# ANDREW LINKLATER

Andrew Linklater

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by

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*Summary*. The primary interest of Andrew Linklater, FBA, FAcSS, FLSW, was in obligations beyond the state, meaning how membership of a particular community could be reconciled with notions of common humanity. To this end he produced a remarkably coherent and evolving body of work, steadily expanding its scope in both intellectual and disciplinary terms. He will be remembered as a major theorist of international relations but also as having made a significant contribution to historical sociology.

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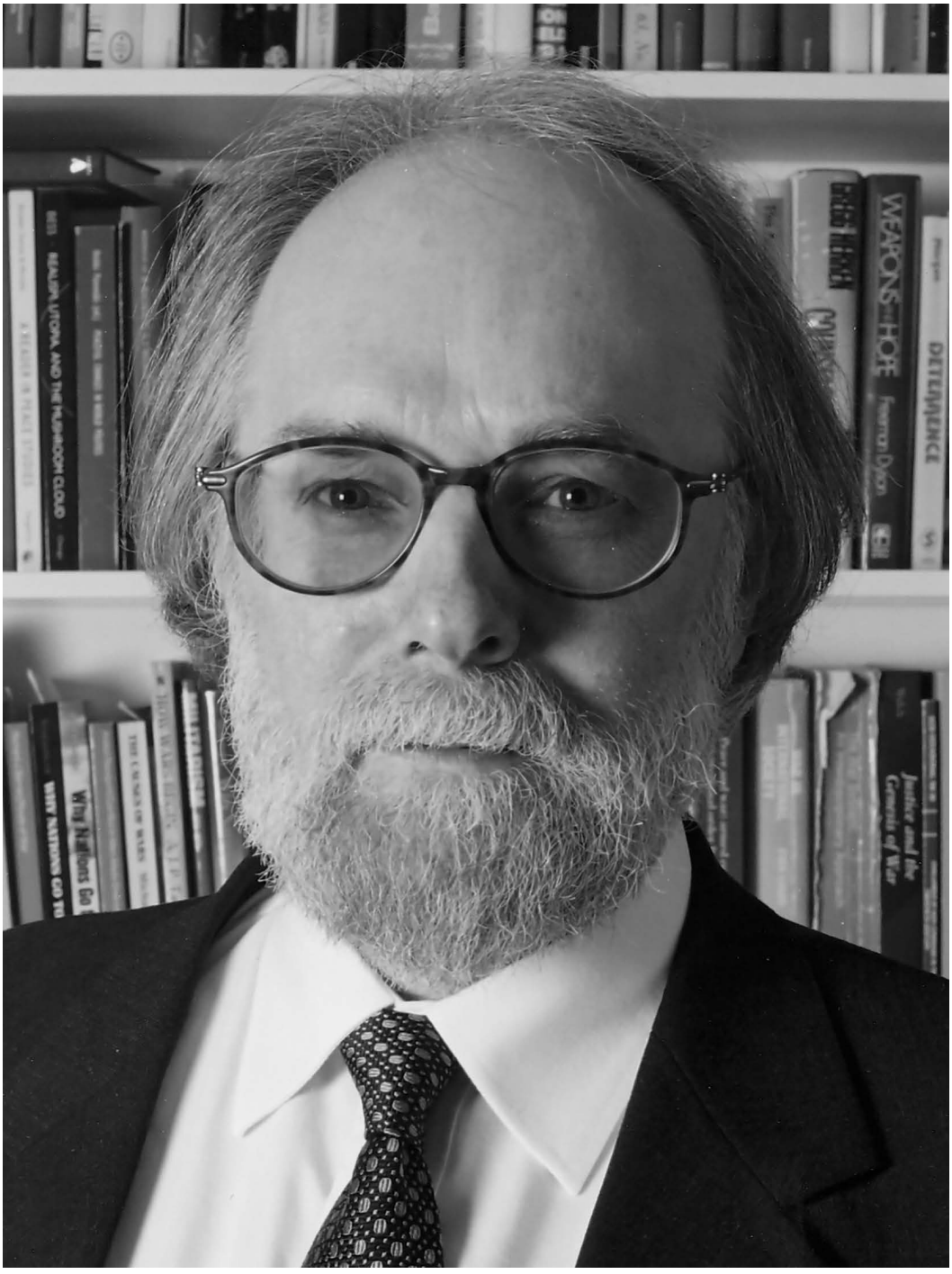


ANDREW LINKLATER

Andrew Linklater had an intellectual project in mind right from his first days as a PhD student at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), in the Department of International Relations.[1] He had come to LSE via an undergraduate degree in Politics and International Relations at Aberdeen University and a BPhil in Politics at Oxford. Three thinkers in particular shaped his trajectory in the course of his education. At Aberdeen Linklater had been influenced by Brian Midgley, a Catholic of Thomist views who had resigned from government service (including a period in the Ministry of Defence) on grounds of conscience. At Oxford he was supervised by Steven Lukes, a distinguished and innovative sociologist-cum-political theorist. Yet he was already beginning to focus on the issue which in one way or another was to preoccupy him personally and intellectually for the rest of his life: how our identity as members of particular societies might be reconciled with the obligations which derive from our common humanity. This led him to move into International Relations at LSE, where the subject was much stronger than at Oxford. At LSE his doctorate was supervised by Michael Donelan, who as a Catholic preoccupied with natural law had overlapping if certainly not identical concerns.

It was at LSE where I first met Andrew, beginning a lifetime's friendship, albeit one conducted for the most part at a physical distance. Linklater's career thenceforwards, over a period of 50 years, was that of a man determined to confront all the difficulties entailed in developing a theory of international politics which could be humanistic without being utopian, historical without being teleological, and which – above all – saw the sovereign state as ultimately more of an obstacle to human well-being than as its most important guarantor.

Andrew was born in Aberdeen on 3 August 1949, long before that city became prosperous through the oil boom. His parents were working-class and had no interest in politics. His father was a postman and his mother had various low-paid jobs, one of which was for a local author, Fenton Wyness. The young Andrew used to come with her at times, sitting under Wyness's desk with a book. It seems likely that this is where Andrew's love of reading began. On one occasion when the writer offered him a book as a birthday present Andrew chose the Chambers Dictionary. Wyness praised him as a 'clever boy' and advised Mrs Linklater to think in terms of university for her son, something which Andrew's mother never forgot. After school Andrew worked in an ice cream factory before going on to university. At the end of his first year there he had a job as a bus conductor.

[1] For most of this piece, dealing with writings and scholarly issues, I have referred simply to 'Linklater' so as to ensure analytical distance. But there are times when I have not been able to resist referring to my friend as 'Andrew'.

It is not clear when his interest in politics began, but as a bright pupil at school in the 1960s he was hardly unusual in wanting to study the subject, not then usually offered at A Level. He had originally applied to study Politics, Moral Philosophy, Sociology and Zoology, but through a timetable clash dropped Zoology in favour of International Relations – a most consequential choice. Andrew was a high-flying undergraduate at Aberdeen, obtaining the best first-class degree in the Department's history and being encouraged to go south to study for the two-year BPhil degree at Oxford. Although he never returned to Scotland to work, his roots remained important to him throughout his life, not least because as a schoolboy he had met Jane Adam, a fellow Aberdonian, whom he was to marry in 1971. Over their long and happy marriage, including six changes of university, she was Andrew's staunchest friend and supporter of his work.

The Linklaters enjoyed their privacy but they were also sociable and adapted easily. Andrew's mixture of intellectual self-confidence and down-to-earth friendliness, coupled with a wry sense of humour, drew people to him. His academic peers realised from an early stage that he was a man of high ability and seriousness, however lightly worn. Even in his leisure interests he could not help but become deeply knowledgeable and proactive. In everything he did Andrew was a person of astounding productivity – achieved in a way which attracted admiration and interest far more than envy. Over his career he published seven major books, the first and arguably the most significant being a development of his groundbreaking PhD thesis. Each of the subsequent six flowed from that beginning and onwards from each other. He also published a jointly written book with Hidemi Suganami, a long-time friend and collaborator from LSE days, together with five edited collections and innumerable articles and book chapters, some of which announced the next stages in his project but many of which dealt with off-shoot interests.

The main body of his work is contained in two major trilogies, even if they were not conceived as such and may not have been seen by the author in these terms even in retrospect. The first consists of three works dealing explicitly with the political theory of international relations, culminating in a clear statement about how political community can be transformed, going beyond the state. The second trilogy continues this project but widens its scope considerably to include empirical issues via a deep engagement with historical and sociological scholarship, being influenced in particular by the work of Norbert Elias. The two trilogies provide the bedrock for this tribute, given that they represent so clearly the trajectory of Linklater's thinking which was itself remarkably systematic and progressive in both senses of the word. Each book follows naturally from its predecessor. Furthermore, because he took the reading of texts immensely seriously, his own books deserve to be treated in the same way.

