

THE  
TWENTY YEARS' CRISIS

1919 — 1939

*An Introduction to the Study  
of International Relations*

BY

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TO THE MAKERS  
OF THE COMING PEACE

“ Philosophers make imaginary laws for imaginary commonwealths, and their discourses are as the stars which give little light because they are so high.”

BACON, *On the Advancement of Learning*

“ The roads to human power and to human knowledge lie close together and are nearly the same ; nevertheless, on account of the pernicious and inveterate habit of dwelling on abstractions, it is safer to begin and raise the sciences from those foundations which have relation to practice, and let the active part be as the seal which prints and determines the contemplative counterpart.”

*Id.*, *Novum Organum*

## PREFACE

THIS book, which was originally planned in 1937, was sent to the press in the middle of July 1939 and had reached page proof when war broke out on September 3, 1939. To introduce into the text a few verbal modifications hastily made in the light of that event would have served little purpose; and I have accordingly preferred to leave it exactly as it was written at a time when war was already casting its shadow on the world, but when all hope of averting it was not yet lost. Wherever, therefore, such phrases as "the War", "pre-War" or "post-War" occur in the following pages, the reader will understand that the reference is to the War of 1914-18.

When the passions of war are aroused, it becomes almost fatally easy to attribute the catastrophe solely to the ambitions and the arrogance of a small group of men, and to seek no further explanation. Yet even while war is raging, there may be some practical importance in an attempt to analyse the underlying and significant, rather than the immediate and personal, causes of the disaster. If and when peace returns to the world, the lessons of the breakdown which has involved Europe in a second major war within twenty years and two months of the Versailles Treaty will need to be earnestly pondered. A settlement which, having destroyed the National Socialist rulers of Germany, leaves untouched the conditions which made the phenomenon of National Socialism possible, will run the risk of being as short-lived and as tragic as the settlement of 1919. No period of history will better repay study by the peacemakers of the future than the Twenty Years' Crisis which fills the interval between the

## Preface

two Great Wars. The next Peace Conference, if it is not to repeat the fiasco of the last, will have to concern itself with issues more fundamental than the drawing of frontiers. In this belief, I have ventured to dedicate this book to the makers of the coming peace.

The published sources from which I have derived help and inspiration are legion. I am specially indebted to two books which, though not specifically concerned with international relations, seem to me to have illuminated some of the fundamental problems of politics: Dr. Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* and Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. Mr. Peter Drucker's *The End of Economic Man*, which did not come into my hands until my manuscript was virtually complete, contains some brilliant guesses and a most stimulating and suggestive diagnosis of the present crisis in world history. Many excellent historical and descriptive works about various aspects of international relations have appeared in the last twenty years, and my indebtedness to some of these is recorded in footnotes, which must take the place of a bibliography. But not one of these works known to me has attempted to analyse the profounder causes of the contemporary international crisis.

My obligations to individuals are still more extensive. In particular, I desire to record my deep gratitude to three friends who found time to read the whole of my manuscript, whose comments were equally stimulating whether they agreed or disagreed with my views, and whose suggestions are responsible for a great part of such value as this book possesses: Charles Manning, Professor of International Relations in the London School of Economics and Political Science; Dennis Routh, Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and recently Lecturer in International Politics in the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth; and a third, whose official position deprives me of the pleasure of naming him here. During the past three years I have been a member of a Study Group of

## *Preface*

the Royal Institute of International Affairs engaged on an enquiry into the problem of nationalism, the results of which are about to be published.<sup>1</sup> The lines of investigation pursued by this Group have sometimes touched or crossed those which I have been following in these pages ; and my colleagues in this Group and other contributors to its work have, in the course of our long discussions, unwittingly made numerous valuable contributions to the present book. To these, and to the many others who, in one way or another, consciously or unconsciously, have given me assistance and encouragement in the preparation of this volume, I tender my sincere thanks.

E. H. CARR

*September 30, 1939*

<sup>1</sup> *Nationalism*: A Study by a Group of Members of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Oxford University Press).

