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JOHN BURTON AND THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: AN ASSESSMENT

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In this article I want to assess the relationship between, the academic discipline of International Relations, by which I mean a set of issues and a community of scholars, and John Burton. The reasons for such an assessment are timely and significant. Firstly the International Relations community has tended to neglect the work of Burton. A survey of many recent assessments of theoretical debates in the discipline, for example, reveals that the references to Burton are usually to work that is nearly three decades old, namely World Society, which appeared in 1972, with a few references to Systems, States, Diplomacy and Rules which preceded it by four years. What is significant is that there is a paucity of references to the vast and arguably more important work done since. Secondly, by the same token, it is perfectly possible, that many scholars who have come to know of Burton's work in the areas of conflict resolution and peace research may be unaware of his earlier, often difficult but necessary involvement with - and departure from - International Relations.

Yet the picture is not one of total neglect and it may be that the relationship is about to change, as I seek to show in what follows. Burton makes an appearance as one of Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations, (1999) notably as one of a group of radical/critical thinkers. There, Martin Griffiths (1999 p.109) notes that Burton's works cannot be easily classified within the conventional frameworks of analysis in the study of international relations. He stresses that Burton has been a trenchant critic of the view that international relations can stand apart from other disciplines in the social sciences. At the same time, Griffiths recognizes that Burton has produced a unique corpus of work that continues to inspire students of world society today.

Moreover, Ken Booth (1997), himself a trenchant critic of International Relations these days, identifies an increasing relevance of the work of Burton (and others) as International Relations struggles with the problems of a new agenda in radically altered post Cold War circumstances. Booth suggests that the teachers of strategic/security studies during the Cold War rejected as irrelevant (or worse) the work of those radicals in peace research or world order studies "whose conception of peace and security was far broader than the high politics of mainstream security studies ... Prominent among the radicals were Johan

Galtung's writings about structural violence; Kenneth Boulding's concept of stable (as opposed to unstable) peace; John Burton's individualist rather than statist world view; and Richard Falk's world order as opposed to realist values". More pertinently, he continues "I would argue that their insights constitute a more original set of contributions to the present security debate than any of the articles that have been filling space in the workaday security journals at the closings of the Cold War" (Booth, 1997 p.109; emphasis added).

In what follows I look at the issues that confront International Relations as it struggles to find a new paradigm to underpin work being done in the radically changed circumstances that present new challenges. There then follows a (brief) survey of the evolution of Burton's work where I argue that, in fact, Burton's engagement with International Relations was relatively short, and that he passed through International Relations relatively quickly, on the way to developing a radically separate ontology (See Dunn, forthcoming). By way of conclusion, I take my cue from Booth and suggest why International Relations scholars might re-engage with the work of Burton, and profit by it.

International Relations in a Time of Change

International Relations emerged as an autonomous academic discipline in the wake of the First World War. Before this, matters of war, peace and diplomacy were dealt with by reference to history, philosophy and law. The behaviour associated with the scale and extent of the First World War prompted the search for an alternative approach. The international system, it was suggested, needed reform or better management. The response was two-pronged. In institutional terms, the mood of reform produced the League of Nations, with an emphasis on the power of reason and the rule of law to enhance the prospects of peace. From this distance it may provoke raised eyebrows, but at the time there was a provision in the Covenant of the League that states intending to go to war were to give notice of their intention to do so. The logic underpinning this apparently Utopian/Idealist provision was actually quite clear: war by accident, stealth or secret diplomacy (perhaps in accordance with the logic of the balance of power and secret agreements associated therewith) could and should be avoided. The provision of a time for discussion would allow the power of reason and law to prevail. For the reformers, part of the problem was the nature and practice of power politics.

Beyond the institutional level there was an intellectual response and this gave rise to the first academic departments of International Politics, principally in Great Britain and the United States. The conduct of states in a system of politics devoid of a central authority was now a cause for concern. This was especially so, given the scale of destruction associated with the phenomenon of total war, where mass society and industrial production were allied to the principles of political self-help embodied in the 1648 Treaty of

Westphalia. The new and expanded departments of International Politics were to study how the system of states could be made to work more effectively so as to enhance the power of law, the peaceful management of interstate affairs, the preservation of order and especially the minimisation of the prospects of war. All of this was to be studied quite explicitly and not in the interstices of history, philosophy or law - although these subjects would be utilised consistent with the problem-centric and eclectic nature of International Politics.

