International Relations and Military Sciences

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Abstract

For all who consider war a political instrument it should be clear that the role and missions of armed forces can only be properly understood in the context of international relations whereby military professionals must have a solid understanding of this subject. This chapter reaches out to students at military and civilian educational institutions and offers a big-picture introduction to the academic field of International Relations (IR) with emphasis on military matters. It does so by presenting four major debates that highlight key questions and divergent theories and approaches that have shaped this field. The second part of the chapter relates these debates to IR's scientific foundation in a way that can inspire current academic endeavors to develop the military sciences.

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Introduction

In the section "War Is an Instrument of Policy" of Carl von Clausewitz seminal work from 1832, the Prussian officer famously makes the point:

> [W]ar is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means. . . war cannot be divorced from political life; and whenever this occurs in our thinking about war, the many links that connect the two elements are destroyed and we are left with something pointless and devoid of sense. (1989, p. 605)

The contemporary officer Simpson (2012) adds that knowing how to achieve political outcomes by military means is a primary task not only for senior but also for junior officers. In the same vein, former US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates (2011) coined contemporary wars with the term "Captains' wars" to describe the responsibility put on lower ranks to make decisions "of higher and higher degrees of consequence and complexity." It follows from such lines of reasoning that military officers and other professionals concerned with the conduct of war must understand politics.

In the context of military sciences this chapter offers a "big picture" introduction to the academic discipline of International Relations (IR). This is a sub-field of political science oriented more towards relations between, than within, states. Traditionally, IR also draws from the academic fields of history, philosophy, and international law and has increasingly fertilized its inquiries with insights from many other disciplines. In addition, the chapter clarifies IR's scientific foundation by addressing cardinal philosophy-of-science questions. The chapter's overall argument and hence its structure is visualized in Table 1 inspired by Wæver (1996, p. 157):

The argument is divided in two parts. Elaborating on Table 1's top horizontal row, the first part presents four major debates that have shaped IR in its 100-years history. This portrayal of the discipline is common (Wæver 1996; Jackson and Sørensen

Table 1 An overview of four major IR debates' emphasis on four different philosophy-of-science branches. High numbers of "x" indicates a branch's relevance in a debate. For a general introduction to philosophy of science and the specific terms listed in Table 1's left column see Sookermany ("▶ Philosophy of Military Sciences" in this volume)

	1st IR debate	2nd IR debate	3rd IR debate	4th IR debate
Teleology	xxx	xx	x	
Ontology	x	x	xxx	x
Epistemology	x	xx		xxx
Methodology		xxx		xx

2007), but not uncontroversial (Schmidt 2012). It is chosen here to highlight some defining features of the discipline and to introduce major divergences that continue to surface in contemporary IR discussions. Clearly, multiple scholars have added a host of nuances to these debates, but to provide an overview this chapter singles in on their protagonists and on a few of their crucial points of disputes that have come to define different strands of IR. Addressing Table 1's left column, the second part of the chapter relates these four IR debates to four philosophy-of-science branches and suggests how the findings may inspire further developments in the military sciences. Clearly, this brief chapter cannot provide a comprehensive introduction to all issues, but it establishes an overview to identify scholarly perspectives of particular interest that readers may explore further.

Three initial clarifications on terminology are useful. First, it may be confusing that IR scholars introduced in this chapter use different notions to refer to the same phenomenon, as illustrated by the terms "international relations" and "international politics." However, British-inspired IR scholars tend to use the former term, while the latter is frequently used in the USA. Second, sometimes scholars use the same terms to refer to the subject matter, i.e., the actors and topics studied – normally indicated with lower cases – and at other times to the academic discipline – normally with the first letters in upper cases. To be consistent, this chapter applies the abbreviation IR to refer to the discipline. Finally, the terms "schools of thought" and "theory" are here used interchangeably, although the former is generally conceived as a broader term.