# CONTENTS

## PART ONE

### THE SCIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

#### CHAPTER 1

	PAGE
THE BEGINNINGS OF A SCIENCE . . . . .	3

#### CHAPTER 2

UTOPIA AND REALITY . . . . .	16
------------------------------	----

## PART TWO

### THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS

#### CHAPTER 3

THE UTOPIAN BACKGROUND . . . . .	31
----------------------------------	----

#### CHAPTER 4

THE HARMONY OF INTERESTS . . . . .	54
------------------------------------	----

#### CHAPTER 5

THE REALIST CRITIQUE . . . . .	81
--------------------------------	----

#### CHAPTER 6

THE LIMITATIONS OF REALISM . . . . .	113
--------------------------------------	-----



## *Contents*

### PART THREE POLITICS, POWER AND MORALITY

#### CHAPTER 7

	PAGE
THE NATURE OF POLITICS . . . . .	123

#### CHAPTER 8

POWER IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS . . . . .	131
(a) Military Power . . . . .	139
(b) Economic Power . . . . .	145
(c) Power over Opinion . . . . .	168

#### CHAPTER 9

MORALITY IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS . . . . .	186
--	-----

### PART FOUR LAW AND CHANGE

#### CHAPTER 10

THE FOUNDATIONS OF LAW . . . . .	219
----------------------------------	-----

#### CHAPTER 11

THE SANCTITY OF TREATIES . . . . .	232
------------------------------------	-----

#### CHAPTER 12

THE JUDICIAL SETTLEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL DISPUTES .	246
---	-----

#### CHAPTER 13

PEACEFUL CHANGE . . . . .	264
---------------------------	-----

# *Contents*

## CONCLUSION

### CHAPTER 14

	PAGE
THE PROSPECTS OF A NEW INTERNATIONAL ORDER . . . . .	287
INDEX . . . . .	309

PART ONE

THE SCIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL  
POLITICS



## CHAPTER I

### THE BEGINNINGS OF A SCIENCE

THE science of international politics is in its infancy. Prior to 1914, the conduct of international relations was the concern of persons professionally engaged in it. In democratic countries, foreign policy was traditionally regarded as outside the scope of party politics ; and the representative organs did not feel themselves competent to exercise any close control over the mysterious operations of foreign offices. In Great Britain, public opinion was readily aroused if war occurred in any region traditionally regarded as a sphere of British interest, or if the British navy momentarily ceased to possess that margin of superiority over potential rivals which was then deemed essential. In continental Europe, conscription and the chronic fear of foreign invasion had created a more general and continuous popular awareness of international problems. But this awareness found expression mainly in the labour movement, which from time to time passed somewhat academic resolutions against war. The constitution of the United States of America contained the unique provision that treaties were concluded by the President "by and with the advice and consent of the Senate". But the foreign relations of the United States seemed too parochial to lend any wider significance to this exception. The more picturesque aspects of diplomacy had a certain news value. But nowhere, whether in universities or in wider intellectual circles, was there organised study of current international affairs. War was still regarded mainly as the business of soldiers ; and the

## *The Science of International Politics*

corollary of this was that international politics were the business of diplomats. There was no general desire to take the conduct of international affairs out of the hands of the professionals or even to pay serious and systematic attention to what they were doing.

The War of 1914-18 made an end of the view that war is a matter which affects only professional soldiers and, in so doing, dissipated the corresponding impression that international politics could safely be left in the hands of professional diplomats. The campaign for the popularisation of international politics began in the English-speaking countries in the form of an agitation against secret treaties, which were attacked, on insufficient evidence, as one of the causes of the War. The blame for the secret treaties should have been imputed, not to the wickedness of the governments, but to the indifference of the peoples. Everybody knew that such treaties were concluded. But before the War few people felt any curiosity about them or thought them objectionable.<sup>1</sup> The agitation against them was, however, a fact of immense importance. It was the first symptom of the demand for the popularisation of international politics and heralded the birth of a new science.

### *Purpose and Analysis in Political Science*

The science of international politics has, then, come into being in response to a popular demand. It has been created to serve a purpose and has, in this respect, followed the pattern of other sciences. At first sight, this pattern may appear illogical. Our first business, it will be said,

<sup>1</sup> A recent historian of the Franco-Russian alliance, having recorded the protests of a few French radicals against the secrecy which enveloped this transaction, continues: "Parliament and opinion tolerated this complete silence, and were content to remain in absolute ignorance of the provisions and scope of the agreement" (Michon, *L'Alliance Franco-Russe*, p. 75). In 1898, in the Chamber of Deputies, Hanotaux was applauded for describing the disclosure of its terms as "absolutely impossible" (*ibid.* p. 82).