The reformist mood that followed 1919 did not last, of course. Reformism gave way to a re-emphasis on political power. The course of events constituted sufficient reason for a change of emphasis. However, the underlying foundations of International Politics were unchanged. International Politics was the study of the relations between distinct political entities in a system of self-help, devoid of central authority, where the question of order was of primary importance, given the problems associated with war, where it was taken as axiomatic that the outbreak of war was symptomatic of disorder.

Yet at the same time the states within the system took upon themselves the right to make war as and when they saw fit. In other words, the irony was that states saw war as a symptom of disorder and a means to achieve (their own sense of) order at one and the same time.

The foundation of the subject - the shared set of assumptions that united both Idealists and Realists (those who stressed the perennial nature of political power and the means to it) - was the idea that what was being studied was a state-centric universe, populated by states. What separated the Idealists from the Realists was that they adopted different approaches to the way the system was to be managed. The Idealist/Reformers took the view that the system could be reformed, improved and managed better - and they showed how this could be done. The Realists argued that the reformers were wrong-headed, over-optimistic and - more pertinently - misunderstood the nature of political power at the international level. History showed, it was argued, the enduring nature of political machinations over the centuries, from the Ancient Greeks, through Renaissance Italy to the origins of the First World War. For the Realists, the Idealists were, in fact, Utopians - wishing for what could never be attained.

In summary, the underlying paradigm was that of state-centricity, shared by both Reformers and political Realists, although they approached the implications radically differently.

That underlying paradigm - the set of assumptions that is said to be what an academic discipline is 'about', what is embedded in text-books and what is passed down through

successive generations of students and teacher - persisted until the 1960s. It found its neatest embodiment in the work Politics Among Nations (1948) by the émigré German Jewish scholar Hans Morgenthau for whom international politics, like all politics, was a struggle for power. That work went through many editions after its first appearance in 1948 and gained enormous status in the United States where it was, essentially the text. Morgenthau's work was so successful because it seemed right for its times which saw Fascism, militarism, war, Cold War and the advent of nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence. In the circumstances, it would be extraordinary had Morgenthau (and the many other Europeans who migrated to the United States to write important texts in International Politics, such as Nicholas Spykman, Frederick Hartmann and Frederick Schumann, as well as Georg Schwarzenberger in Britain) taken a particularly optimistic view of things, given their circumstances.

By the 1960s, International Relations began to change. The emphasis on 'Relations' was, for many, more encompassing than 'Politics' stressing a wider grasp than political relationships per se. Yet this was but the most visible of several changes. There were two more substantive changes of mood. The first was methodological. For decades, International Relations had been studied and written about in what came to be known as the 'classical approach'. History was studied, facts assessed, intuition and wisdom brought to bear as lessons were learned, meanings made evident, and wisdom accumulated. Yet this was all very individualistic, even essentialist. Increasingly, critical voices came to suggest that this was not really much more than journalism, current affairs or informed speculation on events and patterns. There was a concern that International Relations become more 'scientific', more capable of offering advice to decision makers to improve the quality of government and system performance. This demanded precision allied to evidence and these influences had great consequence for the study of International Relations for a decade and more.

The second change was perhaps more fundamental. The period of positivism and empiricism receded, with some lasting influences, but it is also fair to say that much work was of an ephemeral nature and often the 'debates' generated more heat than light. What was changing was that the underlying state-centric paradigm was collapsing. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that International Relations is, even now, searching for a new paradigm to replace state-centricity.

In saying as much, it seems to me that many of the discussions about the so-called 'inter-paradigm debate' in International Relations are actually about the proliferation of approaches, models and frameworks to explain the new concerns of the discipline. There is, in fact, a search for paradigm, not a debate about the merits of extant and proliferating

paradigms. These proliferating schemes and interpretations - approaches even - are not paradigms but symptoms of the problems besetting International Relations as a discipline. States are still part of the subject, but the issue can be succinctly stated - 'states plus what other actors-' In other words, which other actors affect outcomes in order to shape and contribute to the dynamics of a subject that is searching not only for a new paradigm but also a newly constituted name that can accurately embody its concerns- World Politics- World Society- Global Society- Global Village- A planet 'getting smaller'?