Four Major IR Debates

To begin with, IR is a relatively young academic discipline institutionally established only in 1919 (Evans and Newnham 1998, p. 275). Obviously, war, international cooperation, and related topics had been scrutinized in the past by among others military officers like the Athenian Thucydides (460–400 BC), his contemporary Chinese Sun Tzu, and Clausewitz (1780–1831), and by diplomats like political philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) from what is now Italy and the Dutch lawyer Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) to name but a few. The British political philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and the Prussian moral philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) also studied war and proposed how it could be abolished. Such scholars' reflections form part of the large arsenal of ideas from which contemporary IR scholars draw. Their nationality is mentioned to highlight that almost all the above were Europeans, and to make the point that IR remains a western-dominated discipline (Acharya and Buzan 2017).

World War I's devasting effects on people across the globe drove many to join forces under the motto: "Never again." Taking US President Woodrow Wilson's (1856–1924) lead countries like Great Britain, France, and Italy sought new and more peaceful forms of international cooperation. These four major powers along with some 23 other states met at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, and the following year established the League of Nations with the aim of promoting

collective security based on the idea that if one state attacked another, all other states should join forces against the aggressor. Soon Great Britain, the US and Germany established university departments and research institutes of international affairs to support this broad effort with academic insights.

First IR Debate: Utopia and Realism

At the eve of World War II, Edward Hallett Carr (1892–1982) opened the first major IR debate with a devastating attack on Alfred Zimmern (1879–1957) and likeminded "utopians" – a catch-all label Carr used to describe most IR scholars during the interwar period. This term is adopted here only because it simplifies the presentation of the debate but implies no normative judgment. He criticized utopians for failing to explain why wars occur and for believing institutions could create peace.

The utopians' idea that states can curb power politics by means of international institutions was based on the flawed assumption that states will agree to refrain from using war as an instrument of policy, Carr argued. No such harmony of interests exists between states. On the contrary, many have benefitted from war, notably Great Britain and the USA. Others, like Poland, Finland, and Czechoslovakia, owed their independence to World War I. Indeed, Germany's preparations for and resort to war in the 1930s can be seen, at least partly, as an expression of the lessons Germans drew from the 1864–1871 wars that unified them as a people within one major state. And while also Germany suffered heavily from World War I, they primarily attributed this to the fact that they lost it (Carr 2001, p. 50).

Carr was also critical of the utopian notion that international peace can rest on a principle to seek "the greatest good of the greatest number" (2001, p. 42). It works in liberal domestic politics, when law-enforcement measures spur minorities to submit their interests to that of the majority. At the international level, however, no similar measures, short of war, exist to coerce a state to accept submission. Utopians put the cart before the horse when they assume that states driven by a sense of moral duty will be compliant. In international affairs morality is a function of politics, not the other way around. States pursue political interests ultimately by means of war: "the ruler rules because he is the stronger, and the ruled submit because they are the weaker" (Carr 2001, p. 42).

However, Carr found the utopian approach to IR natural. Just like medical science was created to promote health and the science of engineering was created to improve constructions, IR too was created for a purpose: the desire to abolish war. However, so far scholars had wished away power:

> Like other infant sciences, the science of international politics has been markedly and frankly utopian. It has been in the initial stage in which wishing prevails over thinking, generalization over observation, and in which little attempt is made at a critical analysis of existing facts or available means. (Carr 2001, p. 8)

With another world war in the making, Carr argued, it was time for the academic discipline to move on: "[I]n the development of a science, [what] follows the breakdown of its first visionary projects, and marks the end of its specifically utopian period, is commonly called realism" (2001, pp. 9–10). He saw this as "a necessary corrective to the exuberance of utopianism" (2001, p. 10) and mobilized interest for "realism" as a new school of thought, which has since dominated IR (see "► Realist International Relations Theory and the Military" by Schmidt in this volume). Thus, the term "realism" does not necessarily refer to theories that describes the world as it "really is." The term can be seen as a sale pitch some scholars have chosen to present their ideas as providing more correct explanations of international affairs. Indeed, other scholars find realism unrealistic (Oren 2009).

Note that in contrast to many later realists Carr valued utopian ideas because they can "counteract the barrenness of realism... Utopia and reality are thus the two facets of political science. Sound political thought and sound political life will be found only where both have their place" (2001, p. 10).