Linklater's books attracted much attention and response, often via journal special sections, with which he engaged meticulously and reasonably. Indeed, in everything he

did Andrew lived up to Kant's injunction to engage in impartial and critical rationality. And his mind was always at work, even during the last six years of his life when he suffered with the pulmonary fibrosis which was to kill him at the age of 73. This illness is effectively a terminal diagnosis but Andrew did not disclose it even to his closest colleagues, apart from his heads of department. Despite increasing difficulties, he continued to work on the next stage of his project and at the time of his death was near to the completion of another substantial volume.

Andrew Linklater's life divides chronologically and geographically into six periods: his Aberdeen upbringing and undergraduate days; his time in Oxford from 1971 to 1973; his period in London for the LSE PhD from 1973 to 1976; the Australian years from 1976 to 1993, first at the University of Tasmania and then in Melbourne at Monash University; the seven years at Keele University after his permanent return to the United Kingdom in 1993; and the 23 years – almost exactly half of his career – which he spent as holder of the prestigious Woodrow Wilson chair of International Politics at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth.

It was during the LSE period that Linklater began to publish, with help from Geoffrey Goodwin, the head of the LSE's International Relations department, and young staff member Paul Taylor. After he had acted as the secretary to a series of seminar discussions with such leading American visitors as Joseph Nye and Ernst Haas, Goodwin was generous enough to make him a joint editor of the ensuing collection of essays.[2] The senior man was an excellent spotter of talent and wise enough to see that Linklater was already at home in the thickets of international theory, such as it was in the early 1970s. At this time Hedley Bull also became aware of him, asking (from Canberra) if he would check references for his edition of Martin Wight's *System of States*.[3] For his part the topic of 'new dimensions' anticipated Linklater's later stress on the interdependence of national societies and the need to cast ideas of the good life in a wider frame. From the author's personal recollection the writing of the book's introduction was a genuinely joint effort between professor and doctoral student. They came together on views like the following, which in Andrew's case were the product of a growing philosophical conviction that the state could not be understood without reference to the wider context:

> The term 'world politics' is to be preferred to 'international politics' or 'interstate relations' as an indication both of the changes afoot in the contemporary world and of the broader perspectives required for their understanding.[4]

[2] Geoffrey L. Goodwin & Andrew Linklater (eds), *New Dimensions of World Politics* (London: Croom Helm, 1975).
[3] Martin Wight, *Systems of States*, ed. Hedley Bull (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977).
[4] *New Dimensions of World Politics*, p. 2.

A further striking statement in the light of Linklater's later work, although one which also reflected Goodwin's Christian standpoint, came at the end of this piece:

> We need to try to discern more clearly under what circumstances and in what dimensions of international life we can move from our present state in which the nuclear peril induces a sense of a shared predicament … to a realisation of the extent to which our emerging interdependencies may foster a sense of mutual obligation on the basis of which we can approximate more closely to the 'common good.'[5]

## The first trilogy

### *Men and Citizens*

Linklater's PhD thesis, submitted in 1977, was entitled 'Obligations beyond the state: the individual, the state and humanity in international theory', thus anticipating Stanley Hoffmann's prize-winning book *Duties Beyond Borders*.[6] The argument was thus both original and pioneering, even if its transformation into a book published in 1982, with the equally arresting title of *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations*, gave it the appearance of following Hoffmann's lead.[7] The book was naturally an abridged and less elaborate version of the thesis, but it too had a three part construction. This was an elegant way of first establishing the importance of 'international theory', as opposed to political theory's traditional focus on the internal life of the state; then moving on to examine the views of Pufendorf and Vattel on international relations, while finding them both lacking in comparison to Kant's; and third attempting to construct a new 'philosophy of international relations' which located the history of the state in the context of evolving human societies. This approach contained, in its essence, the key themes of the project which Linklater was to pursue systematically over the ensuing phases of his life and career. Even allowing for hindsight, it is striking that the brilliance and ambition of his work, already evident in the doctorate, was not yet sufficiently recognised as to propel him into an academic post in the UK.[8] In the event, after being

[5] Ibid., p. 19. Linklater himself was not a Christian, indeed he was without religious faith of any kind.
[6] Stanley Hoffmann, *Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1981). Linklater had read Hoffmann's 1965 book on war and international theory.
[7] Andrew Linklater, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations* (London: Macmillan for the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1982) – hereafter *Men and Citizens.*
[8] His exceptional qualities had certainly been noted, and not just by Goodwin. Professor Willie Paterson who taught him at Aberdeen and whom Andrew had found 'incredibly supportive of those of us who found the university experience bewildering at first' (personal email, 24 December 2022), thought him 'the best and nicest student I ever taught' (personal email, 7 March 2023).

unlucky in a tight job market with a few applications, he accepted a Lectureship in Political Theory and International Relations at the University of Tasmania in Hobart, a respectable department but not a centre for the issues he was concerned with.

*Men and Citizens* was completed on leave from Hobart in 1980 at the University of Keele where Linklater renewed ties with Suganami and found other sympathetic spirits in John Vincent and Christopher Brewin. Vincent was to prove a major figure in the tradition of the English School of International Relations (IR) which had already influenced Linklater through his reading of Martin Wight's work. It was to be a persistent point of reference in his own.

The main achievements of *Men and Citizens* are fourfold. Firstly, it brought to wider attention, and sharpened the profile of, what was beginning to be known as 'international theory', in contradistinction to conventional political theory. A form of theorising about international relations had been commonplace for centuries, implicit in Thucydides' history and in Machiavelli's guidance to princes. On top of this, the emergence of the academic subject of International Relations after 1919 had fostered normative theory about a better way of conducting inter-state relations. It had also, after E.H. Carr's *The Twenty Years Crisis*, generated modern realist theories attempting to explain actual foreign policy behaviour and to identify wise practice.[9] Yet the explosion from the mid–1950s of 'scientific' approaches to politics, and specifically to foreign policy, meant that by the end of the Cold War Chris Brown could observe that 'theory is a term which is used in international relations with a bewildering number of different meanings'.[10] Most of this was explanatory theory, that is creating hypotheses about why X or Y occurred in the way that it did. But it was also true that by this time a new wave of normative theory about the international realm had begun to emerge, in part out of the English School despite its own founder's scepticism. In 1959 Martin Wight had answered his own question as to 'why is there no international theory?' by arguing that there was no possibility of change in the repetitive world of durable states. For him international life was primarily 'the theory of survival'.[11] It followed that other attempts at theory mostly fell back on moralising, unlike the great tradition of work of 'speculation about the state' from Plato onwards. Wight had not lived to see a new generation of political philosophers pick up the threads from the writers of the classical tradition, so as to go well beyond survival

[9] E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1939). Hans Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948) falls into the same category.

[10] Chris Brown, *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p. 1.

[11] Martin Wight, 'Why is there no international theory?', in Herbert Butterfield & Martin Wight (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966), p. 33.

and the balance of power, towards ideas about justice at the international level and what possibilities there might be for a 'society' of states.

It was this new tradition, then, for which *Men and Citizens* provided some important intellectual scaffolding. Its second principal achievement was to show how international theory was not separate from classical political theory, and perhaps more importantly, the converse: those who saw themselves as political theorists *stricto sensu* would not be able easily to continue seeing the international dimension as marginal to their concerns. This was, indeed, a realisation dawning on political theorists themselves, led by John Rawls, W.B. Gallie and Brian Barry. It was thus revealing and productive that Part One of *Men and Citizens* was entitled 'Foundations of international *political* theory' (my italics). This signalled both that the central problem for students of international relations was political in nature, and that international political theory (henceforth IPT) was a natural outgrowth of the classical canon, not to be confused with the many other flowers blooming under the heading of IR theory. Contemporaries of Linklater such as Chris Brown and Mervyn Frost were quick either to come to the same view or to pick up on his lead. In the United Kingdom, Wight and Donelan had been the most explicit about the need for this convergence, but neither had fully followed through.[12] In the United States, Kenneth Waltz had started down the same path in 1959 only to abandon it for structural realism, while in 1979 Charles Beitz had published his explicitly normative *Political Theory and International Relations* – incidentally not footnoted in *Men and Citizens*.[13] Linklater seems mostly at this time to have preferred to plough his own furrow, but in an 'Addendum' to Chapter 4 he seems to be catching up with John Rawls whom he criticises, following Brian Barry, for not progressing beyond Samuel Pufendorf's circular view of the relationship between 'the social contract which establishes government and the contract which establishes the principles of international society'.[14]

The third achievement of Linklater's first book was his systematic working through of the ideas of Samuel Pufendorf, Emerich de Vattel and Immanuel Kant, chosen because of the 'detailed attention they give to the problem of defending the sovereign state within a theory of international obligation'.[15] In this choice he departed from Wight's idea of the three traditions of thought about international relations as Machiavellian, Grotian and Kantian, which Hedley Bull had built upon in his philosophically informed analysis of

