

International History and International Relations theory: a dialogue beyond the Cold War

CAROLINE KENNEDY-PIPE

It has been observed, too often perhaps, that we either learn from history or that we do not learn from history. Yet for all its familiarity, such a sentiment sometimes bears repeating. The ambiguous, indeed at times downright hostile relationship that has characterized the relationship between scholars of International History and their counterparts in International Relations (especially International Relations theory) is one such case. For a good part of the last forty years they have engaged in what amounts to their own version of a cold war, a war in which, as so often, truth—or at least the search for it—has been the first victim. This article seeks to trace the parameters of the relationship as it exists today, arguing that we have recently seen a thawing between the two fields—especially but not only in the British academic community—and outlining some reasons for this.

Of course, there is an enormous range of work in International History and it would be quite impossible, given the time and space available here, to do anything other than scratch the surface. So instead of trying to cover everything, I will offer one particular case, but a vital one for the interaction of International History and International Relations—the Cold War. By focusing on the debates surrounding the Cold War itself, this article seeks to offer a way of thinking about the relationship between International History and International Relations theory that brings each into dialogue with the other, thereby enriching both.

International History and the Cold War: mimesis dimenvende?

For the diplomatic or international historian the study of the Cold War was inherently problematic. Investigations of the Cold War rested on at best half of the evidence. Historians had until recently no access to the Soviet side, let alone to the Chinese version of the Cold War.¹ The bulk of what was written concentrated on an Anglo-Saxon account. In terms of the historiography of the

¹ For an example of how the new evidence can successfully be used, see Odd Arne Westad, *Brothers in arms: the rise and fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance 1945–1963* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988).

Cold War, this narrowness was understandable as those historians or analysts seeking to come to terms with the Soviet story had to work primarily with US sources or at best with a mixture of Western archival sources, Soviet official sources and, for the few rather more adventurous, theories of Soviet behaviour. The dearth of Soviet sources in particular was always a concern for the historian bold enough to venture into the terrain of postwar Soviet foreign policy or International History. Some historians wisely issued caveats over the nature of the historical investigation and some dissuaded graduate students from venturing into such uncertain territory.

There were other problems with studying the Cold War before it ended. The Cold War was, after all, a continuing 'process', and shifts in the political, cultural and (perhaps specifically) the ideological climate of superpower confrontation necessarily affected historical endeavours. If all history is, as Benedetto Croce asserted, in fact contemporary history,² then the evolution of thinking among historians about the Cold War demonstrates this perfectly. To illustrate this, a brief tour of the historiography of the Cold War, that is traditionalism, revisionism and post-revisionism is useful.

The 'traditionalists' worked during the beginning of the postwar period, seeking to portray the Soviet Union as inherently expansionist and as the key source of the Cold War.³ It is not with hindsight in any way curious that the revisionists, led by William Appleman Williams but working against the backdrop of the US embroilment in Vietnam, should have sought to portray American foreign policy as 'guilty' of fuelling the Cold War through economically exploitative expansionist motives. The interpretation of the United States as a 'greedy colossus' searching endlessly for raw materials and foreign markets radically shifted the parameters of debate over American history in a period when many scholars were doubtful about the conduct of contemporary American diplomacy.⁴ Post-revisionism, a child of the 1970s, is equally a product of its time and the detente period. While not excusing Soviet behaviour, the post-revisionist emphasis upon the bureaucratic complexities of US foreign policy attempted to point to a more complex and multifaceted network of reasons for the Cold War.⁵ Even so, the preoccupation with assigning 'guilt' or responsibility for the origins of the Cold War remained a feature of many historical works. This rush to judge has not been removed by the end of the Cold War, and some of the finest Cold War scholars have not refrained from using 'new' evidence, however slight, to bolster earlier claims. Within the new evidence, however, there is reassurance for some that they had been correct all along in their assessments of Soviet policy. Recent revelations over Stalin's involvement in the origins of the Korean war for

² Benedetto Croce, *History as the story of liberty*, English trans., 1941, quoted in E. H. Carr, *What is history?* (London: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 15.