By the 1960s it became clear that states were not the only actors in the drama of international relationships. There had been a proliferation of new actors affecting outcomes. They may or may not have legal status, but they are frequently legitimate manifestations of belief and/or concerns. Thus, they may be expressions of identity (such as ETA, the Palestinian Liberation Organization or the Irish Republican Army). They may reflect changes in values - such as Greenpeace; problems, such as the proliferation of land mines; and so on. By the end of the twentieth century, to cut a long agenda short, there were now thousands of actors in world politics, across a range of issues. And many of these actors have raised questions about the nature, significance, authority and autonomy of the state, long regarded as the actor at the centre of the discipline of International Relations.

International Relations has responded by trying to address these issues as they have emerged - hence the growth of specialist approaches and issue areas such as Global Political Economy, International Relations of the Environment, the International Politics of Sport, the Growth of International Organization, to mention but a few. International Relations has also been much influenced by the wider cultural and political concerns that have affected much of our social debate, such as Feminism, Cultural Studies, the social construction of 'reality' and the like. In a significant way, the claims of International Relations as a discrete discipline are challenged by the emergent overlaps and convergent concerns of these new areas of concern and attention.

Now all of this raises the central question as to the autonomy of International Relations as an academic discipline. After 1919 it appeared with a very central and pressing problematique: order and war in a system of states. In contemporary circumstances, order is not the sole preserve of states: it is also partly due to the activities of 'markets' (as in currency and commodities), which can (and do) have profound effects upon states and governments, often rendering them vulnerable to destabilisation, deflection from declared policies and unpredicted costs of adjustment - with important effects upon other aspects of the policy agenda, not least the welfare of the citizens for whom they are legally responsible. Second, many states are essentially unviable, and part of the problem

associated with conflict is the attempt to force those who feel that a state is not legitimate to accept rules and authority enforced from the centre. Often state authorities' actions militate against the need fulfilment of many citizens for whom they are ostensibly responsible. And even in advanced states, where there is no open revolt, there are pressures for devolution of authority, as in the United Kingdom in recent years. In other words, the problem is more than one of poor government, although there are many examples of this, such as currently in Burma or Iraq.

Yet the 'old' problem of war has not been displaced on the agenda of International Relations by the arrival of 'new' issues. Nor have all states been marginalised by the proliferation of other actors. The agenda has become more complex, criss-crossing, harder to handle for many in positions of authority. Burton dealt with the emerging issue of complexity in World Society (1972) nearly thirty years ago. Most of his later work has been devoted to the question of conflict and the need for a new political philosophy. In the light of this assessment of the contemporary field of International Relations in great difficulties at best, and perhaps even in terminal decline, it is to Burton that I now turn.

Burton's Passage Through International Relations

As early as his doctoral dissertation sixty years ago, Burton took a radically different view of events. As a student at the London School of Economics, Burton explained the processes of the 1930s not in terms of Fascism and militarism per se. Rather, the issue was about the conjunction of change and states. The problem, he argued, was that change was pretty much the norm in the circumstances of the modern world economy and state system. The changes of the nineteenth century had been radical and profoundly consequential. But major states had not got to grips with the implications of change - namely that they had to change with it. Instead, many established states sought to shift the burden of change onto others, but sought to resist changes themselves. The issues of Germany and Japan were addressed in these terms, rather than devil theories of war or assessments of the nature of human nature.

Burton never meant to be a scholar. He returned to wartime Australia to play an important part in the planning and execution of Australian foreign policy. His role during that period still prompts controversy even now. In 1950 he resigned from his position as Head of the Department of External Affairs in protest at the policies relating to China, Korea and the United States. Fundamentally, he stood opposed to power politics and contemporary interpretations of communism. From a somewhat marginal position he continued trenchantly to argue his corner and continued to attract attention. He wrote The Alternative in 1954 (critical of emergent policies relating to Asia) and his first 'academic' book, Peace Theory, appeared in 1962, the result of a research appointment at the Australian National

University in Canberra. He became a teacher of International Relations in 1963 when he accepted a post at University College in London, offered to him by Georg Schwarzenberger, the Professor of International Law and Relations there.

International Relations : A General Theory appeared in 1965, the direct result of Burton's teaching engagement in London. It is a somewhat curious mix, but clearly demonstrates Burton's engagement with the now rapidly changing IR discipline. He clearly rejects power politics (being an Australian probably matters more here than is usually admitted - what, after all, was the Australian approach to international relations to be in a world dominated by larger states?).