[12] Martin Wight, ibid.; Michael Donelan, 'The political theorists and international theory', in Michael Donelan (ed.), *The Reason of States: A Study in International Political Theory* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978), pp. 75–91.
[13] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); Charles R. Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979).
[14] *Men and Citizens*, p. 78.
[15] *Men and Citizens*, p. 60.

how order works in world politics (sic).[16] Linklater does not say why he did not include Hugo Grotius in his exegesis, but it may be that he saw him as not having reflected enough on the inherent limitations of the state, given his preoccupation with the value of an inter-state society, or simply that Grotius had already been given enough attention. But it is also true that, as his specific concern was with the distinction between insiders and outsiders, he had chosen the three thinkers because it enabled him to trace a progressive narrative, starting with Pufendorf's acceptance of a bounded territorial state whose Hobbesian contract in effect precludes obligations to outsiders. In noting the ethical limitations of this position, not least in terms of the natural law to which Pufendorf still subscribed, Linklater then moved on to Vattel (also a natural law man) in whose work one can see the beginnings of the society of states approach, albeit in the form of the balance of power.[17] Whereas Pufendorf paid lip service to the need for 'universal peace', Vattel defended the 'moral obligations which all states ought to honour as members of "the natural society of nations"'.[18] The tension between men and citizens is thus at least acknowledged, but for Linklater this is still unsatisfactory because such obligations are left in the hands of the monopolistic state. He agreed that natural law is too vague to provide guidance for, let alone constraints on, state behaviour, but was sceptical about Vattel's trust in alliances, the balance of power or Europe 'as a sort of republic'. In a perhaps unconscious nod to foreign policy analysis Linklater affirmed that 'statecraft is more complex than this'.[19] It was towards Kant and the idea of universal consent where the argument was heading.

Linklater was convinced by Kant's view that reason led inexorably to universal ethical principles, but it is also clear, from *Men and Citizens* and all his following work, that it also coincided with his epistemology and personal deontology at the time, in that he was committed to thinking about how a fairer, more peaceful and more tolerant world might be achieved. Yet as the most systematic and fair-minded of theorists he would have been the first to acknowledge that we do not begin thinking from a *tabula rasa*, arriving at the strongest argument by pure reason. We shall see later that his reliance on both history and sociology meant that he accepted Robert Cox's view that 'knowledge is always for someone and for some purpose', meaning that theory therefore cuts both ways, affecting both author and subject.[20] This is the fourth achievement of *Men and*

[16] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977).
[17] An excellent summary of this, together with a perceptive analysis of the book as a whole, can be found in Richard Devetak & Juliette Gout, 'Obligations beyond the state: Andrew Linklater's *Men and Citizens* in the theory of International Relations', in Henrik Bliddal, Caspar Sylvest & Peter Wilson (eds), *Classics of International Relations: Essays in Criticism and Appreciation* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 177–86.
[18] *Men and Citizens*, p. 80.
[19] Ibid., p. 92.
[20] Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998) [hereafter *Transformation*], p. 20. Robert Cox,

*Citizens*: paving the way for the emergence of critical theory in IR, in the sense of both interrogating conventional assumptions and looking towards 'the progressive development of the conditions of sociability', first domestically then internationally.[21]

At base level Linklater believed, like Kant, in humanity's capacity for progress. Yet he also saw that this belief opens the door to historicism, in that it allows for changing material circumstances to determine moral progress, and to teleology, for which neither he nor Kant had any sympathy. Yet it was natural for him to engage with Marx. It is clear from *Men and Citizens* that at this stage Linklater saw Marx as well as Kant as his primary reference points (Hegel's views are also expounded carefully but with a certain opaqueness about their relationship to historicism). He points out that, while at first the historicist critique of natural law (as of Kantian rationalism) 'seems unanswerable', it soon runs into its own problems, whether of relativism or of making arbitrary judgements about hierarchies of cultural or moral superiority. Like rationalism, it could not give a satisfactory account of its own foundations. Still, historicism did effectively overcome the binary of men versus citizens by privileging groups over individuals, whether in nations or classes. Although for Hegel this meant seeing the state as the embodiment of history's Spirit, his dialectical approach and 'philosophical history' allowed for the possibility, in modern conditions, of the 'transformation of political life so that the human capacity for self-determination' is not limited by the state.[22]

The belief in 'transformation' anticipates the third book in Linklater's first trilogy, to be published in 1998, and is yet another indication of the coherence of his evolving thought. The idea of a cosmopolitan international order was surfacing in his work, as a progression in the products of human reason, as was the 'species' as a criterion – despite the global environmental movement not yet having taken off. 'Freedom' was to be understood broadly (perhaps with a nod to Isiah Berlin's 'freedom to') by seeing reason as in constant interplay with material conditions, allowing philosophers to see how it could steadily be enlarged, enabling men to achieve self-mastery. More importantly, it was to be understood universally, not as limited by the state or even the embryonic 'system of states'. Taking Marx's famous words but going beyond them, he thought men would come to understand how to make '*more* of their history under conditions of their own choosing'.[23] History cannot be planned but can be managed in more rational ways.

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'Social forces, states and world orders: beyond International Relations theory', *Millennium*, 10 (1981), 126–55. Linklater was to join in the flood of tributes to Cox after the latter's death in 2018. Shannon Brincat, 'Tributes to Robert W. Cox', 29 October 2018. https://www.ppesydney.net/tributes-to-robert-w-cox/

[21] *Men and Citizens*, p. 111.

[22] Ibid., p. 138.

[23] Andrew Linklater, *Critical Theory in World Politics: Citizenship, Sovereignty and Humanity* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 25. My italics.

Linklater also followed both Hegel and Marx in seeing that freedom would be realised through various historical stages, including in international relations. He nails his colours to the mast in stating that 'the desirability of a higher form of international political life than the modern states-system can be defended within a theory of history'.[24]

*Men and Citizens* skilfully leads the reader through the history of political thought with special reference to the moral tensions generated by the boundary between societies' internal and external faces/activities. The trajectory of the argument relies on the idea that mankind's increasing interdependence makes it ever more myopic to seek refuge in national interests alone. Thus Marx showed that 'capitalism produced world history for the first time', anticipating globalisation theory by more than a century.[25] The global action of capital would produce transnational links and perspectives in the proletariat. Linklater knew that Marx had underestimated the power of local identities, but praised his separation of class particularism from national particularism. He believed, with Marx, in the ultimate possibility of true human freedom emerging from the alienation imposed by state, class and unequal access to resources. While we should resist reductionism in reconstructing Linklater's view here, it is worth noting that his working-class upbringing made him all too aware of the constraints imposed on ordinary people's lives by war and poverty. His move to connect Kant to Marx, rather than choosing between them, was the product of intellectual conviction – but also one of sympathy. In this he was following the Frankfurt school, which was to become important to his later work through his interest in Jürgen Habermas.[26]

Linklater was thus increasingly concerned with the idea of cosmopolitanism as an ethical advance on existing forms of international relations. There is a Whig undertow to parts of *Men and Citizens* in its stress on 'a scale of ascending forms' of 'intersocietal arrangements', although he is usually quick to stress that nothing is ever fixed in stone (and in later work influenced by Elias, he often points to the reversibility of achievements).[27] It is the notion of advance (or rather of *potential* advance) which forms the basis of his emerging critical theory. Pure reason neglects the social processes by which humans move to higher levels of interaction, which are to be understood through 'philosophical history'. In turn, this involves understanding the *conditions* by which a theory becomes plausible. Philosophy can then enable us to see the limitations on freedom of a specific set of historical conditions.

History is an enigmatic presence in *Men and Citizens*. It was later in his grand project, after reading Elias, that Linklater showed interest in serious engagement with empirical scholarship on major events bringing ethical issues to the fore. In this first book, history

[24] *Men and Citizens*, p.138.
[25] Ibid., p. 152
[26] I owe this point to Chris Brown.
[27] Ibid., p. 140.

is ever-present but necessarily under-specified. The philosophical discussion is rarely over-abstract but the main concern is with ideal-types. Even so, given the nature of language it was impossible for the author fully to divorce his models from the real world, as in the otherwise rather anomalous chapter entitled 'From tribalism to political society' (a theme which was to be picked up seriously in the second trilogy). Towards the end of the book he also begins to reflect on the problems of praxis, arguing that if the scale of international violence is to be controlled 'more detailed principles of foreign policy' will be needed[28]. Noting that this is beyond the scope of the book, he looks forward to a 'theory of action, a theory of normative constraints in empirical circumstances'.[29]

This very admission is required because at the end of his careful exegeses Linklater finally makes his normative position, always semi-visible, explicit. The state and the balance of power need transcending, in favour of 'more humanised international relations'.[30] As a first step states should be able to develop international law to the point where they accept the 'obligation to demonstrate the reasonableness of a controverted national claim'.[31] Linklater's vision of a cosmopolitan system is revolutionary, but he is still pragmatic about the difficulties of getting there. He sees ahead to issues that will need to be confronted later. The 'reasonableness' argument evoked the sociological approach to international law of progressive international lawyers such as Rosalyn Higgins.[32] Equally, it looked forward to the dialogic work of Habermas. *Men and Citizens* ignored the internal debates of academic IR – even realism is notably absent – in favour of first doing justice to major thinkers of the past, and second constructing the intellectual foundations for his own emerging ideas about how to reconcile citizenship with higher obligations to humanity and to the species.

