of realism encompassed appeasers as well as anti-appeasers, because by combining Versailles and Munich in one lesson liberal and realist strategies of international security were tied together in a praxeology that dictates when liberal rules apply to international relations and when realist rules apply.

The appeasers' mistake, Hans Morgenthau argued, was to transfer 'a policy of compromise from a political environment favourable to the preservation of the status quo, where it belongs, to an environment exposed to imperialistic attack, where it does not belong.'[71] In this, as in many other instances, Morgenthau sought to formulate realist maxims that could guide policymakers in the United States, as they tried to come to terms with the postwar world and their role in it.[72] But Morgenthau's realism did not exclude liberal strategies; Morgenthau just wanted American policymakers to appreciate that different rules apply to different 'environments'. In combining Munich and Versailles, the lesson dictated how these environments were defined: compromise, or appeasement, could take place among liberal states, but faced with non-liberal states, like the Soviet Union, American foreign policy would have to focus on security rather than inclusion.

The 'realistic' quality of the new realism was to define when and where liberalism had its place. Ontologically, the new realism found the world divided into the forces of order and the forces of those wanting to change that order, as Carr had. But contrary to Carr, Munich taught the new realists to believe that peace depended on the maintenance of the *status quo*. Where Carr originally believed that 'revisionists' would replace the old order with a new, it was now believed that the only alternative to the existing order was chaos. The reason was that the epistemology of realism was no longer defined by appeasement, but by the lesson of Munich. The experience of war and the introduction of nuclear weapons made order appear as the only thing standing between man and Armageddon.

International order was regarded as an appeasing process in itself when compared to the experience and expectations of war. For that reason, the focus on justice in the original appeasement policy was replaced with a focus on peace. Where British policy after the First World War had been based on the premise that the Versailles settlement was to some extent unjust, American policy following the Second World War was based on the premise that the only extent to which world order was unjust was the way the Soviet Union prevented certain societies from being part of it. It was not an option to give in on questions of order. 'Even if successful,' Arnold

[69] Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter (eds.), Royal Institute of International Affairs (London: Leicester University Press, 1991), p. 15.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 2nd edn. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), pp. 59–60.
[72] See also Hans J. Morgenthau, *In the Defence of the National Interest: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952).

Wolfers asserted, 'accommodation [appeasement] cannot guarantee enduring peace and it may, in fact, have an unstabilising effect'.[73] Peace would only endure, it was argued, if made on the terms of peace and security offered by the West; any accommodation to other conceptions of peace would in the end mean the breakdown of order and thereby peace, as giving in to Hitler's designs for Europe had. Following 1945, this led the West to pursue a policy of integrating Germany into the new order in accordance with the first element of the lesson of Versailles, and to pursue a firm policy *vis à vis* the Soviet Union in accordance with the second element of the lesson.

In 1944, the American Committee on Post-War Programs concluded that a future peace treaty should not include a war guilt clause because Article 231 of the Versailles treaty 'was exploited by the nationalists [in Germany] to discredit and destroy all attempts to promote liberalism and international cooperation.'[74] Instead of alienating Germany by placing the blame on her, the Committee argued, peace was to be used to promote 'the earliest possible integration of Germany into the community of peace-loving nations'.[75] This was policymaking by the first element of the lesson of Versailles. Surveying the proposals for peace in light of the lessons of past peacemaking, a British study concluded that 'the treatment of the vanquished country or countries is, in a real sense, an index of wisdom of the whole settlement.'[76] Comparing the 1940s suggestions for the coming peace with the settlements following major European wars, this study by Thomson, Meyer and Briggs was in itself an example of the way lessons of the past were used to shape the postwar settlement. It was the lesson of Versailles that provided the plot for the story of how peace was made. Proposals for a draconian peace, like the Morgenthau plan, went against this plot, and for that reason they failed to persuade Western policymakers.[77]

Germany would only become a security concern again, the Committee on Post-War Programmes reasoned, if Germany found disagreements between the Allies for it to exploit. The best way to secure a lasting peace, the Committee concluded, would be 'the continued cooperation of three principal victors'.[78] The United Nations was one attempt to institutionalise this cooperation in the spirit of the first element of the lesson of Versailles. But soon the West found that the Soviet Union had constructed a different plot of the history of the first half of the twentieth century.[79] To the West, it seemed that by insisting on German reparations and on keeping Germany out of the new European order, the Soviet Union had learned nothing from the failure of the Versailles order. This was seen as evidence that the Soviet Union had divergent, and much less peaceful, intentions for the postwar order.

[73] Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), p. 140.

[74] The Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS): *The Conference at Quebec 1944* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 58.

[75] FRUS, *The Conference at Quebec 1944*, p. 61.