Second IR Debate: Traditional Versus Scientific Methods

The second major debate began in the 1950s and primarily concerns how one should study international affairs. The dispute is prominently illustrated in Morton A. Kaplan's (1921–2017) 1966 article "The New Great Debate: Traditionalism vs. Science in International Relations" which responded to Hedley Bull's (1932–1985) recent critique. Bull lamented that methodologies from the natural sciences were being introduced into IR by Kaplan and likeminded scholars, calling them "as remote from the substance of international politics as the inmates of a Victorian nunnery were from the study of sex" (Bull 1966, p. 366). Be that as it may, the new methods soon dominated the academic field, particularly in the USA, and still do.

"Traditionalism" refers to classical methods used by Machiavelli, Carr, and Bull, among others, while the scientific approach is often associated with the works of Kaplan and Thomas C. Schelling (1921–2016). As above, these terms are adopted here only for presentational purposes. It shall be noted that Bull (1966, p. 362) stressed that the term "scientific" – borrowed from the field of natural sciences – captures the respective scholar's aspiration rather than their performance.

According to Bull the substance of international politics can be grasped by studying questions like: Which actors, i.e. states, mankind, or others, are particularly important in international relations? Do norms exist between such collectives of actors to an extent they form a society that moderates their behavior? If so, what kind of norms regulate war? Can wars be legitimate for instance on humanitarian grounds? Traditionalists approach such questions with an understanding that international relations, as a subject matter, is fundamentally different from those found in the physical world. IR cannot uncover natural laws and universal theories of the kinds developed in the natural sciences. One reason is that international affairs comprise an unmanageable number of variables, such as actors, dynamics, and

norms, that cannot be studied with natural-science methods like controlled experiments in closed laboratories. Moreover, IR's subject matters are, in Bull's formulation, "changing before our eyes and slipping between our fingers even as we try to categorize it" (1966, p. 369). Hence, traditionalists appreciate their field of study as normative and inconclusive and have no time for methods requiring proof and measurement.

Traditionalists emphasize that they study subjects, i.e., human beings and social groups, while the natural scientists primarily study objects. These subjects are influenced, if only in ever so minor and indirect ways, by the very theories IR scholars have developed in the past. For instance, when government officials shape and formulate nuclear policies they may be influenced by ideas and terms developed by scholars writing on balance-of-terror theory. Accordingly, any effort to capture such abstract and political relations in causal terms adopted from the natural sciences, with independent and dependent variables, will be misguided. Instead, traditionalists tend to base their analysis on methodologies adopted notably from political science, history, philosophy, and law. Such methods rely on scholars' judgments to select factors for studies, and to formulate and test hypotheses. Crucially, such judgments cannot be but subjective. Hence, traditionalists do not see their work as a contribution to a cumulative body of knowledge – like natural scientists adding stones to the mountain of science so to speak – but as part of a broad debate about fundamental questions in which they "feel impelled to build their own houses of theory from the foundations up" (Bull 1966, p. 370).

Kaplan took issue with these traditionalist methodologies. To him they offered little more than:

> [a] great mass of detail to which absurdly broad and often falsifiable generalizations are applied. . . indiscriminately over enormous stretches of time and space. They are sufficiently loosely stated so that almost no event can be inconsistent with them. (1966, p. 15)

As an alternative he advocated a scientific methodological approach to develop a body of IR theories that more precisely explained and predicted human behavior. Kaplan argued: "Unless scientific [methodological] procedures are followed, to the extent the subject matter permits, intuitions cannot be falsified, and science cannot grow" (1966, p. 4). He favored systemic approaches and pointed to airplanes' automatic pilots and computer games as evidence. They predict human behavior with a high degree of certainty by processing data of independent and dependent variables recorded from actions of pilots and expert players in multiple situations. The empirical findings are formulated as "if-then" data based on a causal logic and methodological procedures similar to those used in the natural sciences. Other social sciences, like economics, had already adopted such methods and Kaplan (1966, pp. 2–3) found them equally useful to IR.

Kaplan illustrated the scientific methods' utility with reference to his own models that aimed to explain and predict actors' behavior in balance-of-power systems. To this end he computed datasets of independent variables, like military capabilities and economic assets, and dependent variables, such as the number and types of states in

different systems. He formulated hypotheses of the ways these variables may relate, filled in historical data for both types of variables, tested the hypotheses and compared the findings. On that basis he concluded that balance-of-power systems drive alliances to be of short duration and wars to be fought with limited objectives, and further that a bipolar balance-of-power system is less likely to reinforce some parts of international law (Kaplan 1966, pp. 8–9).