## *The Beginnings of a Science*

is to collect, classify and analyse our facts and draw our inferences ; and we shall then be ready to investigate the purpose to which our facts and our deductions can be put. The processes of the human mind do not, however, appear to develop in this logical order. The human mind works, so to speak, backwards. Purpose, which should logically follow analysis, is required to give it both its initial impulse and its direction. " If society has a technical need ", wrote Engels, " it serves as a greater spur to the progress of science than do ten universities." <sup>1</sup> The first extant text-book of geometry " lays down an aggregate of practical rules designed to solve concrete problems : ' rule for measuring a round fruitery ' ; ' rule for laying out a field ' ; ' computation of the fodder consumed by geese and oxen ' ". <sup>2</sup> Reason, says Kant, must approach nature " not . . . in the character of a pupil, who listens to all that his master chooses to tell him, but in that of a judge, who compels the witnesses to reply to those questions which he himself thinks fit to propose ". <sup>3</sup> " We cannot study even stars or rocks or atoms ", writes a modern sociologist, " without being somehow determined, in our modes of systematisation, in the prominence given to one or another part of our subject, in the form of the questions we ask and attempt to answer, by direct and human interests." <sup>4</sup> It is the purpose of promoting health which creates medical science, and the purpose of building bridges which creates the science of engineering. Desire to cure the sicknesses of the body politic has given its impulse and its inspiration to political science. Purpose, whether we are conscious of it or not, is a condition of thought ; and thinking for thinking's sake is as abnormal and barren as the miser's accumulation of money for its own sake. " The wish is father to

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Sidney Hook, *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx*, p. 279.

<sup>2</sup> J. Rueff, *From the Physical to the Social Sciences* (Engl. transl.), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Everyman ed.), p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> MacIver, *Community*, p. 56.

## *The Science of International Politics*

the thought " is a perfectly exact description of the origin of normal human thinking.

If this is true of the physical sciences, it is true of political science in a far more intimate sense. In the physical sciences, the distinction between the investigation of facts and the purpose to which the facts are to be put is not only theoretically valid, but is constantly observed in practice. The laboratory worker engaged in investigating the causes of cancer may have been originally inspired by the purpose of eradicating the disease. But this purpose is in the strictest sense irrelevant to the investigation and separable from it. His conclusion can be nothing more than a true report on facts. It cannot help to make the facts other than they are ; for the facts exist independently of what anyone thinks about them. In the political sciences, which are concerned with human behaviour, there are no such facts. The investigator is inspired by the desire to cure some ill of the body politic. Among the causes of the trouble, he diagnoses the fact that human beings normally react to certain conditions in a certain way. But this is not a fact comparable with the fact that human bodies react in a certain way to certain drugs. It is a fact which may be changed by the desire to change it ; and this desire, already present in the mind of the investigator, may be extended, as the result of his investigation, to a sufficient number of other human beings to make it effective. The purpose is not, as in the physical sciences, irrelevant to the investigation and separable from it : it is itself one of the facts. In theory, the distinction may no doubt still be drawn between the role of the investigator who establishes the facts and the role of the practitioner who considers the right course of action. In practice, one role shades imperceptibly into the other. Purpose and analysis become part and parcel of a single process.

A few examples will illustrate this point. Marx, when he wrote *Capital*, was inspired by the purpose of destroy-



## *The Beginnings of a Science*

ing the capitalist system just as the investigator of the causes of cancer is inspired by the purpose of eradicating cancer. But the facts about capitalism are not, like the facts about cancer, independent of the attitude of people towards it. Marx's analysis was intended to alter, and did in fact alter, that attitude. In the process of analysing the facts, Marx altered them. To attempt to distinguish between Marx the scientist and Marx the propagandist is idle hair-splitting. The financial experts, who in the summer of 1932 advised the British Government that it was possible to convert 5 per cent War Loan at the rate of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent, no doubt based their advice on an analysis of certain facts; but the fact that they gave this advice was one of the facts which, being known to the financial world, made the operation successful. Analysis and purpose were inextricably blended. Nor is it only the thinking of professional or qualified students of politics which constitutes a political fact. Everyone who reads the political columns of a newspaper or attends a political meeting or discusses politics with his neighbour is to that extent a student of politics; and the judgment which he forms becomes (especially, but not exclusively, in democratic countries) a factor in the course of political events. Thus a reviewer might conceivably criticise this book on the ground, not that it was false, but that it was inopportune; and this criticism, whether justified or not, would be intelligible, whereas the same criticism of a book about the causes of cancer would be meaningless. Every political judgment helps to modify the facts on which it is passed. Political thought is itself a form of political action. Political science is the science not only of what is, but of what ought to be.

## *The Role of Utopianism*

If therefore purpose precedes and conditions thought, it is not surprising to find that, when the human mind