### *Beyond Realism and Marxism*

I have given special attention to *Men and Citizens* because it is a classic work of international theory, but also because it is the foundational work for Linklater's evolving project. In the next two volumes of this first trilogy he developed his ideas systematically in two directions: coming to terms more directly with realism and with Marxism; and then moving on to an explicit statement of how political communities and international relations might be jointly transformed, building on insights from rationalism, realism and structuralism, but going beyond them all.

[28] Ibid., p. 194.
[29] Ibid., pp. 204–5.
[30] Ibid., p. 203.
[31] Ibid., p. 197.
[32] See Rosalyn Higgins, *Conflict of Interests: International Law in a Divided World* (London: The Bodley Head, 1965), and Abram Chayes, *The Cuban Missile Crisis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

*Beyond Realism and Marxism* was the follow-up, published in 1990 by Macmillan just as its predecessor had been. It was written while the author was at Monash, but also during a return to LSE for six months of sabbatical in 1984. It aimed to develop what was now becoming known in IR as critical theory, by examining in turn IR's vulnerability to Marxist criticisms and realist scepticism towards Marxism in sociology. It is another extremely thorough work of scholarship in the history and analysis of ideas – lucid and intellectually honest – even though perhaps less interesting than *Men and Citizens* in that it lacks the latter's originality and sheer energy. It is largely a work of exegesis, with the meticulous examination of (in particular) the cast of Marxist perspectives leading him effectively to rule out that paradigm as the answer to the weaknesses of realism. Marxism might be superior to realism (and indeed to rationalism) in its emancipatory interest and in bringing political economy to the fore, but it is also unsophisticated in its approach to extending the idea of a moral community beyond the state and indeed to the state itself, to say nothing of the classical problems of war and/or co-existence.[33] This line of argument might have led Linklater to Karl Polyani's *The Great Transformation*, but his discovery of that work was still to come.

At times *Beyond Realism and Marxism* gives the impression that Linklater was writing less for the IR and political theory audience of his first book than for the different Marxist tribes which were prominent in intellectual life during the Cold War, disillusioned with Soviet communism but hardly better disposed towards western capitalism and usually – in their theory-focused scholasticism – scornful of orthodox academic thinking about power and politics. He needed to do this because he was sympathetic to their stress on issues of material inequality and on the need to understand the global movements of capital. The very fact that he put so much effort into explaining the deficiencies not only of classical Marxism, but also of modern variants such as theories of dependency and world-systems, suggests that for him Marxism was a particularly important frame of reference. Indeed, it may be that at one level he was conducting an interior dialogue with himself in order to be sure that a philosophy for which he had much natural sympathy could not ultimately provide the platform for the arguments to which logic and personal development were leading him. At the same time it must be remembered that *Beyond Realism and Marxism* was written in the decade before the fall of the Berlin wall suddenly pushed socialist ideas (and certainly internal Marxist debates) to the fringes of intellectual life in the West. There is a certain parallelism between its working through of the reasons for disillusion with the Marxist paradigm, and the evolution of real-world events – although the argument is kept strictly academic throughout, with not even a mention, for example, of the 1968 Prague Spring or the 1980 Solidarity movement in Poland.

[33] Andrew Linklater, *Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 171–62.

It is thus perhaps not surprising that despite the book's title (and the author's reference to 'stimulating conversations' with Kenneth Waltz at Berkeley in 1985) realism as such tends to take a back seat. It is difficult to discuss realism without some degree of empirical reference. Yet Linklater also probably saw its ethical deficiencies as being almost too obvious to relate, especially after having spent much time with Pufendorf and Vattel in *Men and Citizens*. After five pages in Chapter 1 he soon moves on to 'revolutionism' (a Wightian term presaging his eventual attempt to bring together the English School's view of international society with critical theory) and to the encounter with Marxism. Thereafter realism only appears intermittently, largely as a counterpoint to Marxism and in the context of sociology's belated discovery of international politics.

The reference to going 'beyond' realism and Marxism was well-chosen, as the aim in this second book was not synthesis but transcendence, using insights from both traditions to build a new understanding of ethics at the international level. This was in part the scholastic exercise of promoting critical theory within IR, but more important was Linklater's mission to show how 'political action might extend the moral communities with which citizens identify in the modern world'. And the reference to modernity was hardly incidental; he saw the increased interdependence of modern life at all levels having created new opportunities for establishing duties across borders. In this context he was already attracted to Jürgen Habermas's stress on the evolution of moral reasoning and the role of language in that process. There are hints that this means thinking not just about leaders and philosophers but also about ordinary citizens and how their basic human needs might be sought and met.[34] That entails 'counter-hegemonic' struggle but also new principles such as the 'common heritage of mankind' or 'basic human needs'. On human needs John Burton had made the case a decade before, but on the common heritage Linklater was well ahead of the game, at least in mainstream IR.[35]

### *The Transformation of Political Community*

As he began work at Monash on the final work of what was to be the first trilogy, Linklater started from the position that sociology and IR should share the same research agenda. Sociology should accept the continuing power of the sovereign state and the realm of recurrence in international politics, while IR needed to continue expanding beyond its original vision of politics and ethics ending at the water's edge (itself a notably

[34] Ibid., p. 143. A critical theory must understand 'the changing ways in which states and their citizens have defined the moral and political principles which underlie their separation from the rest of the world'.
[35] Burton is associated with the concept of basic human needs which he originally termed 'social-biological values', but he did not engage with serious political philosophy. John W. Burton, *World Society* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

Anglocentric metaphor).[36] To this academic imperative in *The Transformation of Political Community* (hereafter *Transformation*) he added the normative vision which had been partly visible in his previous two books.[37] This new volume was a publishing departure, appearing under the imprint of Polity Press. Polity was the brainchild of two figures who were to become closely identified with globalisation theory and indeed with New Labour's 'third way' approach to politics in the late 1990s, namely the political scientist David Held and the sociologist Tony Giddens. Public policy debate did not appeal to Linklater (although he certainly had strong personal views), but he was attracted to the cosmopolitanism and interdisciplinarity of third way thinking. He became close to Held and to the latter's colleague Daniele Archibugi. Although he did not work with Giddens it is a nice coincidence that the latter's first academic post was in the Sociology Department at Leicester, where he worked with Norbert Elias (even if not much influenced by him). Both Elias and Leicester would subsequently become central to Linklater's own work, but this third book was largely written after taking up a chair at Keele (and thus returning to the UK) where the head of department Alex Danchev soon saw the need to grant him a year's sabbatical.

Given publishers' influence on book titles we should not read too much into exact wordings. But as it happens the sub-title of *Transformation* does reflect Linklater's belief as much as hope that the world after the end of the Cold War was opening up major new possibilities for peoples' sense of a common humanity. This was because, as is common in IR, he described modern international relations up to that point in short-hand terms as a 'Westphalian system', meaning one dominated by the aspiration to absolute sovereignty and by a rejection of the idea of obligations to non-nationals. As historians have since shown this is a considerable simplification.[38] In later work Linklater acknowledged this, but in the 1990s the end of the Cold War encouraged the widespread belief that a long period of stasis associated with the domination of the sovereign state was coming to an end. He was particularly enthusiastic about the challenge to the state's 'totalising projects'[39] which came from below as well as from above – in a word, from 'glocalisation', even if such jargon was not his style. Rather, it would simply now be 'absurd to assume that the most significant moral community comprises fellow-citizens or

[36] In *Boundaries in Question: New Directions in International Relations*, co-edited with John Macmillan (London: Pinter, 1995), Linklater questioned both intellectual gatekeeping in IR and the real-world significance of political boundaries between states in an era of globalisation. See Linklater & Macmillan, 'Introduction: boundaries in question', pp. 1–16.

[37] Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge: Polity Books, 1998).

[38] Andreas Osiander, 'Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth', *International Organization*, 55:2 (2001), 251–287. Brendan Simms & D.J.B. Trimm (eds), *Humanitarian Intervention: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[39] *Transformation*, p. 108.

co-nationals'.[40] A new dawn seemed to have arrived. The author's usual self-restraint and judicious analysis remain prevalent, but a streak of excitement, even radicalism, is also evident in this book.