Bull (1966, pp. 371–2) was not impressed. He held Kaplan's model offered little new knowledge, failed to account for important balance-of-power considerations, and gave no reason to believe the selected variables were particularly relevant. Bull pointed to the paradox that while Kaplan "aspire[s] to a theory . . . based either upon logic or mathematical proof, or upon strict, empirical procedures of verification," his conclusions are based on guesswork more arbitrary than the traditional approach would approve of (1966, p. 362). Bull generally criticizes the use of models in IR for directing attention away from the empirical field of study, and towards a few variables selected on questionable assumptions. As a result, students are less likely to develop a sense of the substance and dynamics in international relations and will become ill-equipped to decide on the moral dilemmas in world politics (Bull 1966, p. 368).

In addition, the validity of Kaplan's explanations and predictions relies on the quality of the historical data he uses. In 1961, Carr pointed to this Achilles-heel of the scientific approach when he asked: What is a historical fact? He warned against treating historical facts as natural scientists treat their data. One reason is natural scientists study material things that "impinge on the observer from out-side and are independent of his consciousness" (Carr 2018, p. 9). However, IR's subject matters are the ideas and behavior of human beings, which involves different and more extensive interpretation. Since scholars decide what counts as historical facts these facts cannot be objective. He offers an example: millions have crossed the Rubicon, the river some 300 kilometers north of Rome, yet of all of these history only records Caesar's crossing on the 10 January 49 BC on his way to seize power in Rome. The reason, Carr suggests, is that this specific crossing led to the rise of the Roman Empire. So, while a natural scientist may start out from a set of objective facts and draw conclusions based on that, IR scholars should be aware that "the historian is engaged on a continuous process of molding his facts to his interpretation and his interpretation to his facts" (Carr 2018, p. 29). If Carr is right, on which facts can scientific IR scholars rely to construct theories and models?

Third IR Debate: The Inter-Paradigm Debate

In the 1970s two alternative schools of thought – i.e., liberalism and structuralism, which will be introduced shortly – challenged realism's dominant position in IR. They offered radically different views on key theoretical features, such as the international systems, the relevance of different kinds of actors, and the dynamics and relations between them:

> Each [school] begins their analysis from a particular assumption that determines the kind of questions they ask, and therefore the answers they find. They are like three toy trains on separate tracks travelling from different starting-points and ending at different (pre-determined) destinations, and never crossing each other's path. (Strange 1988, p. 16)

Moreover, since the three schools of thought described different realities there was no way to test which was valid. IR's credibility and relevance for policy seemed in jeopardy.

Michael Banks (1985) offered some clarity by framing the situation in the IR-discipline as an inter-paradigm debate. The concept of paradigm was borrowed from the philosopher of science Thomas S. Kuhn's seminal theory about knowledge in the natural sciences. He was critical of the dominant idea that scientific knowledge develops in a cumulative manner. Rather, he argues, scholarly communities share a coherent set of ideas and assumptions about their field of study, i.e. paradigms, based on which they carry out research on more specific topics in a problem-solving manner. A paradigm can last several centuries but will eventually be replaced by another as scientists encounter unacceptable amounts of empirical findings that contradict the dominant paradigm. His argument may be illustrated with Nicolaus Copernicus' (1473–1543) paradigm of the solar system, which replaced Claudius Ptolemy's (100–170) geocentric paradigm, as astronomers found it increasingly difficult to theorize about planets' trajectory movements based on Ptolemy's model. This model put the Earth at the center of the planetary system, whereas Copernicus had the sun at the center of his paradigm.

Banks (1985, p. 9) argues that IR's three abovementioned schools of thought could be seen as paradigms. Realism was broadly introduced in the first debate above. Liberalism – which Banks refers to as pluralism – comprises several theories, including utopianism, which have reasonable common assumptions and explanations (see "► Liberal International Relations Theory and the Military" by Silverstone in this volume). Structuralism originates from the historical materialism of Karl Marx (1818–1883), arguing that major political changes in the history of mankind involves class struggles caused by economic and technological changes as illustrated by the changes from feudal to capitalist political system in the West during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Banks 1985, p. 17). From this outlook, the sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein (1930–2019) offers to IR the notion "world system," which he defines as a "unit with a single division of labor and multiple cultural systems" (quoted in Wæver 1992, p. 110). This he argues, makes many people poor and a few very rich.