[76] David Thomson, E. Meyer and A. Briggs, *Patterns of Peacemaking* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1945), p. 82.

[77] The Morgenthau plan for carving up and de-industrialising Germany was actually accepted by Roosevelt and Churchill at the Summit of Quebec, but was, in Anthony Eden's words, 'quietly put away'. Anthony Eden, *The Eden Memoirs: The Reckoning* (London: Cassell, 1965), p. 476.

[78] FRUS, *The Conference at Quebec 1944*, p. 61.

[79] On Soviet conceptions of war, peace and international order, see Margot Light, *The Soviet Theory of International Relations* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1988).

In his Fulton speech, Winston Churchill emphasised the similarities between the situations in 1946 and in the 1930s, warning that if his call for a steadfast policy was not heeded this time, yet another war would occur – a powerful argument in 1946.[80] Although Churchill argued for the creation of a powerful Western alliance to contain the Soviet Union, he did so as a way to defend the promise of international order enshrined in the United Nations. To Churchill, the connection between the two elements of the lesson of Versailles was always clear.[81]

Peace was to be found in the defence of order. Secretary of State Dean Acheson described the creation of NATO as a way 'to wage peace'.[82] The lesson of Versailles showed that peace was only achieved through an active policy of inclusion and through the defence of the order thus created. After signing the Washington Treaty, President Truman stated:

> [I]f it [the treaty] had existed in 1914 and in 1939, supported by the nations who are represented here today, I believe it would have prevented the acts of aggression which led to the two world wars.[83]

Truman made 'waging peace' the rationale of American foreign policy. It was this rationale that President Johnson followed when he argued that the role of the United States was to 'be the guardians at the gate'.[84] The domino theory articulated the notion that one of the 'gates' was placed in South Vietnam: if North Vietnam (and, by implication, China and the Soviet Union) was allowed to infringe on even the periphery of Western order, then the centre might not hold, and mere anarchy would be loosed upon the world.[85]

Concluding the lesson

More than 60 years after Munich and more than 80 years after Versailles, these events are remembered as a lesson in how to make and keep peace. In 1999, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright asked her colleagues to remember Munich when she wanted them to take military action on the issue of repression in a faraway corner of Europe. To her NATO colleagues, these events constitute a shared lesson in the importance of not giving in on issues of order, however peripheral they might seem. Albright reminded her fellow foreign ministers why they were in the Atlantic alliance together, and what that alliance was supposed to be good for.

[80] Winston S. Churchill, *Sinews of Peace*, 5 March 1946. Westminster College, Fulton, MO: Missouri, The Churchill Center <http://www.winstonchurchill.org> (5 December, 2001), §29.
[81] Churchill, *Sinews of Peace*, §17.
[82] Dean Acheson, 'Address by the Honorable Dean G. Acheson, Secretary of State', 1949, reprinted in Dennis Merrill (ed.): *Documentary History of the Truman Presidency,* vol. 17: *The Origins and Establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1948–1952* (University Publications of America, 1997), p. 7.
[83] Harry S. Truman, 'Address by President Truman, 4 April, 1949', reprinted in Department of State: *A Decade of American Foreign Policy Basic Documents, 1941–1949* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1985), p. 935.
[84] Johnson, 'We Will Stand', p. 179.
[85] W. B. Yeats,'The Second Coming', in *The Poems*, edited by Richard J. Finneran, (New York: Scribner, 1983).

The achievement of the lessons literature is to show the importance of historical analogies, like Albright's, for the security policy decision-making process. Focusing on decision-making, however, the lessons literature makes a mistake common within International Relations – a mistake that greatly inhibits the discipline's ability to account for the ways in which policy is made, as well as policy possibilities that present themselves. The lessons literature either focuses on individual decision-makers or analyses states as if they made decisions like individuals. In Alexander Wendt's phrase, the lessons literature holds that 'states are people too'.[86] By anthropomorphising the state, the lessons literature makes history ontological prior to the state (or the individual, for that matter). Instead of shaping history, an agent has to learn from history. The history of the lessons literature itself clearly shows that lessons work differently.

If you track the history of the Munich lesson, it becomes clear that lessons are much more than analogies. Secretary Albright did not merely evoke an analogy to a specific situation; she drew on the entire history of Western security cooperation defined by setting up collective security institutions (such as NATO and the EU) after the Second World War. Albright was thus putting on the line the relevance of the Western alliance in the face of new security threats. It is this added layer of lessons that a constructivist approach can uncover. Furthermore, regarding the lesson as history, a constructivist approach can show how the lesson shapes the entire worldview of a state, a generation or an alliance.