He is vociferous in his explicit discussion of the failure of orthodoxy as policy; and he is keen to pick up ideas, from those around him (who included John Groom, Michael Banks, Chris Mitchell and Tony de Reuck, among others) and from the emergent changing agenda, most notably Karl Deutsch's seminal Nerves of Government, (1963) which brought the language of cybernetics to the study of decision making and which gave Burton the key vocabulary to allow him to move 'from power to steering'. Typically, Burton was critical of the conventional wisdom of International Relations. He was, therefore, challenged to provide an alternative explanation of conflict, but chose to explain afresh conflicts that had not already been explained in conventional terms. These became the focus of attention in the newly founded Centre for the Analysis of Conflict (CAC) at University College and Burton produced Conflict and Communication in 1969 as a direct result of these innovations.

Insofar as Burton developed a new frame of reference, he was much influenced by work outside of International Relations as from within it. Perceptions, values and definitions of the situation were all part of a dynamic approach to conflict. The impact of Deutsch's radical and fresh approach has been identified already. Also important was Peter Blau's work on Exchange and Power in Social Life (1964). This provided Burton with a means to explain the development of power relationships, not in terms of 'the darker side of human nature' or power-seeking per se, but in terms of the development of asymmetric relationships that develop out of patterns of reciprocal exchanges. In other words, power relationships are not 'given', they develop out of dynamic relationships. Perceptions, values and strategies of conflict resolution - as opposed to settlement or management - are central to World Society (1972), which saw Burton develop a frame of reference that united the individual and the emergent world society, in the context of methodological holism allied to personal values and valued relationships, many of which transcended state boundaries.

What happens next is crucial in the development of Burton's work. No new book appears for seven years, a remarkable period of ostensible inactivity. Yet, this ostensible silence reveals a crucial change, for it is a period that I characterise as the period of Burton's 'ontological break'. The emergence of Burton's passage through International Relations was de facto evident as early as 1974, though the better articulation of it was to take a little longer. Essentially, however, Burton's engagement with International Relations, which began with his teaching at University College, was over within a decade. He had engaged, found it limited in terms of explanatory capability and wanted to move on to try to say something more significant, relevant, valuable and practical.

In 1974 he had confronted Fred Northedge, Professor of International Politics at the London School of Economics, for the purposes of a course being taught by the Open University (a radical new British innovation which permitted people to study at home, via television and guided learning packages). Northedge gave what can best be described as a conventional view: states were at the centre of the analysis, they made things happen, other actors made up the context of state behaviour and so on. Burton spoke in terms vastly different. His was the language of transaction, legitimacy, authority, change and the like. The vocabulary of World Society expanded, but not yet fully developed into a coherent frame of reference. In other words, Burton had moved on and through. He was dealing with the issues of methodology and holism, not historically-rooted essentialist aspects of international politics. Indeed, Burton rather annoyed Northedge with the observation 'international politics has nothing to do with the real world !'

By the time that Deviance, Terrorism and War appeared in 1979, Burton had reconstituted the agenda of discussion. In other words, he had redefined the nature of the problem to be discussed and the means to discuss it. It was no longer about states and state-centric dynamics. What Burton was now 'about' constituted a new definition of the problem and a new definition of the reality at the centre of the analysis. The subtitle of the book is, in fact, the key to the whole: the process of solving unsolved social and political problems. Note the key elements here. We are concerned with process, not stasis or structures. We are concerned with the solving of social and political problems, not their containment, management or control. We are also concerned with change and not coercion, either to effect change or to resist it. Moreover, we are concerned with recurrent patterns of human behaviour at all levels of social complexity. This is not a book about International Relations: it is about relationships, where international relationships are but part of the whole.

The articulation was assisted by, again, the taking on board of ideas and concepts form the wider realm of social analysis. From insights provided by Steven Box, a colleague at the University of Kent (to which Burton had moved from London), Burton reassessed the way

society classifies and defines deviance. The influential Structure of Freedom by Christian Bay (1970) was acknowledged as underpinning the whole of the work as Burton stressed its recognition of the shift to human rather than institutional values. And the influence of Paul Sites (1973) - especially the focus on human needs - is crucial. Need was to become the foundation of Burton's later and most important work. It is a concept not without controversy, but so too is the concept of power and much analysis has been borne on the foundation of that shaky, elastic and imprecise concept. But Burton is pragmatic.