Banks highlights the three IR paradigms' fundamentally different assumptions. Realists focus on states as unitary actors that by means of military force get their way, or are pushed aside, like billiard-balls in an international system no one controls. Liberalists widen the scope of relevant actors to include states but also international institutions, markets, multinational companies, ethnic groups, individuals, and others. Such actors operate in an international "cobweb" of numerous crisscrossing relationships driven by a host of social dynamics. Structuralists picture the global system as a multiheaded octopus with powerful tentacles constantly

Table 2 Summarizing Banks' (1985) presentation of three distinct IR paradigms

	Realism	Liberalism	Structuralism
System-image	Anarchy	Cobweb	Octopus
Actors	States	Various kinds	Classes
Dynamics	Military force	Complex social movements	Political economy
IR explains	States' power politics	International integration	Global contrasts between rich and poor

extracting wealth from weak peripheries toward the powerful centers. The differences may be visualized in Table 2.

Two key points from Bank's portrayal of the third debate are particularly useful for students of international relations. First, paradigms are analytical frameworks that offer different appreciations of international affairs (Banks 1985, p. 20). This may be illustrated with the notion "security": Realism can be used to analyze security in terms of power politics; liberalism can help understand how international integration and institutions may enhance security; and structuralism broadens to concept of security to include for instance survival from poverty.

The other key point is Banks' notion of theory. He starts out from the presumption that IR is about understanding the international system as a whole. This seems an overwhelming task because it potentially includes billions of people who make a living in a multitude of ways, who are divided into almost 200 differently organized sovereign states, who have common or conflicting interests, and much more. Scholars aim to portray this complex reality in a meaningful way by simplifying it, without distorting it. Banks clarifies: "To do this is to theorize. All discussion of world affairs rests upon assumptions about which things are the ones that really matter" (1985, p. 7). He continues:

> It is naive and superficial to try to discuss IR solely on the basis of "the facts"... because they fit a concept, the concept fits a theory and the theory fits an underlying view of the world... Theory consists of both analysis and synthesis. To analyse is to unravel, to separate the strands, or to take to pieces. To synthesize is to reassemble, to piece together the parts in such a way as to compose a whole that makes sense. General theory in IR, then, consists of dividing the human race into sections, noting the significant properties of each, examining the relationships between them, and describing the patterns formed by the relationships. (1985, pp. 7–8)

This understanding of theory and theorizing reflects a widely used scholarly practice which was challenged in the next debate.

Fourth IR Debate: Rationalism Versus Reflectivism

In the 1980s Robert O. Keohane discerned a fourth debate between what he termed a rationalist and a reflectivist IR approach – terms which again are adopted here for presentational purposes only. They entertained different views, among others about whether objective knowledge exists and about the foundations upon which they based their knowledge.

The rationalist research agenda is found in both neoliberalism and neorealism as reflected most prominently in the works of, respectively, Keohane and Kenneth Waltz (1924–2013). Although their theoretical outlooks differ, these scholars share the assumption that substantive rationality – described as "behavior that can be adjudged objectively to be optimally adapted to the situation" (Keohane 1988, p. 381) – is a useful analytical tool. Its utility may be illustrated with Keohane's own research agenda, which sets out to explain how international institutions, like NATO, influence states' behavior and cooperation. To this end, neoliberals study "the purposive behavior of relatively small number of actors engaged in strategic bargaining" (Keohane 1988, p. 379). Focusing on a limited number of variables and assuming actors behave rationally, scholars propose under which conditions such actors cooperate and how they can benefit from international institutions. Keohane is no advocate of law-like theories but still encourages scholars to undertake empirical research in order "to develop a cumulative verifiable knowledge . . . [and] conditional, context-specific generalizations" (1988, pp. 379–380).

In contrast, the reflectivist IR approach emphasizes human reflection, interpretation, and meaning in world politics. Referring to Richard K. Ashley, Friedrich Kratochwil, and John G. Ruggie, Keohane argues: "To them meaning comes prior to behavior and is therefore as important to study" (1988, p. 381).