The fragmenting of state authority meant that citizens would be freer to enjoy multiple identities and loyalties, producing a creative diversity in which minorities no longer felt so excluded. At the same time, following Habermas' concept of communicative-action, the principle of dialogue should be elevated over competition and control so that moral-practical learning could occur. Yet Linklater was never naïve; he recognises both that dialogue will take place within a capitalist environment of exploitation and that the state will remain a major influence on citizens' lives. It is the fully sovereign state which he sees as anachronistic. What is more he was aware of his own cosmopolitan impulse and the tension it creates with cultural specificity. One of his answers to this dilemma is to suggest how the state can be harnessed to progressive causes such as human rights, following the lead of his by now late friend John Vincent.[41] Another was to pick up on the idea of the Australian foreign minister Gareth Evans who in 1990 had made a speech arguing that states could and should behave as 'good international citizens'.[42] This idea was much discussed during Linklater's years in Monash, where he wrote the first draft of *Transformation,* as it was to be at a later stage with colleagues at Aberystwyth such as Ian Clark, Tim Dunne and Nicholas Wheeler. At the same time he agreed with Richard Falk that the idea of 'global citizenship' in the absence of a global state was sentimental; more intelligent was an aspiration to transnational or 'cosmopolitan' citizenship, whereby individuals developed empathy and some sense of obligation to human beings qua human beings.[43]

At this point Linklater paused for a rare comment on a contemporary political controversy. He clearly approved of Will Kymlicka's belief in the value of multiculturalism in the sense of 'group-specific rights'.[44] Yet at the same time he was quick, as always, to present all sides of the argument and to prioritise its theoretical sophistication. At this stage of his development he showed little inclination to engage with the issues of blood and iron which characterise much of international politics, even where they

[40] Ibid., p. 31.

[41] Vincent died in London on 2 November 1990. Linklater wrote sadly from Australia that 'we are left with powerful memories and his lasting influence' (personal communication, 8 January 1991). For his continuing appreciation, two decades on, see Andrew Linklater 'Prudence and principle in international society: reflections on Vincent's approach to human rights', in *International Affairs*, 87:5 (September 2011), pp. 1179–91.

[42] Gareth Evans, 'Foreign policy and good international citizenship', Canberra, 6 March 1990. https://www.gevans.org/speeches/old/1990/060390_fm_fpandgoodinternationalcitizen.pdf

[43] The citation is from Richard Falk, 'The making of global citizenship', in Bart von Steenbergen (ed.), *The Condition of Citizenship* (London: Sage, 1994).

[44] *Transformation*, p. 83.

involved obvious ethical issues, as with the Bosnian war, the Rwanda genocide, or the dilemmas presented by Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi. He did not focus on the issue of genocide, for example, until the books of the second trilogy (see below). This was not because Linklater was temperamentally an ivory tower don. He was always well-informed and often politically concerned. More likely, it was because he did not want to distract from the seriousness of his philosophical discussion, where he knew he had something important to contribute, by descending into the ephemera of think-tankery. It might also have been because the *zeitgeist* of the 1990s was that of a belief in 'war no more', a prediction which certainly resonated with the picture he was painting of post-Westphalian cosmopolitanism. Even here, however, the richness of *Transformation* consists in its persistent subtlety over the co-existence and interaction of states and trans-nationalism – something absent from the enthusiastic hyper-globalisation school. He endorses Held's vision of 'cosmopolitan democracy', but adds 'these remarks do not anticipate the demise of the state but envisage its reconstruction'.[45] Indeed, the book tends to make its case more by presenting the strengths and weakness of others' arguments than by explicitly stating his own preferences – the style established in his previous two monographs.

Continuity is indeed evident in the underpinnings of *Transformation* despite its more normative and assertive character. References to Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Marx are just as frequent as those to Habermas, Held and Rorty, the contemporary thinkers Linklater uses to support his view that a 'transformation' is underway in the experience of community. Other famous public intellectuals are taken less seriously. Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' thesis, first expounded in 1993, is simply ignored despite its obvious relevance to the multiculturalism debate. Francis Fukuyama's even more notorious 'end of history' is dismissed as a 'reinvention of Western cosmopolitan triumphalism'.[46] There is a whiff here of academic puritanism in Linklater's approach, or possibly of political tunnel vision, despite his strenuous – and usually successful – efforts to be fair-minded.

The real element of continuity in *Transformation*, however, relates to a term which is beginning to emerge in Linklater's thinking – 'immanence'. This was to become central during the second trilogy of major works, influenced by Norbert Elias. For now it can serve as a reflexive description of how an emerging concern in *Beyond Realism and Marxism* flowers fully in this successor volume, namely critical theory.[47] Whereas previously his main concern had been to introduce 'post-Marxist critical theory' to an IR

[45] Ibid., p. 44.
[46] Ibid., pp. 46–7.
[47] Linklater's first reference to immanence seems to have been in his 'The achievements of critical theory', in Steve Smith, Ken Booth & Marysia Zaleweski (eds), *International theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 279–98.

audience and to establish it as a serious alternative to realism and rationalism, in *Transformation* he was actually doing critical theory. Thus the great theorists now gave ground before the substantive issues like emancipation, exclusion, community and citizenship which dominated the chapter headings. He was particularly concerned with 'unrealised possibilities'.[48] Exclusion was a major theme, with feminist thinking cited for the first time as having highlighted its effects.[49] The circle between ideas and actual politics was partly squared through the importance Linklater gave to processes of dialogue, in that progress was seen as being possible through exchange and moral learning. Still, critical theory was to have more of a cutting edge than this. It raised difficult questions such as whether empires or societies of states had more potential for 'advances in universality' and 'enlarging the realm of social interaction which is governed by dialogue rather than force'.[50] Although politically incorrect this point revealed the author's hostility to nationalism and to exclusions from social processes. Indeed, there might have been a personal note in his reference to 'the capacity to trap human beings in bounded societies' during a discussion of the emergence of 'civilised' social systems.[51]

*The Transformation of Political Community* soon became a seminal work of critical theory in the UK and beyond. He had been developing the ideas expressed there throughout the 1990s, and was invited to speak about them in Australia, Canada, Indonesia and Spain as well as across the UK. The book helped to remake the landscape of IR theory particularly in those influenced by the Marxian tradition. It gave its readers the conceptual tools not just to critique state-centric accounts of world politics, but to construct, on the basis of observed trends, a set of criteria and opportunities for human co-existence which went beyond both utopianism and the basic avoidance of war. In this Linklater was consciously responding to E.H. Carr's belief in the need for constant attention to the balance between national loyalties and progressive internationalism. Such an injunction would have been regarded as insufficient by many of the later theorists discussed in *Transformation*, especially the post-modern challengers to any notion of foundations. Indeed, even during the 1990s a split was emerging in critical theory, with the post-structuralist camp influenced by Foucault and Derrida showing hostility to the historically materialist strand.

Here Linklater might be accused of having skirted the issue. He prefers 'ethical universality' to 'universal morality' on the grounds that the latter shuts down cultural difference, although this might have been a distinction without a difference. Equally, although he has rejected Kant's rationalist moral imperatives his own deontology is not fully clarified. Ethics have to emerge from *process*, meaning dialogue and social learning.

[48] *Beyond Realism and Marxism*, p. 172.
[49] *Transformation*, pp. 25–6, 68–9, 93–6.
[50] Ibid., pp. 111 and 132.
[51] Ibid., p. 134.

Yet such processes can, as we have more recently discovered, lead to the spread of nationalist populisms which create the very exclusions Linklater argues so strongly against. He discusses Richard Rorty's position at length and seems to agree that 'perhaps it is sufficient to argue that the ethic of freedom prevails by default since alternative ethics of domination … have had their foundational supports stripped away'.[52] His ultimate hope is for 'wider universalities of discourse which increase the range of permissible disagreements'.[53] As we shall see this is not so far removed, as Linklater himself recognised, from the society of states approach to international order, which itself in some respects had anticipated constructivism.[54] His intellectual honesty meant that while in *Transformation* he was striving to imagine a truly improved version of the status quo, with individuals freed from the 'social cage' of the state, he would not deny that getting there represented a major challenge.