³ See for example George F. Kennan, *American diplomacy: 1900–1950* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1951) and *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961).

⁴ William Appleman Williams, *The tragedy of American diplomacy* (New York: World Publishing, 1962).

⁵ John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the origins of the Cold War, 1941–1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).

example provide the 'hard' evidence for some judgements made many years ago by analysts such as Malcolm Mackintosh.⁶ John Lewis Gaddis is in this respect probably among the more gallant of the International History community in openly acknowledging that some (but by no means all) of his earlier judgements about the Cold War were, in his own words, 'wrong'.⁷

The limited access to archives during most of the post-1945 period could and did, if not distort notions of the Cold War, certainly and understandably lead historians in certain directions. For example, the access to postwar British sources led some to proclaim an English school of Cold War history in which the Cold War could be understood not through the establishment of American hegemony but through the careful nurturing and tutoring of the Americans by the British in the harsh realities of the new post-Second World War order. While there is little doubt that British opinion was indeed influential in certain essential areas, not least in the German question,⁸ it is also the case that the stories from the British archives were only one part of a diplomatic and historic equation.

This is not to say that the new archival evidence is not compelling in its own way—it certainly is on the Soviet side. Not least is that the evidence that we have points to a rather fragile type of superpower. Evidence for example of Soviet military capabilities pointed to the flawed nature of certain Western assumptions about Soviet strength during the early Cold War period. Recent interviews from former members of the Communist Party, in addition to the data from the archives, point to an inherently more fragile and technologically challenged military power than most Western experts had believed. The state of discipline within the Red Army, the problems of morale, the need for constant internal vigilance and the struggle for technological innovation are all now part of a new story of the Soviet Union which emphasizes relative weaknesses not strengths.⁹

If the Soviet Union was indeed a rather fragile superpower with more limited capabilities than has been assumed, Soviet weakness was compounded by an inherently uncertain set of relationships within the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the wider communist world. We 'now know' of the tensions that dogged the Kremlin in its relationship with the satellite states. In many respects one of the more telling pieces of new evidence from the archives in Moscow indicates that the Soviet crushing of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was not so much the behaviour of a ruthless superpower as the reaction of a nervous power fearing a loss of control in eastern and central Europe and pressurized into action.¹⁰

⁶ Kathryn Weathersby, 'The Soviet role in the early phase of the Korean war: new documentary evidence', *Journal of American–East Asian Relations* 2: 4, pp. 425–58; J. M. Mackintosh, *Strategy and tactics of Soviet foreign policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 45–6.

⁷ John Lewis Gaddis, 'On starting all over again: a naïve approach to the study of the Cold War' in Odd Arne Westad, *Reviewing the Cold War: approaches, interpretations, theory* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 27–43.

⁸ Anne Deighton, *The impossible peace: Britain, the division of Germany, and the origins of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁹ Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed forces: the transnational movement to end the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, *Russia and the world* (London: Edward Arnold, 1998).

¹⁰ Mark Kramer, 'New sources on the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia', *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 2 (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Fall 1992).

The idea of some form of monolithic Soviet bloc has lost much of its resonance as scholars working throughout Russian and east and central European archives unearth new evidence, if not of simple resistance within eastern and central Europe, then at least of a more complex package of interactions between Moscow and the peripheries. Wilfried Loth, for example, has provided new accounts of the manner in which the East German leadership during the 1940s had their own views about paths to socialism, while the evidence from Poland, Hungary or China certainly does not point to a trouble-free relationship or alliance on the communist side.¹¹ Perhaps most importantly the new evidence alerts us to the importance of ideas and ideologies during the Cold War.

Studies of the new evidence from the archives, for example on the decision-making undertaken by Soviet leaders, underline the enduring importance of ideology in the making of Soviet foreign policy. Historians have long debated the influence of Marxism-Leninism on the making of Soviet foreign policy and the Cold War itself. Some have tended to dismiss ideology as an input into the making of the Soviet world view implicitly adopting a realist perception that pragmatism and interest not ideas dictated the Kremlin's external strategies. The new evidence from Soviet archives demonstrates that what we might term ideological considerations were indeed determining factors in Soviet conduct. Marxism-Leninism for example had a profound effect upon both the nature of regime and the perceptions and preoccupations of Russian leaders, justifying the rule of the Communist Party and the maintenance of an elite to lead society. This legitimating function meant that any modifications in ideological thinking could and did exercise a profound impact upon the domestic political system.