Like Bull in the second IR debate, reflectivists oppose using natural sciences as an ideal for the study of international affairs. Ashley (1984) is particularly critical to rationalists who build theory on the assumption that actors are rational. This, he argues, is a flawed idea based on a positivist understanding of science that he sums up in a few key points. First, positivism holds that science shall offer objective knowledge about reality. It unfolds its objects of studies by identifying structures, key variables, and causal relations between them. Second, positivism requires that science provides knowledge that allows people to make predictions and take efficient action to achieve desired outcomes. Third, positivism demands that theories and scientific hypotheses are tested in empirical studies. By adopting this positivist understanding of science, it follows that rationalists must exclude from the analysis human subjectivity in the sense of meaning, perceptions, values, and norms. Instead, rationalists assume that social actors, primarily states and larger social groups, act in a purposive-rational way that can be objectively understood; and that the actors do so in contexts understood as a set of objective external constraints. Accordingly, when rationalists undertake case studies their task is to objectively identify the most relevant external constraints, actors' pregiven ends and their rationality. Based on such data rationalists calculate, uncover causal relations, explain, and predict behavior (Ashley 1984).

In contrast Ashley finds that international relations must be studied with approaches fundamentally different from those used in the natural sciences. To him the difference is not primarily methodological, as Bull argued, but more profoundly a question of epistemology – of what counts as knowledge. Ashley (1984, pp. 249–252) strongly advocates IR to move beyond positivism and instead draw from recent theoretical developments in the social sciences. From these ideas "Poststructuralism" emerged as a new theoretical perspective and the major opponent to its mainstream schools of thought (see "▶ Poststructuralism in International Relations: Discourse and the Military" by Baumann in this volume).

Kratochwil and Ruggie (1986) also criticized the underlying positivism of rationalism and, more specifically, neoliberals' idea that international institutions can be studied as bargains between rational egoists in situations defined by a set of objective and constraining variables. This approach falls short of understanding why actors cooperate the way they do, because it cannot account for the norms, and meanings formed by states and international institutions. Subjects are treated as objects, and norms are treated as variables. This is a mistake since "[t]he impact of norms within international regimes is not a passive process, which can be ascertained analogously to that of Newtonian laws governing the collision of two bodies" (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986, p. 768). In even more blunt terms: norms do not cause effects "in the sense that a bullet through the heart causes death" (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986, p. 767). Norms are intersubjective – i.e., they exist between subjects – and can inspire, guide, and express mutual expectations. Norms can also be ignored, but this does not necessarily invalidate them, rather their standing will be influenced by other actors' reactions to such violations. From this outlook Kratochwil and Ruggie present international affairs as a social fabric and use interpretative approaches to clarify the communicative functions of norms and ideas.

Keohane appreciates the reflectivist critique as grounded in the philosophy of science but warns against continued elaborations "about epistemological and ontological issues in the abstract" (1988, p. 382). Instead, he invites his opponents to join forces, combine insights, and develop a third IR approach. Some scholars took up on that invitation and eventually established Social Constructivism as a new mainstream IR school of thought, which they presented as a middle ground between rationalists and reflectivists approaches (see Agius' "▶ Social Constructivist International Relations and the Military" here).

Philosophy-of-Science Questions to IR and Military Sciences

Sookermany, editor-in-chief of this handbook, argues that despite deep historical roots military sciences remain relatively undefined, and he calls for scholarly efforts to improve this shortcoming. Supporting this endeavor the purpose of the last part of the chapter is to draw from scholarly experiences in the field of IR to inspire developments in the embryonic academic discipline of military sciences. He proposes to begin by asking basic philosophy-of-science questions – notably from its four branches of teleology, ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Since their

content is a source of controversy, this chapter applies his account of the branches summed up in the four respective questions: what is the purpose of the academic discipline? what is the discipline's subject matter? what counts as knowledge in the discipline? and, how shall scholars in the discipline study the subject matter? (see Sookermany's "► Philosophy of Military Sciences" in this volume). These questions are now addressed in turn.

What Is the Purpose of the Academic Discipline?