## The second trilogy

### The English School

If the comprehensive normative statement of *The Transformation of Political Community* was a punctuation mark in Linklater's work, it was certainly not a full stop. While other thinkers might have contented themselves with various restatements of their position in the context of changing circumstances, his approach was, instead, to develop themes which had begun to emerge in his writing but which he deemed important to develop further. The two main examples of this are his view of the English School of IR, and his increasing interest in the concept of harm. The first had been fully evident throughout the first trilogy, in part through having studied for his PhD in the International Relations Department at LSE. The second, however, was evidently an idea struggling to be born in Linklater's mind during the writing of *Transformation*. Brief references to harm can be found in the context of his view that if human beings could not be persuaded to share a distinct moral code then at least they could progress by showing each other greater compassion.[55] Both harm and the English School were in time themselves to be the subjects of major books. It seems possible that the book on harm emerged from Linklater's taking seriously a review of its predecessor which made the point that Habermasian dialogue

[52] Ibid., p. 71.
[53] Ibid., p. 108.
[54] Andrew Linklater, *Critical Theory and World Politics: Citizenship, Sovereignty and Humanity* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 198 n. 13. This is a collection of (revised) essays first published between 1982 and 2007. It demonstrates both the range and the consistency of his concerns.
[55] The references to harm are on pp. 191–92 of *Transformation*.

was too abstract and lacked materiality. He concluded that harm was a more fundamental basis of universality given the collective human bodily vulnerability.[56] But it also seems likely that his enthusiasm for IR critical theory as such was waning, uninterested as he was in factionalism and polemics.

Before the original work on harm was completed Linklater took time out to write his joint book with Hidemi Suganami on the English School. This derived from their long collaboration at Keele and then at Aberystwyth, where Linklater had become Woodrow Wilson Professor in 2000 and where Suganami was to follow in 2004. The Introduction explains in the third person his personal debt to the English School, deriving from his postgraduate time onwards:

> Linklater had dedicated much of his scholarly work to developing a cosmopolitan perspective, arguing for the necessity and possibility of reducing the areas in which the institutional distinction between citizens and outsiders is treated as morally relevant in the practice of world politics. … In this process he had come to see in some of the key works of the English School – especially historical ones emanating from the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics – a rich source of insight and inspiration.[57]

The reference to the historical works of the British Committee was to its 'pioneering interest in a comparative study of states-systems'.[58] But Linklater also valued its use of the Kantian tradition and the way it pointed to the 'progressive potentials' even in a world of anarchy, enabling some 'basic normative guidelines' for contemporary foreign policy.[59] He admitted to having been 'tolerant of ambiguities' in the work of Wight, Adam Watson and Bull given his wish to develop the English School 'in a more critical and normative direction'. As he had done previously with the work of John Vincent, he acknowledged the 'inspiration and insight' they had provided.[60] But by this time he was already grafting onto their thinking his own interest in 'harm conventions', meaning the norms which different international systems generate on how permissible it is to harm outsiders. This was to be the subject of his next monograph, five years on, to be considered below.[61] His hope and belief was that some progressive movement was occurring in history, from simple interactions between units, through a minimalist form of international

[56] I owe this information to André Saramago.
[57] Andrew Linklater & Hidemi Suganami, *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Reassessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 1.
[58] Ibid., p. 10. For a rich account of the British Committee which includes a list of its outputs see Brunello Vigezzi, *The British Committee on the Theory of International Politics: The Rediscovery of History* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2005).
[59] Linklater & Suganami, p. 3.
[60] Ibid., p. 4.
[61] Andrew Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011). Hereafter *Harm*.

society, towards what Bull had termed a solidarism between states. Thus the English School's interest in norms and values was to be 'exploited' to sketch out a 'meliorist, gradualist' project for spreading the acceptance of human rights world-wide.[62] John Vincent had been the key figure here, although Linklater was by now impatient with what he saw as his friend's relative conservatism – despite the fact that Vincent had put the right to subsistence firmly on the human rights agenda.[63]

There are two particularly interesting aspects of this credo. One is Linklater's willingness to harness rights talk to his own approach, which meant bringing it together with the insights he drew from Marxism about the damage done to individuals by capitalism. The second is his defence of merging an account of historical evolution (following Watson rather than Wight) with a post-positivist epistemology: 'it is submitted, there is no way to represent the world without necessarily offering an interpretation of it and ... however marginally, affecting, or contributing to, the way the world goes on'.[64] As we shall see, the tension inherent in this combination of views was to remain evident throughout the three major books to come, and his already keen interest in the work of Elias (of whom he had first become vaguely aware through a seminar convened by Stephen Mennell at Monash in 1991) led him to see it as creative rather than inhibiting.[65] His focus was on potentials, and on immanence, both susceptible in his view to analytical description.

If the English School was the crucible from which Linklater's scholarship had emerged, remaining an important point of reference throughout his life, it was also an approach which he sought to transcend personally and to a lesser extent transform academically.[66] He continued to meet the arguments of 'English School scepticism' head-on (unlike those of realism, which he increasingly consigned to the past, despite its neo-classical revival), but they were at odds with his personal radicalism.[67] What he wanted, in his persistently constructive way, was to pull out the progressivist threads to be found among English School writers, and to show how they could lead to a reworking of the Grotian view whereby states could be seen as engaging in 'moral learning', thus moving towards to a genuinely solidarist acceptance of a single human community. On this Linklater argued that Kant, misunderstood by Bull and Wight as a utopian, could be

[62] Ibid., p. 9.
[63] Linklater, 'Prudence and principle in international society'.
[64] Linklater noted that Adam Watson had raised the possibility of 'transcultural values' in his *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 174–5.
[65] See the exchange of letters between Mennell and Linklater in 2002, reprinted in 'Tributes to Andrew Linklater', *Figurations: Newsletter of the Norbert Elias Foundation*, 59 (2023), 12.
[66] Barry Buzan, influenced by neo-realism, sought to reinvigorate the English School, but in a way far distant from Linklater's concerns with solidarism and moral community.
[67] Linklater, 'Prudence and principle in international society', second draft pp. 13–14 (private copy). The published version tones down his criticisms of Vincent for not being sufficiently 'robust'.

recovered so as to justify 'cosmopolitan harm conventions which give individuals and non-sovereign communities and associations protections for their own sake'.[68] Kant was, in his view, really a 'radical rationalist'. This implies a key proposition, namely that individuals, not states, are the ultimate members of international society. That principle has major implications for serious foreign policy problems such as humanitarian intervention, but at this stage Linklater does little more than flag them up. This book, after all, is essentially, an inward-looking academic project, albeit one rich in textual knowledge and philosophical sophistication.

Writing about the English School might seem to have been an excursion, or even an act of piety, in the overall context of Linklater's project, but in practice it led directly into what had become a principal concern and close focus – the problem of harm. Although apparently an oblique, even abstruse, way of approaching international ethical dilemmas, it was for him the way to avoid overt moralising while maintaining a critical approach to the habitual cynicism of foreign policymakers. While sympathetic to the idea of the 'good international citizen', for example, he eschewed 'some vision of world politics which is far removed from the conduct of foreign affairs'.[69] His language tended to be passive, as in 'avoiding indifference' or protecting individuals from 'unnecessary suffering'. But this was not just pragmatism. The aim was to identify and encourage the immanent possibilities contained within the existing system by which states and peoples could enlarge their sense of a supervening human community in their mutual interests.[70] After all, 'loyalties can get out of phase with a changing reality and in extreme cases become fossilized', while multiple loyalties are increasingly inevitable.[71]

### *The Problem of Harm*

The book in which Linklater fully addressed this approach – of attempting to enlarge the areas in which human beings identified with each other and would try to refrain from inflicting suffering – appeared in 2011 as *The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations* (hereafter *Harm*). It is the first book in which the influence of Norbert Elias's work is fully visible. Thus far Elias, and harm, have only been referred to in passing in this assessment; even in the book with Suganami, Linklater's preoccupations in the last decades of the 20th century were still predominant. These concerns were not being abandoned, but Linklater was increasingly immersed in a deep reading of

[68] Linklater & Suganami, p. 188.
[69] Ibid., p. 256.
[70] See also the measured discussion in his 'The good international citizen and the crisis in Kosovo', in *Critical Theory and World Politics*, pp. 79–89.
[71] Michael Waller & Andrew Linklater, 'The changing face of political loyalty', in Michael Waller & Andrew Linklater (eds), *Political Loyalty and the Nation-State* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 224–33.

