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Rethinking International Relations

Fred Halliday

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
1 Introduction: The Pertinence of the ‘International’	1
The ‘International’ in Perspective	1
Formative Influences	4
The Emergence of Theory	5
Realism and Behaviouralism	10
International Relations since the 1970s	16
The Parameters of ‘Rethinking’	19
2 Theories in Contention	23
Traditional Empiricism: History and the English School	24
‘Scientific Empiricism’: the Siren of Behaviouralism	27
Neo-Realism: ‘System’ without Content	31
The Tallest Story: Post-modernism and the International	37
Conclusion: Another Path	46
3 A Necessary Encounter: Historical Materialism and International Relations	47
A Challenge Evaded	47
Marxism and IR’s Three ‘Great Debates’	50
The Potential of Historical Materialism	55
The Historical Materialist Paradigm	59
The Inhibitions of Theory	68
Marxism beyond Cold War	71
4 State and Society in International Relations	74
Impasse on the State	74
Definitions Contrasted	78
The State as Domestic and International Actor	84
State Interests and Social Forces	86
Societies and State Systems	87

5 International Society as Homogeneity	94
The Meanings of 'International Society'	94
Transnationalism and its Limits	103
The 'Constitutive' Paradigm and its Protagonists: Burke, Marx, Fukuyama	107
Implications for International Relations	119
 6 'The Sixth Great Power': Revolutions and the International System	 124
A Case of Mutual Neglect	124
Revolutions and their Effects	128
The Formation of the International System	132
Historical Patterns	134
International and Domestic Links	139
Revolutions and War	143
 7 Hidden from International Relations: Women and the International Arena	 147
The Silences of International Relations	147
An Emerging Concern: Four Dimensions	152
State and Women: Nationalism and Human Rights	160
Implications and Problems	166
 8 Inter-Systemic Conflict: The Case of Cold War	 170
A Distinct Form of Conflict	170
Theories of Cold War	171
Sources of Theoretical Resistance	177
The Salience of Heterogeneity	180
 9 A Singular Collapse: The Soviet Union and Inter-State Competition	 191
New Light on Old Questions	191
Transformation from Above	192
The Transition from Socialism to Capitalism	195
International Factors and Cold War	198
A Comparative Failure	205
Three Levels of International Competition	211

10 International Relations and the ‘End of History’	216
Aftermaths of Cold War	216
Varieties of Historical Evaluation	222
The ‘End of History’	228
Prospects for Liberal Democracy and Peace	232
11 Conclusion: The Future of International Relations	236
The Challenge of the Normative	236
Alternatives in Research	241
<i>Notes</i>	245
<i>Name Index</i>	278
<i>Subject Index</i>	281

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Preface

The chapters in this book are elements of a double response – to developments in political and social theory and in the academic study of International Relations, and to changes in the international system itself over the past years, most particularly the collapse of the Soviet bloc. In this sense, and in what may be a reversal of conventional practice, the general, and in part theoretical, reflections follow from a number of more concrete studies of the international system and of the central conflicts within it which I have already published, most specifically *The Making of the Second Cold War* (1983) and *Cold War, Third World* (1989) and a number of third world case studies. In so doing, I hope not merely to extend these reflections on International Relations, but also to draw out assumptions and questions which were, to a greater or lesser extent, present within them. International Relations, like all branches of knowledge, faces two dangers – that of factual accounts devoid of theoretical reflection, explanatory or ethical, and that of theorising unanchored in, or tested by, the analysis of history itself. My hope is that these essays, as responses to ideas and to events, will find a passage between these two dangers. While making some general observations on the nature of the international system and of where analysis of it may proceed, I have also examined some more particular issues. My intention is to follow this overview of the subject with two further theoretical and historical volumes, one on the role of revolutions in the international system, the other on the ethical tension between nationalism and internationalism.

In preparing these essays I have benefited from the stimulation and criticism of many friends and colleagues over the past decade. In particular I would like to thank my colleagues and students in the International Relations (IR) Department at the London School of Economics (LSE) who have, through individual contacts and through the General Seminar in IR, provided many a challenge and stimulus. Martina Langer of the International Relations Department was ever helpful and speedy in helping with

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While the chapters of this book have been updated and considerably developed, many of the ideas and arguments contained in this book draw on a set of articles and essays published over the last few years: in particular parts of Chapters 1 and 2 have appeared in *Political Studies* (vol. 38, no. 3, September 1990), *Economy and Society* (vol. 18, no. 3 August 1989) and *Millennium* (vol. 22, no. 2, summer 1993); an earlier version of Chapter 4 was published in *Millennium* (vol. 16, no. 2, 1987); of Chapter 5 in *Millennium* (vol. 21, no. 3, winter 1992); of Chapter 6 in *Review of International Studies* (vol. 16, no. 3, summer 1990); of Chapter 7 in *Millennium* (vol. 17, no. 3, winter 1988); of Chapter 8 in Mike Bowker and Robin Brown (eds.) *From Cold War to Collapse: Theory and World Politics in the 1980s* (Cambridge University Press, 1993); of Chapter 9 in *Contention* (no. 2, winter 1992). Chapters 10 and 11 include material from *New Left Review* (no. 193, May–June 1992) and from the Barclay Enterprise Lecture, given at LSE, 17 May 1993, 'Sleep-Walking Through History: The New World and its Discontents', later published by the London School of Economics Centre for the Study of Global Governance.

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