Teleology is a branch of philosophy of science concerned with the purpose of a subject matter. Here, it will be conceived along Carr's slightly different lines to clarify prominent IR scholars' divergent and often implicit views on the discipline's purpose. Carr clearly disagreed with the first generation of scholars' academic motivation to abolish war, but he also found it natural that: "The initial stage of aspiration towards an end is an essential foundation of human thinking. The wish is father to the thought. Teleology precedes analysis" (2001, p. 8). In 1939, his main goal was to reorient the discipline to include theorizing on power politics.

Arguably teleological considerations were part of all the abovementioned debates and influenced by their contemporary geo-political contexts. The emergence of nuclear weapons and the Cold War spurred particularly US policymakers to engage academic communities in the broad effort to avoid a nuclear world war. In this context the purposes of Kaplan and other scientists in the second debate was to establish IR as a scientific discipline that could explain and predict international dynamics, while traditionalists like Bull aspired to understand the same dynamics and the moral dilemmas they involved. During the third debate, scholars challenged realism's dominant position in the discipline. As reflected in the subtitle to Keohane and Joseph S. Nye's principal liberal work *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (1977) they aimed to provide alternative paradigms to better explain different political dynamics. US policymakers, largely informed by the realist school of thought after World War II, increasingly went to liberals for guidance during the 1970s. This political reorientation at that point in time, according to Wæver (1992, p. 82), can be explained by a militarily less tense Cold War, the shortcomings of US military force in the Vietnam War, and Washington's desire to lead the world by means other than military. Reflectivists' purpose in the fourth debate may be seen as an effort to align IR with developments in other social sciences. An important reason why they gained momentum may have been the shortcomings of rationalist approaches to make sense of the fundamental geo-political alterations following the "New World Order" proclaimed by the Soviet Union's and the United States' respective presidents in the late 1980s.

Using IR's experiences to answer the initial and simple teleological question "What is the purpose of the academic discipline?" suggests that such purposes change and that they change according to context in which they exist. Hence, in the further development of military sciences scholars may be inspired to explore how and why the purposes of military sciences have changed over time and in different

regions of the world. Moreover, Cox's critical position that "[t]heory is always for some one, and for some purpose" (1981, p. 128) should inspire scholars to follow up on their findings by reflecting on which political interests, societal dynamics, and academic fashions have shaped these alterations.

What Is the Discipline's Subject Matter?

The ontological philosophy-of-science perspective orients attention to the nature of the discipline's subject matter. So, what is international relations? There is no clear answer to that question either. The third debate alone offered three radically different answers. To briefly recapitulate: According to realists international relations is, a power struggle between states in an anarchic international system; according to liberalists it is a cobweb of competitive and cooperative relations between innumerable actors in economic and other fields; and according to structuralists international relations is driven by global structures that reinforce unjust relations between the world's *have* and *have-nots*. The fourth debate questioned whether IR's field of inquiry *is* something in any objective sense of the term. Some reflectivists argue international relations are socially constructed phenomena – i.e., that the field's meanings vary with what subjects make of it from one era to another and from one area of the world to another.

Using these academic experiences to develop the military sciences inspire to reflect on which paradigms different scholars draw from when they explain what the military *is* and to compare competing paradigms. Further, attention can be given to whether scholars portray the military primarily in objective terms or as a socially constructed phenomenon? The answers, whether implicit or explicit, to these questions matter, because they shape understandings of the military. In this manner ontological questions can be used as analytical tools to clarify assumptions about what military sciences study.

What Counts as Knowledge in the Discipline?

The epistemological perspective focus on questions like: How can one know? What counts as knowledge? Such epistemological considerations were part of Carr's efforts to balance the discipline's wishful thinking with historical analysis, and of Bull's later warning against adopting natural sciences ideals in IR which would limit the scope of valid knowledge to what could be mathematically proven or deduced from logic. Should such a view prevail, he argued, the academic discipline will offer only a poor and remote understanding of international relations. Epistemology was even more central during the fourth debate. Here reflectivists criticized rationalists for presuming that international relations exist in an objective sense and that it is a scholarly task to provide objective knowledge about causal relations between variables in that field of study. Rather, to properly understand international relations

reflectivists advocate approaches that scrutinize the meaning-contexts in which practices of international relations come into being.