That there is much conflict in the world is symptomatic of something happening or not happening. For Burton, people conflict when they feel that their needs are not being fulfilled, to a sufficient extent that they feel motivated to do something about this state of affairs. In other words, the existence of unfulfilled needs can be inferred from the presence of conflict in human affair, and persistent violent conflict at that. This is not a given, inescapable fact of human existence. It is an issue that demands explicit attention in order that the problem of human conflict can be addressed, resolved and needs be satisfied. A central issue in all of this is change and adjustment to changed circumstances. Burton wants us to be pragmatic and it is no surprise that he finds an intellectual foundation for his stance from the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, one of the founders (with William James and John Dewey) of the approach to pragmaticism.

Typically, for Burton, he avoids the discussion of philosophy as eternal debate about metaphysics and potentially endless, relativist and lengthy debate (over hundreds of years) about competing truth claims and essentially contested concepts. He gets from Peirce the idea of abduction, which Burton uses as indicated above. Conflict is a problem and the inference to be drawn is that needs are going unfulfilled. This is a valid inference and constitutes a fruitful line of argument and advice. It is, therefore, a second-order issue to say what needs are - or ought to be. At this stage of the research, need probably has something to do with identity, participation, recognition and self-worth. Looked at another way, people are killed in (ethnic) conflict when they are demonised, objectified, subordinated and marginalized. They become not people with needs but objects and cyphers, 'them' and not "us". There have been numerous examples of this at the end of the twentieth century, indeed too many to list here. In the light of this evidence, a focus on need as a central conceptual issue on the agenda might be timely as well as relevant.

Need is a central component of Burton's provention. Doubtless there will be those in International Relations who feel that Burton has not assisted his own cause by wedding his ideas to a neologism like provention, setting himself out on a limb. But the same might be said of Kenneth Boulding's 'human betterment' and Johan Galtung's 'structural violence'. These terms are means to an end, symptoms of the need for innovation, to open up the

debate not to close it off. The issue is to assess what is represented or suggested by an approach termed 'provention'. The key for Burton is not a million miles away from where he began as a graduate student. Whatever else provention is about, it is about change and adjustment where change is ever present and adjustment necessary - and where resistance to change is going to be part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

John Burton and International Relations: Towards a Fruitful Re-encounter?

Now in his mid-eighties, John Burton has retired to Canberra and written his last book (he says). A fruitful encounter with International Relations means then that IR scholars might look at what Burton has to say, especially when they have a myriad problems to face. There is not space and time here to exhaust the agenda, but I list here a few issues where what Burton has said might be of assistance to a discipline in difficulties.

It is now nearly a decade since Ken Booth, observed that for International Relations "... our work is our words and our words do not work any more..." (Booth, 1991 p.314). In such circumstances, scholars in International Relations might be well advised to take seriously the claims of radicals who identify the continuing limitations - perhaps even the worsening problems - associated with stretching concepts that cannot bear the added burdens placed upon them. If radicals are often identified as those who are out of their time, we might entertain the notion that there may come a time when their time has come. Stretching the concept of security may be of some utility, but having to struggle to make it fit that for which it was ostensibly designed is probably taking things too far. Why not, then, see what the likes of Burton, Galtung and Boulding have to offer- Sceptics might find more to provention than meets the eye.

Secondly, what is striking about these three scholars is that they all outgrew the disciplinary limitations that they first encountered: Burton the scholar-diplomat, Boulding the economist turned social theorist and Galtung the sociologist turned polymath (in which group we might also include Anatol Rapoport). All of them went beyond the bounds of convention. In seeking to assess contemporary social conditions they all sought to do so by resort to new words and concepts. In suggesting what is possible, they have suggested what is not possible within the patterns of current policies and discourse. They have not been bound by the limits of the old - and in diagnosing the limits of the old they have sought to innovate, as has Edmund O. Wilson with his notion of consilience (1999). Rather than dismiss them as "those who moved on", why not ask: what was the problem that caused them to move on and to discuss questions of conflict in such radically different terms?

Also of especial note is that none of these three has studied history, to the extent that they are bound by its discourse - and its limits. Certainly Burton was and is always suspicious

about both the written records of diplomatic history and about "expert" knowledge. Whenever he encountered it, it was wrong . He was, after all, a diplomat and knew what went on when and where he was involved. Cynthia Kerman has this to say about Kenneth Boulding's encounter with history : "...It was reading H.G. Well's Outline of History - combined with his own encounter with the reinterpretation of English history from the point of view of an Irish school friend - that convinced him that history teachers were liars, that the narrow picture of history presented by one country's schools was a source of dissension and war..." (Kerman 1974 p.91).