Certain sections of the Soviet leadership were at key points governed by a Marxist-Leninist notion that a crisis of capitalism could paralyse the Western powers and allow for some manoeuvring by the Kremlin. In terms of Third World strategy, at least some of the Soviet leadership continued to believe that socialism could provide a sustained and successful model of development, thus aiding Soviet ambitions. Yet new evidence also points clearly to disputes between Tito and Stalin on the future orientation of socialism in Europe and to a far more complex set of calculations behind China's relationship with Russia and indeed the external world.¹²

The point here is that ideologies, ideas and how states are organized matter. International historians have questioned the very notion of the state itself through a variety of work which examines questions such as how states organize themselves, how power is organized within the state, the sources of state power, and how these factors have impacted upon the making of foreign policy. Here,

¹¹ Vladimir Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: from Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Wilfried Loth, trans. Robert F. Hogg, *Stalin's unwanted child: the Soviet Union, the German question and the founding of the GDR* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

¹² See for example Shu Guang Zhang, 'China's strategic culture and the Cold War confrontations', in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Reviewing the Cold War*.

ideas and concepts widely used by social scientists such as bureaucratic politics and the use of psychology in decision-making have provided new avenues of exploration. Historians have always been aware of the complexity of understanding just what goes on in national foreign ministries and institutions. But traditionally, diplomatic historians have been somewhat guilty of collapsing the state into the archives and thereby equating the 'state' in a simplistic manner with the 'bureaucracy'. Indeed, this is true both for International History and some International Relations theories.

So, despite Gaddis's firmly ironic 'We now know'¹³ in the title of his most recent and impressive survey of the Cold War, there is also an awareness that while many important details of the story of the Cold War have been filled in, the revelations of the archives on their own do not bring us any closer to some of the bigger questions of the Cold War world. Not the least of these is why the USSR, given its inherent fragility, managed to survive and compete for so long but in the end collapsed. What role did ideas and ideologies play in the Cold War world? How did the Cold War affect those 'outside' its diplomatic framework, for example Soviet nuclear workers or women, and how should we 'now' understand the framework of the Cold War?

As this article goes on to suggest, works such as Fred Inglis's book *Cruel peace: living through the Cold War* and Abbott Gleason's *Totalitarianism: the inner history of the Cold War*¹⁴ represent new ways forward. For example, Gleason's book *Totalitarianism*, in which he traces the emergence, evolution and implications of a concept—totalitarianism—that clearly affected Western understanding of International History and International Relations, offers a rather different interpretation of International History than can be found simply within the archives or indeed through concentrating on diplomatic or state history.

It should, of course, be noted that some broadening of the agenda of both historical studies has already taken place. Zara Steiner, in an important article 'On writing international history: chaps, maps and much more', published in *International Affairs* in 1997, traced the evolution of International History as a discipline. She highlighted the way in which, for much of the twentieth century, diplomatic history has broadened out away from reliance upon the 'Annales' to a livelier and more vibrant subject concerned with more than the mere behaviour of statesmen (there were few women) and diplomats. More crucially Steiner also pointed to a greater willingness on the part of the international historian not only to broaden the historical 'canvas' but also to interact with other subjects and disciplines: most notably those of anthropology and sociology but also that of International Relations. For a number of years the respectable international historian would have had little truck with the 'goings on' in International Relations, even though many international historians had consciously or unconsciously adopted a form of realism as methodology, but, as Steiner argues,

¹³ John Lewis Gaddis, *We now know: rethinking Cold War history* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

¹⁴ Fred Inglis, *Cruel peace: living through the Cold War* (London: Aurum Press, 1995); and Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: the inner history of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

International History has in some respects developed out of all recognition from the style of diplomatic history.¹⁵