Moreover, asking: what counts as knowledge? directs attention to the theories and approaches being used and begs the question: what is theory? This chapter illustrates that IR scholars disagree also on this point. To Kaplan, theory is a statement about law-like causal relations between variables that explain and predict actors' behavior, much like Newtonian mechanics offer universal laws about objects: "if A, then B." Accordingly, IR scholars shall strive to provide objective knowledge upon which other scholars can build. Bull disagreed: No such cumulative theoretical foundation exists in IR. Scholars can learn from each other but must build their own theories from the foundation up. Banks takes a different view, however. Scholarly communities cluster around and generate knowledge within paradigms. Banks seems to assume, that although paradigms highlight different aspects of world politics, scholars select their empirical evidence from the same objective reality. In the same vein Waltz presents theory as a picture, mentally formed to depict the organization of a system and its parts. Yet, he stresses that "no one can ever say that it is *the* reality. . .we can never be sure that a good theory will not be replaced by a better one" (Waltz 1979, p. 9). Still, he works on the assumption that international relations objectively exist.

Reflectivists take issue with that assumption. They acknowledge the world exists but note that people cannot make sense of it without language and traditions of interpretation (Campbell 1992, p. 69). And because researchers cannot access "reality" directly, IR cannot provide objective accounts, but only interpretations, of "reality." Such considerations have ethical dimensions. If the reflectivists are right, IR scholars cannot be objective. Scholars portray the field of international relations in the way they theorize about it. Thus, a common poststructuralist study would analyze how dominant discourses on a particular topic have come into being, with what effects, and whose interest they serve.

Asking what counts as knowledge in military sciences may reveal why such professional knowledge is little developed in academic terms. To this end, experiences from IR, including those briefly introduced here, offer some initial guidance to different ways this question can be explored.

How Shall Scholars in the Discipline Study the Subject Matter?

Finally, methodology is the philosophy-of-science branch reflecting on the many choices scholars make in the process of doing a particular study and the implications these choices will have for the findings. It addresses questions such as: How shall scholars study the subject matter? What considerations could, or should, scholars make when deciding how to gain new knowledge?

These questions were at the heart of the second debate spurred by the challenge from the self-labelled scientists. Aspiring to generate universally valid knowledge they had adopted the natural sciences' methodological ideals, which according to traditionalists would derail the discipline from the substance of international

relations. The controversy concerned the value of studying the field in objective and causal terms. Traditionalists argued such methods failed to account for international relations normative and subjective nature. The debate is relevant also in the military sciences. One could evaluate specific methodologies used for instance to study strategy or tactics, consider whether these methods resemble traditional or scientific approaches, and discuss their strengths and shortcomings to such ends.

The fourth IR debate also concerned new methodologies. Reflectivists introduced among other approaches, discursive and content analysis. Such methods may be useful to understand war in the cognitive domain, encompassing the realm of values, ideas and morals, and its implications in the physical domain. This appears relevant to military sciences if Clausewitz is right in saying that "[m]ilitary activity is never directed against material forces alone; it is always aimed simultaneously at the moral forces which give it life, and the two cannot be separated" (1989, p. 137).

Summary

This chapter has provided a broad overview of IR and to some of its key questions, major debates and characteristic features. The academic discipline provides several analytical perspectives that can be most helpful to gain better and competing understandings of the armed forces' political rationale and to critically discuss common-sense assumptions about war and its utility compared to other dynamics in international relations. The chapter also illustrates how basic philosophy-of-science questions can be used to shed light on the different grounds upon which IR's various schools of thought approach and picture international relations. This provides a framework to unravel the discipline's many theoretical disputes at a more profound level than academic works tend to do. The chapter has brought to the fore that IR remains a Western-dominated discipline, but also stresses that theory is not neutral wherefor students should critically examine dominant theories' relevance to other parts of the world and when necessary, develop perspectives better suited to understand specific regional contexts. In addition, the chapter's structure with its focus on major debates and their relations to basic philosophy-of-science questions can hopefully inspire scholarly efforts to grasp and develop the military sciences as an academic discipline.

Cross-References

- ▶ Liberal International Relations Theory and the Military
- ▶ Philosophy of Military Sciences
- ▶ Poststructuralism in International Relations: Discourse and the Military
- ▶ Realist International Relations Theory and the Military
- ▶ Social Constructivist International Relations and the Military

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