Elias's work, producing the conviction that his existing concerns would be enriched by an encounter with Elias's focus on civilising and decivilising processes at the global level. As a result he began to publish articles on these themes from 2001 onwards. They constitute over a third of the articles contained in his 2007 collection *Critical Theory and World Politics*, whose Introduction and Conclusion also alert us to his new 'current interests' (vii).[72] *Harm* draws on these pieces but goes well beyond them. It is a major extension of the project. It also coincided with Linklater's first decade in the newly flourishing Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth, where he enjoyed working with colleagues such as Ken Booth who had also been developing a cosmopolitan position, albeit of a different kind.[73]

What does Linklater mean by 'harm'? In the first instance he follows Hippocrates' dictum to 'first, do no harm', which in the international context would seem to mean avoiding violent harm on a large scale. Yet he also places pain and cruelty, including to animals, at the centre of his analysis. He accepts that societies vary in what they see as undesirable and/or wrongful harm but argues, following Elias, that the modern era has witnessed a 'heightened sensitivity to pain and suffering'.[74] Exhaustive taxonomies follow, touching on (but not developing) Galtung's notion of 'structural violence' which retains a sense of agential responsibility without neglecting the embedded sources of harm. The argument is that to survive human societies need 'harm conventions' to control internal impulses and inter-personal relations. The relative success of the state in its internal pacification mission has led to variety among these conventions, but also to thinking about how they might need to be extended to the international level: 'Such [international] harm conventions stand between the vulnerable and the structures which bind them together in the most recent phase in the history of global inter-connectedness'.[75] Indeed the increased involvement of morally concerned transnational groups is producing a real need for genuinely 'cosmopolitan harm conventions', leading Linklater

[72] The articles as originally published were: 'Citizenship, humanity and cosmopolitan harm conventions', *International Political Science Review*, 22:3 (2001), 261–77; 'The problem of harm in world politics: implications for a sociology of states-systems', *International Affairs*, 78:2 (2002): 319–38 (based on the Martin Wight Memorial Lecture given at the LSE in November 2001); and 'Norbert Elias, the civilising process and international relations', *International Politics*, 41:1 (2004), 3–35. Also relevant in terms of pre–2007 publications are: 'Towards a critical historical sociology of transnational harm', in Stephen Hobden & John Hobson (eds), *Historical Sociology of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002); 'Discourse ethics and the civilising process', *Review of International Studies*, 31:1 (2005), 141–54; 'The harm principle and global ethics', *Global Society*, 20:3 (2006), 429–43.

[73] Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Other key colleagues at Aberystwyth, for varying periods, were Michael Cox, Hidemi Suganami, Nicholas Wheeler, Richard Wyn Jones and Michael Williams. Yet Linklater was gradually becoming less interested in the mainstream IR literature.

[74] *Harm*, p. 49.

[75] Ibid., p. 74.

untypically to endorse the bold suggestion of Ulrich Beck that 'the utopia of a world society' might be 'a little more real or at least more urgent'.[76]

In practice Linklater had no utopian delusions. He focused on the idea of harm conventions precisely because it was a practical minimum which could be expected in a world of sovereign but increasingly interlinked states. If 'realist fatalism' had to be discounted, then a degree of realism was still necessary in terms of pursuing the cosmopolitan agenda. Seeing his work on harm, rightly, as pioneering, he was concerned to armour it against objections – such as the obvious rejoinder that it was too indeterminate a concept, especially given that, drawing on the work of Elias and Michel Foucault, he now defined violence as involving issues like slavery and capital punishment as well as international war. To this Linklater's response was to admit that subjectivity about harm was inevitable and that there could be no agreement on any underlying principle of 'the good'. On the other hand the logic in individualist thought which privileged liberty so long as it did not harm others begged the question of defining harm just as much. Given that harm had a subjective dimension, he concluded, emotions had to come into the picture, as Elias had shown: on the one hand victims' justifiable demand for an end to their suffering, and on the other the feelings of pity, compassion and identification which suffering can engender in outsiders regardless of calculations of interest. Aversion to pain and death is universal, while cruelty has increasingly provoked feelings of disgust in the modern world. Linklater, like Elias, often cites Freud on the issue of whether 'instinctual gratifications' could through self-constraint prove 'plastic' over time.[77]

This last point reveals a key difficulty in the argument, which Linklater recognised. Were harm conventions to be advocated on the basis of Kantian universal ethics, or on that of empirical observations about 'moral progress in embedding a "principle of humaneness" in international society'?[78] The latter gelled with his acceptance of Elias's sociology of evolving 'civilising processes', but also ran straight into the problems of Eurocentricity and 'progress'. Yet if the focus on harm can't solve all moral dilemmas, it does point up vulnerabilities and the issue of 'complex responsibility' for overarching phenomena such as famine, slavery and climate change. Linklater was convinced that it should be possible to foster solidarity about common vulnerabilities to pain, and at least on what constitutes *inhuman* behaviour, citing the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 as well as the Nuremberg Code and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. 'The universal human rights culture ... is the main contemporary expression of that shared immanent potential'.[79] At this point his own normative position emerges more clearly, as

[76] Ibid., p. 74.
[77] Ibid., p. 158 n. 6.
[78] Ibid., p. 108.
[79] Ibid., p. 111.

does the problem of change over time. He did not agree with Wight that cosmopolitanism is a revolutionary doctrine. Rather, it is about promoting a mentality of 'friendship towards the world' – a sense of solidarity which does not mean a top-down arrogance which might actually impose harm more than reduce it.[80]

One of the attractions to Linklater of Elias's 'process sociology' was its acceptance that 'civilising' changes can go into reverse (as the Holocaust showed). What is needed therefore is to study precisely the *processes* by which societies form and adapt their harm conventions, and by extension those protecting the thinner strands of international compassion. These processes are dialectical as actors act and react to their various behaviours. Here the shadow of Marx and Hegel is once more apparent.

In international relations Linklater thought that the increasing human interconnectedness brought about by modernity had created new opportunities for non-governmental cause groups which then worked further to widen the moral horizons of national citizens. This worked in parallel with the 'functional democratisation' by which people came to depend on many others, as much outsiders as insiders. This represented a 'civilising' of feelings and a reducing of the disruptions caused by violence. Feminists and the Greens are cited as examples. By thinking in these terms he was following Elias's search for a 'high-level synthesis', of academic disciplines but more importantly of processes within different states, states-systems and indeed civilisations.[81] In his book on harm he was at pains to bring together Elias's understanding of evolving civilising processes with his own longstanding interest in Wight's comparative study of states-systems, although the latter still tends to come across as something of a red herring to the main argument. If 'the challenge is to compare global civilising processes'[82] then comparative sociology would seem to be more useful than IR – at least until Linklater's attempt in his last book to focus directly on 'civilisation' and its relationship to world order. Here he is still clearly preoccupied with ethics and the limits of community, albeit with the new range brought about by the encounter with Elias.

*Harm* was described by its author as a 'ground-clearing exercise', but this severely understates its originality and ambition.[83] In one way, however, it can be seen as something of a *cul-de-sac*, both because it has not been as influential as the books of the first trilogy, and because of its uneasy combination of a specific concept and a very general scope. Its use of history is erratic, with a neglect of major watersheds like the French and Russian revolutions and even of nationalism. The idea of the state is at times used ahistorically. Yet, self-aware as he was, Linklater was well aware of the need to address the empirical dimension more directly, something he intended to do via comparative history.

[80] Ibid., p. 241 n. 19, citing Linklater's 2002 own article 'The problem of harm in world politics'.
[81] Ibid., p. 234.
[82] Ibid., p. 193.
[83] Ibid., p. ix.

This was to be the subject of his next, Toynbeean, effort in what is arguably his most substantial book.[84]

### *Violence and Civilization*

As a title *Violence and Civilization in the Western States-Systems* seems grandiose but it was in fact carefully specified to ensure continuity. The book was a sibling to *Harm*, enabling a focus on the causes of the suffering which he wished to see mitigated; 'civilization' was chosen because of the decision to follow Elias in comparing different historical periods in terms of harm conventions; and 'Western states-systems' narrowed the focus to Europe of what was already an ambitious book. The result was a truly impressive effort – ranging from the Greeks to the present, with nine chapters devoted to specific chronological periods before two more pull the argument together. It is rich in reading and worked examples of the ways in which violence and attempts to restrain it were variously manifested over time, from the *Pax Romana*, through courtly chivalry and the slave trade, up to long-distance warfare and the Holocaust. Much detail is provided, often grisly, all in the cause of the author recognising that his view was not that of a pure political philosopher but one which required a view of history. Linklater was becoming an historical sociologist in the attempt to make sense of three thousand years of 'Western' politics, and to provide an explanatory yet hopeful thread which would avoid falling into the trap of teleology.