This constructivist approach to lessons shifts the focus from individual government officials to the way lessons shape a 'security culture'. Decision-makers are not only *in* history, as the lessons literature holds; they are *of* history. History constitutes a narrative that defines who they are, and how they should act in a given situation.

This narrative approach differs radically from the constructivism of Alexander Wendt. Taking his point of departure in a theory of individual agency (symbolic interactionism), Wendt finds that international agency can only be accounted for in terms of the *agents*. Therefore, Wendt holds that when studying IR you are faced with a choice between methodological individualism and anthropomorphising the state. As he identifies states as the source of international agency, he chooses the former solution. It is clearly a solution he is less than happy about. The reasons he gives for 'why anthropomorphising the state is still problematic' would lead most people to look for other solutions.[87] Researching the constructions that shape agency, rather than the agents that constitute the framework for action, overcomes Wendt's dichotomy between individual and state. Perhaps the most interesting research question is not 'who acts', but 'how to act'. A construction of agency also identifies the agents who act. For example, the lesson of Versailles is directed at liberal, Western states. Thus by studying the lesson rather than the governments that 'learn', you are able to make the agent an empirical question. Furthermore, this line of inquiry opens the possibility of studying types of international agency, which cannot be reduced to a person or a state. When Secretary Albright invoked the lesson of Munich to her NATO colleagues, she was invoking 'the West' as a

[86] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 215.
[87] Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 221–4.

community of action—a community defined, among other concepts, by the lesson of Versailles.

Madeline Albright is probably the last US Secretary of State with a personal Munich experience. David Chuter argues that the lesson of Munich is questioned by new generations with no personal experience of Munich.[88] A new generation, including George W. Bush's Secretary of State Colin Powell, is more influenced by Vietnam than by Munich,[89] just as the upcoming generation of policymakers will be more influenced by the events of 11 September 2001 than by Vietnam. Chuter argues that new experiences will cut the lesson of Munich down to size, enabling people to see appeasement 'as it really is'.[90] However, there is no reality independent of our understanding of it. We know what happened in Munich only by the story we tell about it. Of course, this story has different relevance when it is not only a story of international relations but also a personal story. Yet, the political relevance of the story is determined by the needs of the times, rather than the personal memories.

The end of the Cold War did not render the lesson of Versailles irrelevant. Policymakers in the 1990s identified themselves with the generation that build the Western order on the basis of the lesson of Versailles. In 1997, President Bill Clinton argued that the post-Cold War generation had 'the possibility of achieving what Marshall's generation could only dream of – a democratic, peaceful and undivided Europe for the first time in all of history'.[91] In Morgenthau's terms, the environment in which liberal politics were believed to be possible enlarged. The mission of the West was to entrench this zone by defending the new liberal *status quo*. The means to do so were the enlargement of the EU and NATO in Europe and the spread of liberal regimes in the rest of the world by the process which has become known as globalisation.[92]

According to US Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz, the events of 11 September 2001 proved that 'along with the globalization that is creating interdependence among the world's free economies, there is a parallel globalization of terror'.[93] Globalisation holds not only the promise of peace and prosperity but also the threat of terrorism. This was a story of a promise of peace betrayed. As such, it not only followed the same plot as the story of the 1930s, the 'war on terrorism' was also regarded as a continuation of the world wars of the twentieth century. 'We have seen their kind before', President Bush said of the terrorists behind the attacks on New York and Washington in a speech to Congress on 20 September 2001, 'they are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century'.[94] Thus the president

[88] Chuter, 'Munich, or the Blood of Others', p. 78.

[89] See for instance Bob Woodward's description of Colin Powell's approach to the use of the military force and how that approach has been shaped by his experiences as a young officer in Vietnam; Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991).

[90] Chuter, 'Munich, or the Blood of Others', p. 79.

[91] Clinton, William Jefferson, *Remarks by the President at the United States Military Academy Commencement*, Michie Stadium, West Point, New York. The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 31 May 1997, <www.whitehouse.gov/New/Remarks/Mon/19970602–10734.html> (3 June 1997), §12.

[92] G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory. Institution, Strategic Restraint, and The Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 245–6.

[93] Paul Wolfowitz, *Building a Military for the 21st Century*, Prepared Statement for the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, 3–4 October 2001. Washington, DC: United States Department of Defence, §37.

