


Sept 25-Sept 27 (week 4) Foundations: IR as a Modern Academic Discipline

Assigned Readings

J. Benjamin de Carvalho, Halvard Leira and John Hobson (2011)
“The Myths That Your Teachers Still Tell You about 1648 and
1919”, *Millennium* 39(3): 735-7

 E. H. Carr (1939) *The Twenty Years Crisis*. London: Macmillan.
Chapters 1 and 2

 Kal Holsti (1985) *The Dividing Discipline*. Boston: Allen and
Unwin. Chapter 1

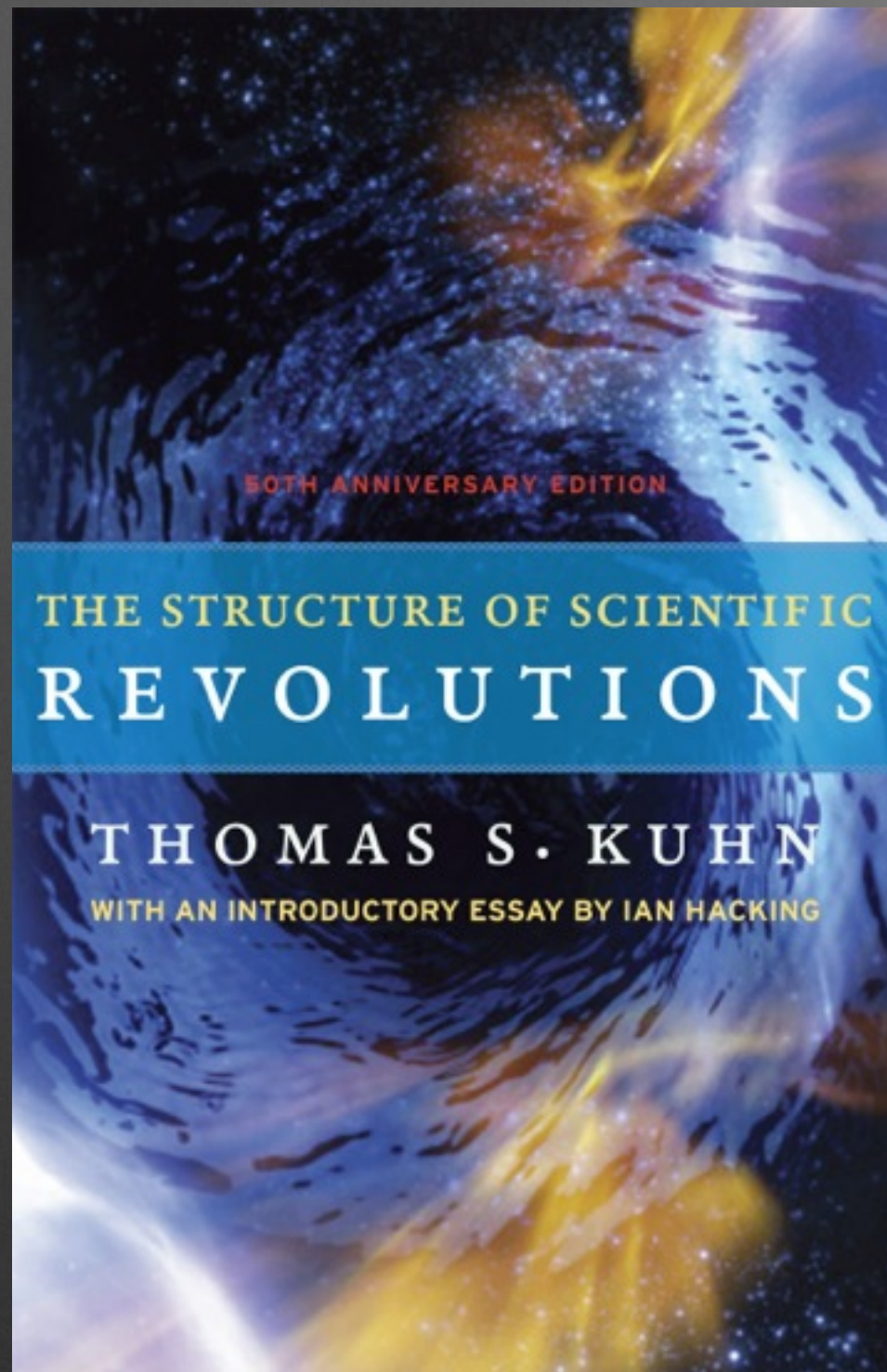
purposes this week

- present (somewhat conflicting) historical claims about the origins of IR
- reconstruct its “great debates”
- acknowledge growing discontent with these “mainstream” views

Stories *of* origin?

**“statecraft crafts not only the sovereign state
but also the state of the discipline”**

–Cynthia Weber



CONTEXT

IR and the
language of
Paradigms

Foundations: Competing views

IR as a coherent *field*

IR as a *science*

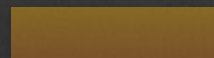
Peloponnesian War
431-404 BCE

World War One

World War Two



The long view: IR as a perpetual clash of power & interest—more like a never resolved problem than a discipline



IR as a modern but classical tradition (Holsti): The first paradigm?



IR as a “science of peace”: circa 1920: The first paradigm?