Cold War history has already benefited from the expansion of the menu of history. For example, the work of David Holloway on Stalin and the Soviet atomic programme, *Stalin and the bomb*, demonstrates just how important constant technological innovation was to those who made foreign policy during the Cold War. Holloway's work has also had another noticeable effect, which has been to alert us to the way in which technology or the demands of industrial 'progress' historically affected peoples and communities during the Cold War. As he explains, within the USSR itself, the demands of the Soviet nuclear programme had an immense impact on the lives of those engaged in the work of mining uranium and building the atomic programme. Many of those involved in the construction of Soviet nuclear plants, for example, were drawn from prison labour, and the conditions in which they lived, worked and died were brutal.¹⁶ Christopher Andrew has also unlocked a hidden side of the Cold War through various works on the intelligence services of both the United States and the Soviet Union. This 'hidden' side of the Cold War points to a broadening of the agenda of the international history of the Cold War.¹⁷

Yet, historians of the international can only benefit from a continuation of the broadening of such a trend and, more controversially, less reliance on wholly archival work. Indeed, despite Steiner's identification of a broadening in the historical agenda there is still little real dialogue, and this seems especially marked of the academic communities in the United States, between international historians and International Relations scholars. John Gaddis has described this estrangement as the 'balkanisation' effect: near neighbours that do not 'talk' to each other.¹⁸ This is, as the next section shows, not just because International History has in some respects been too narrow, but primarily because of the dominance of a certain type of theory within International Relations.

International Relations theory and the Cold War: hubris ascendant

So, if International History has had its own limitations in the study of the Cold War, International Relations theory in its mainstream form is equally problematic. The main problem is that International Relations theory since the 1970s has been preoccupied by the debate surrounding Waltz's theory of international politics which had emerged by the 1980s as the predominant theory. (The debate between neo-realism and the liberal internationalists subsumed theorizing

¹⁵ Zara Steiner, 'On writing international history: chaps, maps and much more', *International Affairs* 73: 3, 1997. See also Michael H. Hunt, 'The long crisis in US diplomatic history: coming to closure', *Diplomatic History* 16:1, winter 1992, pp. 115–42.

¹⁶ David Holloway, *Stalin and the bomb: the Soviet Union and atomic energy, 1939–1956* (London, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994). See also Michael H. Hunt, 'The long crisis in US diplomatic history: coming to closure', *Diplomatic History* 16:1, Winter 1992, pp. 115–42.

¹⁷ Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin archive: the KGB in Europe and the West* (London: Penguin, 1999).

¹⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, 'History, theory and common ground', *International Security* 22: 1, 1997, p. 75.

throughout the decade but neo-realism and liberal internationalists shared the methodology and the commitment to systemic analysis.) Waltz argues there have been two ways of conceptualizing the international system. The first he calls reductionist, which 'reduces' the properties of the system to the properties of one or more units of the system (the character of states for example). The alternative is what Waltz terms a truly systemic model where the properties of the system are wholly deducible from its own character. Once systemic theory is chosen, one of two ordering principles must be asserted—hierarchy, where there is clear structure of authority running from top to bottom, or anarchy, where no such structure exists. By definition thus, the international system is anarchic. This creates a neo-realist synthesis and a theory, which concentrates on the character of that system (anarchy) and on the only thing that neo-realists hold to matter in the context of anarchy—the relative capabilities of the unit. From this flows the characteristics of neo-realism, the inevitability of the balance of power and the irrelevance of the character of the units because of the need of all units to be, in Waltz's phrase, 'functionally undifferentiated'.¹⁹

This theory and its manifestations have been widely criticized after 1989 for the failure to explain adequately the balance of power during the Cold War and to predict the end of the Cold War. For example, it has been argued that one of the striking aspects of the new evidence from the archives is how obvious the asymmetry in power between the two sides of the Cold War actually was.²⁰ Of course there was, as we now recognize, a striking disparity in power between the two superpowers, but to accuse Waltz of missing this 'power differential' is in many respects to miss the point of Waltz's theories. Yes, the USSR was hugely inferior both economically and militarily, but this did not matter to those addicted to the study of neo-realism.