Burton and these others have freed themselves from the limits of not only words but also method. Again, Ken Booth is relevant and pertinent. "...Our central myths have internalised conflict as a foundational myth. We have constituted ourselves in conflict, from class struggle to Mutual Assured Destruction. One reason why humanity persists with so dismal a view of its own potentiality is history, the story we tell about our past...." (Booth, 1998 p.25). In not being the prisoners of history, the pioneer peace researchers that Booth now identifies as having much to say to us, have always been anti-foundationalist, radical and reconstitutive, despite earlier being marginalised or dismissed Morgenthau made much of the notion of human nature. Some philosophers make much of the human condition, the need to struggle and all of the rest of it. But what of those whose nature was benign, cooperative, caring and nurturing- Are these aspects of behaviour unusual, Utopian - deviant, perhaps- Best to assume that there is no such thing as human nature and that the human condition is what human beings make of it - when they are at liberty to do so. Never mind what some people say what we ought to do, for the moment at least; Burton has not brought philosophical debate to an end with his notion of provention. Ask what it is that people say that they need, to be, to be in peace and to be human - and explore the nature of existent peaceful societies. There are some!

The work of Burton and others is also relevant in relation to what I call "the statist pretence". By this I mean that we really ought not to assume that the state is some form of ultimate achievement of political order. Because the state is the institution that 'we' have we live in it, we invented it and legitimized it. We really should not pretend that there is thus a limit to political adaptation, especially when, as suggested earlier, the state is part of the problem in many areas of the planet, and not the means to solutions. We have not reached the highest form of social evolution, manifested in the state as embodiment of the collective social will. Change and adaptation are constants and institutions are legitimate only insofar as they serve the people who constitute them; they have no sacred or mythic status, except insofar as those who seek to invent such a status do so.

Moreover, we would be well advised to dismiss another illusion. States do not do anything. People do the doing in international relationships, as in all others. People act as agents of, or in the name of, states. There is nothing unique about the behaviour of people who act in the name of the state, nor are there questions of "it's worse because they are acting for millions". A father acting for a family of two, without means or hope, knows the power of responsibility and obligation; a wife or husband divorcing know the nature of intense conflict. In this, Burton has gone straight through the age old problem known as 'the level of analysis problem in "International Relations." It does not need re-interpreting, it needs replacement. His focus on relationships stresses the need to unite the individual with the evolving nature of world society - and he did so, thirty years ago, well before the agenda of globalisation. The need here is to grasp the intellectual nettle of holism.

For some, globalisation is a threat and for others a promise. The fact of globalisation has had dramatic consequences for many academic disciplines and nowhere is this more so than in the conjunctions of International Relations, Social Theory and Cultural Studies. Each of these has an agenda that in some way or another encompasses identity, change and the like. Whether or not it is the impact of McDonalds, the internet, cyberwar and the rest, there is an agenda where, in an era of globalism, identity and being are key issues. Confronting the issue of change is vital, but we do not need to re-invent the wheel. Postmodernist approaches neither define the agenda nor do they exhaust it. For those working in this area, Burton's stress on needs is a valuable opening out of the agenda and Boulding's stress on human betterment is equally important. For both Boulding and Burton, change is the key element in much of their work and it is, by the same token, still a conspicuously under-developed concern in International Relations. Traditionally, International Relations has been concerned with the preservation of order and stability in the here and now, in the short term. The long term could look after itself, if we can survive into the long term. We need to invest the study of global politics with a temporal dimension that is not Utopian and may be vitally creative. Although the 1960s notion of International Relations becoming a predictive science now seems a little passe for many, we would do well to remember that for years many scholars in this field were dumb struck when the Cold War ended as it did - and in circumstances that few predicted. This led to much confusion and uncertainty about where we were heading into an uncertain future. The New World Order that emerged was not the one that was widely forecast.

Finally, a stress on conflict resolution. The primary level of analysis for Burton is the human being. Conflict will be resolved when the issues that separate people as people disappear. This all sounds so obvious. Yet look at conventional approaches to the management of conflict and a statement and restatement of the obvious seems necessary. The Russians

destroy Grozhny in order to win the war in Cechnya on the assumption that in 'winning' they can get the Chechens back "on side" and then promise to rebuild. Long after the war is supposed to be "over", Chechnya is an insecure place devoid of legitimate authority and desperately poor.