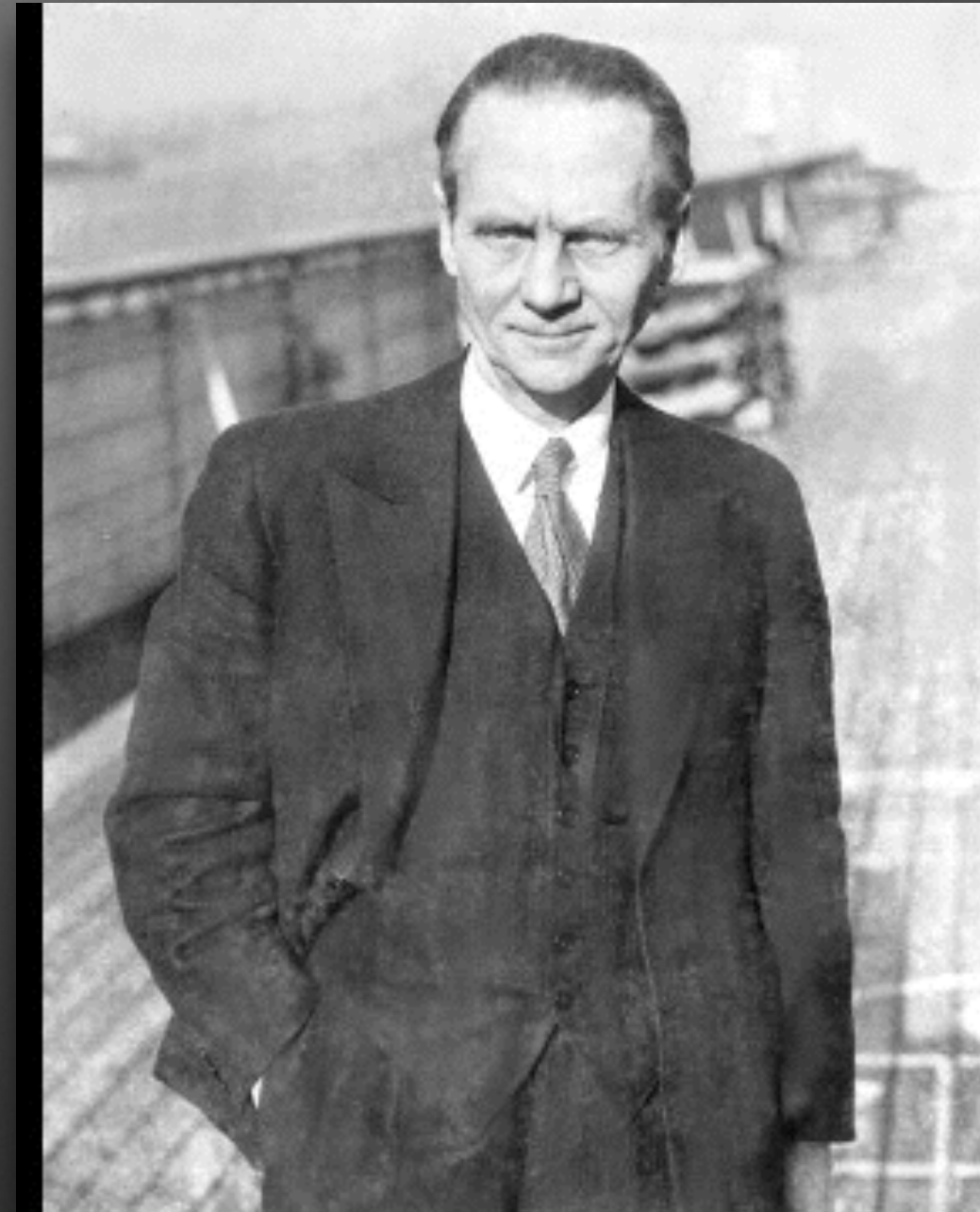
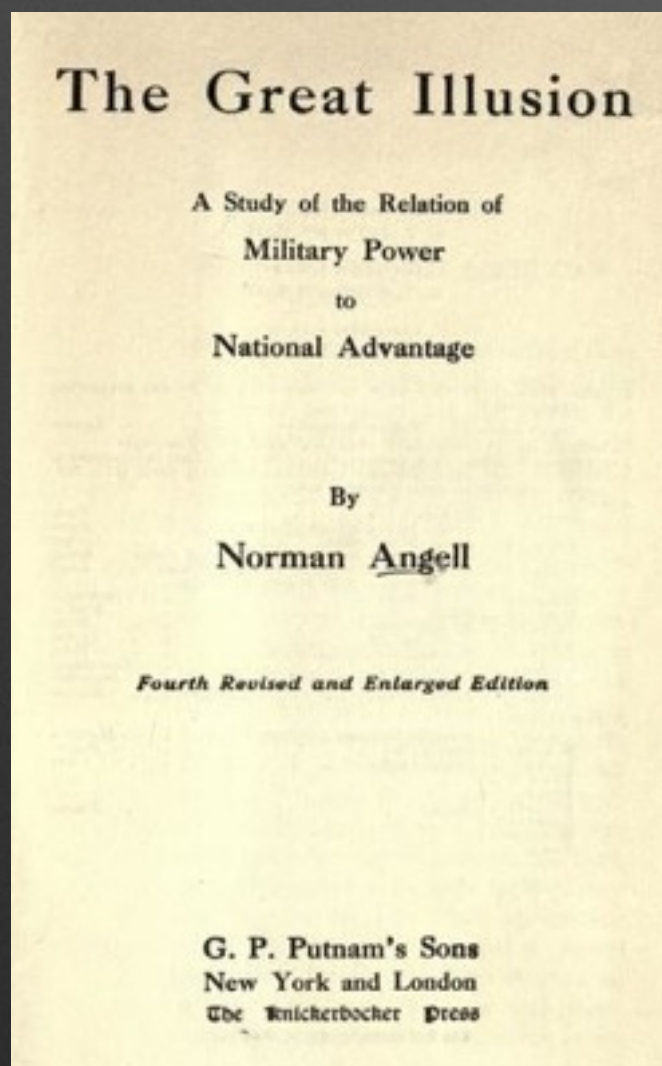
IR as a Realist “science”: circa 1940s: The first paradigm?

IR as a modern “science” take 1: A peace paradigm

Norman Angell (1872–1967)

“military and political power give a nation no commercial advantage, that it is an economic impossibility for one nation to seize or destroy the wealth of another, or for one nation to enrich itself by subjugating another”

“A theorist of whom everyone has heard but few take seriously” Cornelia Navari (1989) “The Great Illusion Revisited,” *Review of International Study*, 15: p. 341



But Idealism the real *Great Illusion*?