Criticism that neo-realism failed to predict an end to the Cold War system, let alone a peaceful one, should indeed be regarded as a major failing for those parts of the discipline that claimed a predictive ability. In itself though, it is not a major criticism of neo-realism. It is not valid because neo-realism does not seek to predict the behaviour of individual states at any given time, only the logic of individual relationships. So strictly speaking this criticism of failure to predict cannot, at least in terms of Waltz's views, be upheld.²¹ However, this does not mean that neo-realism can simply be 'let off the hook'. Any theory that purchases such immunity from criticism by retreating to the level of abstraction is vulnerable on other grounds: not least simply because when theories become so abstract and formulaic they become meaningless, and if they cannot tell us

¹⁹ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of international politics* (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1979).

²⁰ See for example William C. Wohlforth, 'A certain idea of science: how International Relations theory avoids reviewing the Cold War' in Odd Arne Westad, *Reviewing the Cold War*, pp. 126–49.

²¹ Kenneth Waltz, 'Reflections on theory of international politics: a response to my critics' in R. O. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and its critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 322–45. For criticism of neo-realism's inability to account for the end of the Cold War, see R. N. Lebow, 'The long peace: the end of the Cold War and the failure of realism' in R. N. Lebow and Thomas Riese-Kappen, eds, *International Relations theory and the end of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

about the Cold War it means they have nothing to offer in terms of explanation about the event that dominated global politics for the last fifty years.

William Wohlforth, one of the most influential of the younger American scholars working in Cold War studies, has argued that part of the problem with using International Relations theory, particularly the ideas of Waltz, to address the Cold War is that International Relations theorists simply do not care about the archives and that they would not in any case be persuaded by the new archival evidence.²² This point is correct but in many ways irrelevant. It is perfectly valid to point out that theorists do not take history as seriously as a diplomatic historian would like, but really such a criticism does not get us further than recognizing Waltz's theory as simply ahistorical. As long as neo-realism remains dominant in International Relations theory there cannot be a dialogue between International Relations theorists and international historians that will be of any great significance. This will not change whatever the evidence from the archives. In many ways, therefore, there is little point in berating International Relations theorists who subscribe to neo-realism and more to be gained from looking at recent trends within the broader field of International Relations theory—not least the contribution of those scholars such as John Ruggie and Alexander Wendt and the debate between rationalists and reflectivists that highlights the new opportunities which now exist for a dialogue beyond both Cold Wars.

Beyond the Cold Wars

The English school

Perhaps the most obvious example of a missed opportunity for a dialogue, despite a good deal of obvious intellectual sympathy, occurred in British academia within that group of UK-based academics usually known as the English school. It has had a persistent presence in British International Relations scholarship since the late 1950s and, although its popularity and appeal has waxed and waned, it has remained a continual force and is currently the focus of much attention.²³

The English school consisted predominantly of the members of the British Committee for the Study of International Relations, who were focused upon and were very open to the endeavour of history. Most of those engaged in this committee were trained as historians. Herbert Butterfield, Martin Wight and Desmond Williams ended up as or always were Professors of History. Martin Wight was of course Professor of History at the University of Sussex as well as an influential teacher at the LSE. Moreover, most of the best known works, such as Wights's *Power politics* and *Systems of states*, Hedley Bull and Adam Watson's *Expansion of international society* and Watson's *Evolution of international society* are all histories in some sense. Wight is famous for his perhaps over-quoted view

²² William C. Wohlforth, *op. cit.*

²³ Timothy Dunne, *Inventing international society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).

that that there is no international theory—and that it is historians who could best explain the nature of foreign policy and the working of the states system.²⁴

Given all of this then, one possible avenue for dialogue between International History and International Relations could at an earlier stage have been through this English school. Yet the opportunity was either ignored or not perceived. Again, the reason was methodological, but of a very different order. Wight had little time for social science in its positivist form or indeed at all, and in turn, most social scientists had and have very little time for Wight. Thus, the English school made little impact on international historians. They perceived Wight's work as lacking the necessary archival weight. There was also a basic hostility to both Wight and Butterfield because of the very strong theological overtones in their conceptions of history.²⁵