[94] George W. Bush, *Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People*, 20 September, 2001. Washington, DC: The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, <www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920–8.html> (11 June 2002), §25.

reinforced the post-1945 conception of Western order as the only bulwark against chaos and restated the United States' role as the guardian at the gates of order: '[W]e will defend ourselves and our future against terror and lawless violence', President Bush stated.[95]

Globalisation added a new plot to the story of the lesson of Versailles, however. Globalisation made the challenge of terrorism all the more dangerous because it was believed to be the process of globalisation which, while spreading the liberal values associated with peace, proliferated technologies for weapons of mass destruction and made a vast civilian infrastructure available to terrorists.[96] 'Like the threats of another era', President Bush argued, evoking the Munich element of the lesson, 'this threat cannot be appeased or cannot be ignored'.[97] Constructing the promise of the post-Cold War order, as well as the threat to this order, in terms of globalisation, the lesson of Munich was qualified in important ways. In 1938, as well as in 1965 when Johnson intervened in Vietnam, the issue was the need to defend peripheral states against aggression. Globalisation means that the gates of world order are no longer in the periphery but at the very centre of the Western order. Thus in the autumn of 2001, no 'domino theory' was needed to connect security problems in Asia with what happened in New York. What was needed was a concept for how to defend yourself against a new type of transnational enemy.[98] Thus by tracking the construction of the lesson of Versailles, we can identify how a new type of non-state agency gains political importance.

The transnational space al Qaida occupied broke the temporality of the lesson of Munich. Al Qaida's aggression was not the culmination of a gradual policy of revisionism as Hitler's aggression had been. Al Qaida's war was not the continuation of politics with other means.[99] Therefore, the issue was not whether one should have realised sooner that they constituted an alien identity one could not do deals with. One should have realised sooner that in a globalised world transnational networks were a serious threat, and that this specific network did not offer the possibility of compromise. Al Qaida was constructed as an 'other'. In the words of George W. Bush, '[T]hey are a movement defined by their hatreds'.[100] Thus, the end of the war on terrorism did not hold the promise of fostering a peaceful identity in the

[95] George W. Bush, *President Bush Speaks to United Nations*, Remarks by the President to United Nations General Assembly, UN Headquarters, New York, New York, 10 November, 2001. Washington DC: The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, <www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011110–3.html> (12 June 2002), §1.

[96] I have elaborated on this argument in, '"A Parallel Globalization of Terror": 9–11, Security and Globalization', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 37 (2002), pp. 323–50.

[97] George W. Bush, *President Bush Thanks Germany for Support Against Terror*, Remarks by the President to a Special Session of the German Bundestag, 23 May 2002, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, <www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/05/print/20020523–2.html> (24 May 2002), §8.

[98] For a description of how transnational networks operate on security issues, see John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt (eds.), *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001).

[99] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976 [1832–34]), p. 605.

[100] George W. Bush, *President Speaks on War Effort to Citadel Cadets*, Remarks by the President at the Citadel, Charleston, North Carolina, 11 December 2001, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary; <www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/12/print/20011211–6.html> (12 December 2001), §15.

opponent following his defeat, as the lesson of Versailles had dictated in relation to Germany in 1945.

However, hatred was believed to be confined to an isolated group of fanatics rather than to an entire nation like Germany or the Soviet Union. Globalisation was still seen as a force of the general appeasement of the world – provided that terrorism was stamped out. An important part of 'the lesson of the 11 September 2001' will thus be the interpretation of how the benign and the dangerous effects of globalisation relate to one another. On this subject, there seem to be some differences within the West. The transatlantic debate in the autumn of 2002 on whether the next step in the war on terrorism should be an attack on Iraq illustrated that these different interpretations of 11 September 2001 placed themselves in the discourse of the lesson of Versailles and Munich. The opponents of pre-emptive action against Iraq have argued that such an attack would go against the Versailles element of the lesson because it would undermine the United Nations. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice took her point of departure in the Munich element of the lesson, inviting the opponents of a pre-emptive strike to 'look back and ask how many dictators who ended up being a tremendous global threat and killing thousands [. . .] should we have really stopped in their tracks.'[101] Pundits have argued that the different perceptions of the need for action reflect a different strategic culture on either side of the Atlantic.[102] While it may be true that such differences are developing, the debate also shows that the lesson of Versailles remains constitutive of the way security questions are framed on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Western alliance is still defined by the lesson of Versailles, and if you want to convince your allies then you invoke either Versailles or Munich. Eighty years from now, the lesson of 11 September 2001 will probably be an important element of the narrative by which the West defines peace, security – and itself. However, this lesson in postmodern security will probably supplement rather than deconstruct the lesson of Versailles because that lesson defines the very concepts of peace and security the West is to defend.

[101] Condoleezza Rice on BBC's Today Programme quoted in 'Bush Aide Cites Case for Saddam's Removal', *The Guardian*, 15 August, 2002.

[102] Se for example, Robert Kagan, 'Power and Weakness', *Policy Review*, no. 113 (2002), <http://www.policyreview.org/jun02/kagan_print.html> (5 July 2002).