“A hollow and intolerable sham,” E. H. Carr
1892 – 1982



Iconic image of idealism's utter failure



Not as simple as it seems

- Many valid criticisms by realists
- e.g. Idealism more resembled liberal indoctrination than academic research
- but recent critics have sought to rescue particular thinkers (especially Angell) from label of misguided idealist (for example David Baldwin 1980)
- more importantly, inter-war idealism hijacks an earlier, more cautious variety
- That idealism never promised an end to war, but instead promoted idea of a society of states
- Associated with Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) & Emmerich de Vattel (1714-1767)
- now closely associated with the English School

Idealism as a Paradigm?



A war to end all wars: Can a movement for peace be a paradigm?

- idealism primarily prescriptive
- dangerously disconnected from even a pretense of scholarly detachment (realist critique)
- and dangerously isolated from “real world” developments
- but helps push a previously scattered, unsystematic field toward some sort of consolidation
- by 1920s IR recognized on both sides of Atlantic as a distinct academic field
- this Anglo-American pedigree remains strong to this day

**CHATHAM
HOUSE**

The Royal Institute of
International Affairs

1920

International
Affairs

1921

COUNCIL ON
FOREIGN RELATIONS



FOREIGN
AFFAIRS

Why the Anglo-American Dominance?

1. Politics: two victorious & “satisfied” powers

Tainted by great power interests

“war to end all wars” a statement of US/UK interest as much as humanity’s desires

Satisfied powers (by definition) seek to avoid war

2. Contingency: social scientists in great abundance in these countries



The Early Years

- At first IR a largely elite (not academic) enterprise
- Paris Peace Conference (January 1919 at Versailles) brought together technical experts
- Leads to creation of “think-tanks” like *Council on Foreign Relations* & *Royal Institute of International Affairs*

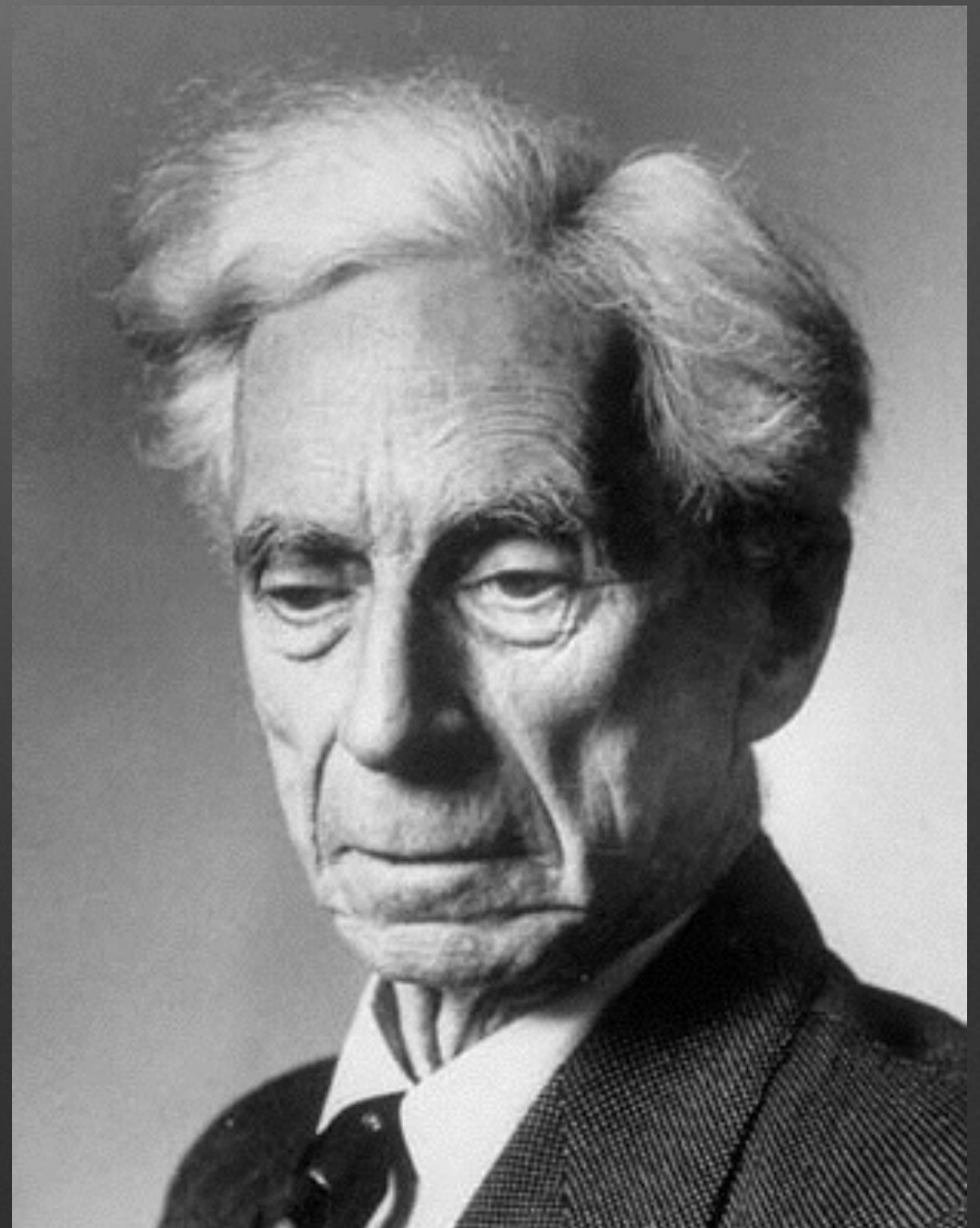
IR still wears the legacy of this early elitism (cult of the expert)