In addition, the very complexity of the English school militated against a dialogue. It is only recently, with the growth of historical sociology and the recognition that world history can inform studies of the international, that the pioneering work of the English school in comparative state systems has emerged as a possible bridge for historically minded international studies scholars and internationally minded historians.²⁶ Yet the interesting feature of the English school was that it placed history at the forefront of the study of International Relations and used it as a base from which it was possible to theorize about International Relations. In this respect, Wight et al. did not treat history as 'repeating decimal' in the way in which International Relations theory, particularly American International Relations theory, often does.

International History revisited

Many historians have of course long accepted the notion of an anarchic state system. Some, for example A. J. P. Taylor in *The struggle for the mastery of Europe*, worked within the idea of an anarchic international system but without using the language recognizable to International Relations. Kenneth Waltz in his work *Theory of international politics* in one sense systematized what some international historians such as A. J. P. Taylor had been saying for some time.²⁷ Historians such as Paul Schroeder are adding to our conception of how the international system might be interpreted. Although Schroeder is sceptical

²⁴ Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds, *Diplomatic investigations* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966); Martin Wight, *Power politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds (Leicester: Leicester University Press/London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978); *Systems of states* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977). See also Michael Nicholson, 'The enigma of Martin Wight' in *Review of International Studies* 7: 1, 1981.

²⁵ For the religious overtones in Butterfield's work, see Alberto R. Coll, *The wisdom of statecraft* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985). For Wight, see the introduction to *International theory: the three traditions* (Leicester: Leicester University Press/London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991).

²⁶ See Barry Buzan and Richard Little, *International systems in world history: remaking the study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Bruce Mazlish and Ralph Buultjens, eds, *Conceptualizing global history* (Oxford, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1993).

²⁷ A. J. P. Taylor, *The struggle for mastery in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954).

about certain facets of Waltz's neo-realism as a whole, he is convinced by specific parts of systemic theory and believes that international historians should test the ideas of Waltz against historical case-studies. In this sense, Schroeder's notion that states might take advantage of the international system has something, as noted below, in common with the agenda developed by constructivist theorists of International Relations, and in so far as Schroeder's work is rooted in elaborate historical processes, might be said to carry the argument further than International Relations theorists have so far done and point to the way in which theory and history can be successfully combined.²⁸

As Schroeder argues, there are a great deal of misunderstandings (perhaps wilful) of the tasks of the social scientist and those of the historian, especially the historian of the international. Political scientists for example sometimes claim that historians seek to understand and explain without theoretical rigour and that the historian is concerned with the details, the particular and the narrative.²⁹ The criticism often levelled by the social scientist at the historian is that he/she merely arranges dates and events in a chronological order, allowing the facts to speak for themselves. There are, not surprisingly, few historians who would or could agree with such a (mis)perception of their pursuits.

Partly though, as Schroeder points out, there is a problem with the way in which the use of 'narrative' has been narrowly and perhaps wilfully misinterpreted by some, if not all, political scientists. At least part of this problem is the fact that the idea of narrative in historical writing is complex and debated. Its use in Schroeder's own work for example is hardly similar to its use by Hayden White, who is basically concerned with the structures of historical consciousness and the forms of historical representation.³⁰ The key to narrative in his work is what he terms 'emplotment', that is the ordering of events into a meaningful structure. One International Relations scholar, David Campbell, uses White's notions in his recent book *National deconstruction: violence, identity and justice in Bosnia* to argue that the best way to confront any event such as the violence in the former Yugoslavia is to examine and disrupt the master narratives that have been used to explain or account for the event—those of the actors, those of the interveners and those of the observers, and to use this exercise to deconstruct the problematic ethno-political questions.³¹

In this context it is not whether one agrees with such a use of narrative methodologies but that such an approach inevitably foregrounds questions of historical knowledge and representation. The significance of this is that narrative is clearly a crucial aspect of historical work, but there are potential overlaps, as Campbell has demonstrated, between these historical concerns and at least some of the issues which are central to International Relations theorists.