In the Middle East there is still a persistent dispute between Israel and the Palestinians regarding sovereignty, against a backdrop of wars, insurrections, peace deals and conferences. At ground level, there is persistent insecurity. New rounds of peace talks regularly re-start. The point is that conflict cannot be resolved from the top down, only from the primary level upwards. Leaders may create the framework, people create the peaceful relationships - and they can be coerced into doing so only at great cost, if at all.

In addressing his own agenda and finding his own articulation of the real (not Realist) agenda, Burton has been equal to the task. He might even have enjoyed his career as a member of 'the awkward squad'. Yet he has never lost sight of what the primary issues are. The key for John Burton is addressing conflict explicitly and solving the problem. So often we do not do that. It is remarkable that for such a long time conflict in society has not received the attention it deserves, as an issue in itself and not as an adjunct to questions of order, justice and stability. Given the salience, persistence and costs of human conflict, it is remarkable that it has been the task of recent pioneers of peace research and of radical International Relations scholars to try to re-orientate the agenda. It is surely no longer justifiable to suggest that order is the immediate goal and a just world order a goal we will seek if and when we can get around to it. The reason why there is so much conflict is because a significant proportion of the human race live in unpeaceful conditions; this is no mystery and neither is it a condition to which they - or we - should be condemned or from which we cannot escape.

In the operational frame of reference known as the conventional wisdom, so often we deal with the symptoms and not the causes of problems. Is there a problem with our basic assumptions- Perhaps it is time to discard long-established notions of international politics, such as the notion that deterrence deters or 'if you seek peace prepare for war', or 'there are no perpetual friends or enemies, only perpetual interests' or 'my enemy's enemy is my friend.' These may have been appropriate to their own times, but are less appropriate to ours. It is surely incumbent upon us to explain how and why it came about that peace was based on the threat to kill millions and render societies vulnerable to devastation. In hindsight, as Burton might suggest, we should admit that we got things wrong, with wrong assumptions, wrong definitions of the situation and wrong policies, if not all of the time, then at least some of the time. This might be a start.

For John Burton, the system will change when we assess the high costs of resistance and opt for a change in our assumptions and practices. We are unlikely to find this a comfortable or comforting process. Yet change we will - and must. For it is clear that we cannot proceed securely into an uncertain future allied to out-dated institutions, each with their own justification, history and mythology. For example, a major systemic response to the outbreak of conflicts after the end of the Cold War has been the massive proliferation in the area of peacekeeping. We should not be surprised at this. But we can ask, fruitfully if uncomfortably, where is this process leading to, in what timescale and with what sense of alternative approaches to conflict resolution- For how long can what kind of peace be kept- Who will lead the effort, pay the price, shoulder the burden and accept the responsibility- These may be borne by the United Nations, or they may not. We would do well to recall that we have had a peacekeeping of sorts in Korea, Ireland and Cyprus for many decades. In other words, the cost issues associated with the implementation of current policies may very soon be upon us and we ought to entertain the notion that confronting long-term, unacceptable costs may cause us to re-appraise working assumptions and practices. One problem for governments is that their domestic publics are often acutely aware of the likely costs of involvement in foreign conflicts, and in peacekeeping endeavours. John Burton has always sought an alternative to the conventional wisdom and he has outlined the framework of provention that demands further articulation. That process of articulation and implementation is now underway in the United States, Australia and to a lesser extent in the United Kingdom. In all these places, conflict resolution issues and aspects of peace research have been placed on the agenda by a new generation of scholars, for undergraduates as well as research students from varied backgrounds.

Burton has been sceptical but constructive, he has been impatient and driven, not least by the notion that things the way they are are not the way they have to be. International Relations, struggling to adapt an anachronistic system of thought to the needs and demands of the twenty-first century, might usefully engage with his work - and that of others in Peace Research. There is enough of it - after nearly fifty years of work, this is not surprising - and it deals with a realistic agenda that scholars of International Relations will find helpful in their time of transition. The issue, after all, is not simply about intellectual neatness. It is about the performance of our institutions and practices in relation to the question of peaceful relations. This was always at the centre of International Relations from its foundation. It has been a life long preoccupation of John Burton, who has long sought constructive intervention, motivated by a quest for social improvement. In constructing his own approach he has developed a conceptual agenda of rich promise and has avoided many of the pitfalls associated with post-modernism. We do, really, know enough to be able to do better, even if we also acknowledge that there is much still to do.

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