- early research NOT directly associated with universities
- by and for an elite audience of foreign policy practitioners
- universities took their cue from policymakers (IR research now tries to reverse this)
- legacy of this elitism still strong in IR (and the foreign policies of great powers) today
- Elite, technical strand of IR also linked to foundations/pacifist movements (e.g. *World Peace Foundation, Carnegie Endowment*)

Wealthy elites and WW I

And all this madness, all this rage, all this flaming death of our civilization and our hopes, has been brought about because a set of official gentlemen, living luxurious lives, mostly stupid, and all without imagination or heart, have chosen that it should occur rather than that any one of them should suffer some infinitesimal rebuff to his country's pride.

Bertrand Russell



IR as a “Science”: Take one—Idealism and the immutable lessons of World War One



- war no longer a usable tool of statecraft
- war the product of avoidable miscalculation
- war caused by secret diplomacy and sinister interests: Stable peace requires the spread of statehood & democracy

IR as a “science” take 2: Realism and the “birth” of *the* discipline

- early realists prone to talk about “objective” & “scientific” laws of politics
- but such claims often “qualified by an acute awareness of the incommensurability between scientific reason and political action,” Nicolas Guilhot (2011) *The Invention of International Relations Theory* p. 2
- Morgenthau: politics understood *through* reason, but it is *not* in reason that it finds its model
- in other words, politics may be amenable to a rational *understanding* but not be reducible to scientific principles

Beyond (realist) caricatures of realism

- realist IR grounded in irresolvable moral dilemmas (despite allegations of amorality)
- normative theory at core of realism and early realists deliberately put international politics on a path separate from political science
- Morgenthau insists that states must find the appropriate balance between power and morality as they strive to achieve the national interest (which at minimum is national survival); *Politics Among Nations* 1948
- also rejected faith in the utility of empirical tests as means of establishing the validity of theory (*Scientific man versus Power Politics* 1946)
- later realists (especially neorealists) tend to ignore, overlook, or not know this stuff

American IR theory born on Friday, May 7, 1954? Sort of....

Conference on International Politics,
sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation
—Washington, D.C. May 7, 1954

Hans Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr,
Walter Lippmann, Paul Nitze, Arnold
Wolfers, Kenneth W. Thompson, &
Kenneth Waltz

IR theory brought to you by Standard Oil
founder John D. Rockefeller (1839–
1937)?

reminder of the role that organizations
with large endowments can play in the
production and dissemination of ideas
and that theory arises out of a very
specific social context