²⁸ Paul W. Schroeder, *The transformation of European politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

²⁹ Paul W. Schroeder, 'History and International Relations theory: not use or abuse, but fit and misfit', *International Security* 22: 1, 1997, pp. 64–74.

³⁰ Hayden White, *Metahistory: the historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

³¹ David Campbell, *National deconstruction: violence and conflict and justice in Bosnia* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

This is simply to emphasize that there are overlaps which as yet have not been properly explored by either side and that historical debates such as those about narrative or about the International History of concepts—such as totalitarianism—are central to a number of different aspects of International Relations theory, not just systemic aspects.

During the Cold War, for example, Gleason's point was that totalitarianism had what we might term a prehistory as well as continuing implications, and that it is a term with resonance from at least the mid-1930s to the 1990s.³² Gleason's argument, if correct, suggests strongly that both the theory and the practice of International Relations depend at least in part on regime type and ideological justification for state behaviour. Thus here is a historical argument, which would produce serious doubts about Waltz's third image systemic approach. In this vein, the study of ideas or studies of intellectual history supplement more traditional archival history and provide quite clear links to the work of those engaged in International Relations theory. The question, though, is to which parts of International Relations theory we should turn.

In his presidential address to the International Studies Association in 1988, Robert Keohane referred to a growing body of International Relations theory he called 'reflectivism'.³³ Reflectivist International Relations theory is of course a highly variegated body of thought. For Keohane it represented a 'sociological' rather than an economic methodology (such as common to neo-realism) and included the work of scholars such as John Ruggie, Friedrich Kratochwill, Hayward Alker and Rick Ashley.³⁴ While it would be too adventurous to suggest that these academics shared much beyond a hostility to 'rationalist' methods, two particular areas of reflectivist³⁵ work offer the greatest possibilities for a dialogue with a broadened International History.

Constructivism and critical theory

Constructivism

This is perhaps the most protean contemporary body of thought within International Relations theory and offers a great deal for those interested in a dialogue with International History. Scholars such as John Ruggie and Alexander Wendt have pioneered this approach but it has in some respects already achieved the status of a third recognized approach with International Relations theory

³² Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism*. For an even 'longer' view of the origins of totalitarianism, see E. V. Anisimov, *The reforms of Peter the Great: progress through coercion in Russia* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1993).

³³ Robert Keohane, *International institutions and state power: essays in International Relations theory* (Oxford, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1989).

³⁴ See Friedrich Kratochwill and John Ruggie, 'International organization: a state of the art on the art of the state', *International Organization* 40: 4, 1986, pp. 753–75.

³⁵ For a discussion of what constitutes 'reflectivism', see Steve Smith, 'The discipline of International Relations: still an American social science?', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, forthcoming 2000.

(recognized that is by major figures within neo-realism and neo-liberalism). Its central insight is that the international system is a construction and that therefore it can, in certain respects, be 'reconstructed'. As Alexander Wendt expressed in the title of his best-known article 'Anarchy' (which, à la Waltz, he accepts as the defining characteristic of the states system), 'Anarchy is what states make of it'.³⁶ In other words, anarchy is not a structural property of the system, rather it is an intersubjective understanding that helps the system to work the way it does. But it can evolve and change and need not be fixed. This understanding thus opens up a possibility of historical studies which seek to account for how states make what they can of the international system.

Critical theories

The second area of so-called reflectivist work worth considering here is what is often called critical theory in International Relations, but this should be understood as excluding (in this context) post-structural work. Rather, it should be understood to include the work of scholars such as Andrew Linklater who has throughout his scholarly endeavours displayed a sensitivity to historical questions, especially to historically evolving practices of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' in the international system.³⁷

It is also worth pointing out that a good deal of work in both constructivism and within critical theory is more and more sensitive to various 'subaltern' areas of study increasingly popular in contemporary history. Of these, gender, the role of women, ethnicity and religion can serve as potential bridges between International Relations and International History.

For example, feminist theories of International Relations provide a very different set of actors and issues to those that were found in mainstream International Relations as it has been characterized throughout this article. The answer to the question 'Where are the women?' in International Relations unlocks an alternative series of debates about the nature not just of International Relations theory but also of International History. As Cynthia Enloe has demonstrated in a range of articles and books, by looking for women in international processes and locating their roles, we create a new and richer picture. In general terms, Enloe's work on gender alerts us to the issue of who or what we consider to be the important actors in both history and international relations. Specifically, and in the context of the Cold War, a new picture of diplomacy emerges. In her *Bananas, beaches and bases: making feminist sense of international politics*, Enloe argues that the notion that diplomacy 'worked was not just due to the endeavours of civil servants in foreign embassies but sometimes because of the skills of the unpaid diplomatic wives in providing an environment conducive to the smooth

³⁶ Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics', *International Organization* 46: 2, 1992, pp. 391-425.

³⁷ Andrew Linklater, *Beyond realism and Marxism: critical theory and International Relations* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990).

running of diplomatic exchanges'. As Enloe argues, sometimes diplomacy has succeeded not in the conference chamber but at the informal dinners and receptions that all too often are hosted (unpaid) by a diplomat's wife.³⁸

By looking at where women actually were in international politics, Enloe is not just interested in the diplomat's wife but in the prostitute servicing military bases or the low-grade workers in Third World economies. Feminist interpretations of international politics offer not only a rather different 'story' of Cold War politics but also challenge key concepts in International Relations. Not least of these are notions of power and what constituted the public sphere of the Cold War.

Conclusions

I have suggested above that a dialogue between two previously estranged communities, that of International Relations theory and International History, would be beneficial. I have argued that historians need to focus not just on the archives but on the bigger ideas, ideologies and theories of international behaviour. Here, of course, Steiner's robust defence of how much International History has already moved away from its narrow diplomatic focus is worth noting. Perhaps historians are indeed beginning to see woods and not just trees. Yet a dialogue with International Relations theory is in many ways imperative if we are to understand the bigger questions of the Cold War. While we might 'now know' in greater detail the story, or some of the diplomatic stories of the Cold War, there is still a need to examine ideas, ideologies and how the international system operated during the last fifty years.

How might such a dialogue take place? Partly, as this article has suggested, this can be achieved through utilizing certain parts of International Relations theory. Schroeder's work is one clear example of a mix of International History and International Relations theory. The English school too has always placed history (albeit a rather narrow conception of history) at the front of its investigations. This represents one avenue for advancement. Constructivist approaches offer another. In so far as constructivists see the international system as an intersubjective construction, then the history of its construction and the ways in which actors such as the Soviet Union have perceived it become an essential part of reflective theorizing.

Where could such a dialogue evolve? Given the fact that at the moment American International Relations theory is so heavily positivistic,³⁹ it is likely that such a dialogue would only take place outside the citadels of American International Relations. This is not to dismiss the possibilities of a dialogue within the American academic community but to recognize that part of what

³⁸ Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, beaches and bases: making feminist sense of international politics* (London: Pandora, 1989) and *The morning after: sexual politics at the end of the Cold War* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

³⁹ See Steve Smith, 'The discipline of International Relations: still an American social science?'

has traditionally militated against any significant dialogue between historians and theorists has been the heavily rationalistic methodologies of International Relations theory in the United States. The British academic community therefore might be better placed to take such a dialogue forward.

One key site for this dialogue can be found in the renewed interest in the English school, which has been spearheaded in very different ways, by Andrew Linklater on the one hand and by Barry Buzan on the other. However, this does not exhaust the possibilities. If Chris Brown and Nick Rengger are correct to see international political theory as, in many respects, a British social science, then the opportunities for dialogue with political thought and intellectual and cultural history are very real as well.⁴⁰ Wherever such a dialogue flourishes initially, such a recasting of the relationship between International Relations theory and International History is bound to benefit both communities. A new English school could move beyond the academic cold war and rethink the 'real' Cold War.

⁴⁰ Chris Brown, 'International political theory—a British social science?', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 2:1, April 2000, pp. 114–32.