Such an ambition was bound to attract attention, as indeed Linklater's work had always done through its sheer quality. This time, however, his move into empirical generalisation, combined with changes in the intellectual and political *zeitgeist*, produced a wave of responses, not all of them positive. As one of the founders of the Enlightenment branch of critical theory and someone with a record of responding to critics, it was something he was bound to welcome, even if in part this was a tiresome reprise of the attacks he had suffered in the 1990s.[85] The fundamental problem was the hostage to fortune given by the prominent use of terms like 'progress', 'civilisation' and 'western'. The book came out at a time when public debate was increasingly polarised between populism, with its sovereignist preoccupations, and a new post-colonialist anger about the fact and legacies of European imperialism. This had gathered pace with the 'Rhodes must fall movement' originating in Cape Town in 2015 before spreading to Oxford. It demanded recognition of the crimes of Cecil Rhodes against Africans and the removal of

[84] Andrew Linklater, *Violence and Civilization in the Western States-Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[85] For example, see Andrew Linklater, 'Transforming political community: a response to the critics', *Review of International Studies*, 25 (1999), 165–75.

statues in his honour.[86] The populists would have scorned Linklater's cosmopolitanism, but then they would not even have been aware of serious scholarship. In the academy, however, with its progressivist majority, post-colonialism was increasingly influential. Thus Linklater's careful interest in interrogating grand ideas like civilisation was all too easily misread as normative endorsement. It did not help that he had the effrontery to be interested in the genealogy of European thinking at a time not only when Europeans were suddenly back in the dock after several decades of self-congratulation – over rapid decolonisation and the creation of the European Union as a 'civilian power' – but also when Europe's role as the crucible of modernity was being called into question.[87]

The work of Hobson and others was a valuable expansion of intellectual horizons, geographically and chronologically. At the same time the accusation of 'Eurocentricity' soon became a stick used by the less careful to beat anyone associated with different views, and in particular those with an apparent sympathy for aspects of the European 'Enlightenment'. European cultural arrogance coupled with the atrocities of imperialism thus produced the paradoxical reaction on the one hand that Europe had been less significant than it judged itself to be, and on the other that it was responsible for many of the major ills inflicted on the world under modernity. By his at times myopic preoccupation with Elias and their shared focus on European history, Linklater made himself a primary target for this line of attack. It is notable that neither Eurocentricity nor post-colonialism figure significantly in either *Harm* or *Violence and Civilisation* – an omission he was to remedy in his succeeding book on the idea of civilisation.

Linklater responded to this criticism with the defence already formulated by his friend Stephen Mennell during debates on Elias (on whom Mennell is a leading expert), namely that if Eurocentrism meant 'a linear and progressive narrative' shackled to a 'triumphalist ideology' then that did not apply to work on and about Europe; it could not be intrinsically Eurocentric.[88] And why indeed should he not be free to study Europe/the West as an important subject in itself? It must be admitted that in making this distinction

[86] See Adekeye Adebajo, 'A crumbling legacy: how to dismantle the reputation of Cecil Rhodes without forgetting about the harm he caused', *Times Literary Supplement* (31 March 2021).

[87] Linklater had already touched on these paradoxes in his 'A European civilising process', in Christopher Hill & Michael Smith (eds), *International Relations and the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 367–87. For works which had begun the new questioning of Europe's role, see John M. Hobson, *The Eastern origins of Western Civilisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), and John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory 1760–2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). For an example of how the argument developed, see J.C. Sharman, *Empires of the Weak: The real story of European Expansion and the creation of the new world order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

[88] Remarks cited by Linklater in his 'Process sociology, the English School and postcolonialism – understanding "civilization" and world politics – a reply to the critics', *Review of International Studies*, 43:4, 700–19. His citations were from Zeynep Gülsah Çapan, 'Writing IR from the invisible side of the abyssal line', in the same issue of the *Review*.

Linklater at times sailed close to the wind in trying to describe how Europeans had come to believe in their own civilising achievements. Such statements as '… certain features of the civilising process had already been globalized' could easily be misread.[89] His own concern with precise expression was not always matched by those who believed that IR had made Europe a privileged subject without allowing that other civilisations might have shaped the world, including Europe's own development. They thus skipped over Linklater's clear affirmation that:

> Western conceptions of the relationship between violence and civilization have dominated world politics in the modern period. That is the reason for concentrating on Europe and its moral and political legacy in this work; the final volume in this trilogy will broaden the discussion.[90]

Language apart, the evidence is plentiful from both his life and work that, in Hidemi Suganami's words, Linklater's intellectual commitments 'were never detached from his empathy and ethical concern with the world's deprived nations and classes'.[91] To depict him as a European triumphalist is simply bizarre.

Scholarship is one thing; when it touches on current political controversies it becomes grist to anyone's mill. In this case critical theory, previously cutting-edge and progressive, itself came to be attacked for ethnocentrism. Almost a whole issue of the *Review of International Studies* was devoted to Linklater's book, a double-edged tribute given that the majority of the articles saw it as Eurocentric to some degree or other. Linklater was at pains to insist that process sociology was precisely not 'linear' but rather the means of tracing diverse strands of change, including reversals or 'decivilizing' trends where they occurred. As for the discourse of 'civilization' itself, he pointed out that it was used both to justify colonial excesses and to criticise them, depending on who was speaking. For someone like him who was always alert to ambiguity, quite apart from his expressed concerns over violent harm, it seemed almost too obvious to need stating. If this line seemed just a touch defensive, Linklater had no problem with standing by the empirical observation that European states had 'created the international political framework that now embraces the entire world'.[92] This was a fact, even if that framework could well be superseded given that facts change and that the civilising *process* is one of unpredictable change.

[89] The quotation comes from Andrew Linklater & Stephen Mennell, 'Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process*: *Sociogenetic and psychogenetic investigations* – An Overview and Assessment', *History and Theory*, 49 (October 2010), 403.
[90] *Violence and Civilization*, p. 13.
[91] Personal communication by email, 24 August 2024.
[92] Linklater, 'Process sociology, the English School and postcolonialism', p. 702 – where Linklater cites himself from p. 24 of *Harm*.

Thus *Violence and Civilization* was designed as a synthesis of the English School's interest in the evolution of state system*s* and process sociology's focus on the 'ambiguities of civilization', meaning in particular the ever 'changing balance of power' (a misleading metaphor in this context) between the 'violent capabilities' of a system and the 'moral standpoints' of the time which sought to restrain violence. In the modern era, for example, one might trace the dialectical relationship between doctrines of nuclear deterrence and the growth of peace movements. It was not a study of the 'rise of the West'.[93] It cannot be denied that Linklater thought that the world was getting better in some respects, with a trajectory worth maintaining. At the same time he saw that in some respects, and for many people, it was getting worse, as through industrial levels of killing or the despoliation of the environment. Either way, it was not a simple matter of ascribing responsibility to the West, causal or moral.

Following Elias, Linklater advocated more exploration of the power dynamics in insider-outsider relationships, whether inside a society or between civilisations. This runs into the objection that the power dynamic between colonisers and colonised was quite straightforward – that is, severely unequal. Equally, progressive changes after 1945 owed as much to resistance as to the paternalism (or enlightened self-interest) of the declining empires. He might have done better to have confronted these points more directly and to have taken them on board. After all, he was self-evidently not nostalgic for empire, let alone a neo-colonialist. He referred often to 'colonial cruelties' and to 'barbarism'.[94] But Linklater's very scholarship counted against him here; such virtue-signalling as the denunciation of western hypocrisy was not his style. He preferred to concentrate on disentangling difficult arguments and complex processes.

*Violence and Civilization* is a major work which will survive the ephemeral angst of the moment. If its author had just written about interacting cultures of violence over time, without daring to write about the difficult idea of civilisation itself, it would have attracted less criticism – but then it might well also have been less read. The further ambition to carry Wight's work forward by yoking the universal ideas of violence and civilisation to an extensive survey of how 'western states-systems' have evolved over three millennia also attracted opprobrium in some quarters, and tended to obscure the subtleties of Linklater's argument about the interplay between *staatsraison* and moral awareness. Perhaps as a result he focused in his last completed book on 'global order' rather than on the state system, while at the same time doubling down on his conviction about the importance of both Elias's work and the idea of civilisation.[95]

[93] Linklater, 'Process sociology, the English School and postcolonialism', p. 704.
[94] See *Violence and Civilization*, pp. 20, 231.
[95] Andrew Linklater, *The Idea of Civilization and the Making of the Global Order* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2021). It is interesting that for the third book in the second trilogy there was a change of publisher – just as had occurred in the first trilogy.

### *The Idea of Civilization*

*The Idea of Civilization and the Making of the Global Order* (hereafter *The Idea of Civilization*) was intended as a free-standing book which nonetheless built on its two predecessors on linkages between process sociology and the English School.[96] It was also to be a bridge to Linklater's next work, on symbols in world politics, sadly not quite complete by the time of his death. It does fulfil these functions, but must also be understood as a considered riposte to the post-colonial critique referred to above. In this Linklater was defending not only himself but also Elias, with whose work he had come closely to identify. He argued that part of the book 'resonates with postcolonial sensibilities', but that:

> … postcolonial critics can reasonably argue that Elias's sparse observations about the relationship between overseas expansion and the civilising process led to a limited understanding of the Europeans' lack of preparedness for, and shock at, the Nazi genocides.[97]

Despite such concessions, and his continued spirit of scholarly enquiry and aversion to mere polemics, there can be no doubt that Linklater's sympathies were with Elias's approach. He had no intention of backing away from his views that process sociology could illuminate international relations, notwithstanding Elias's 'strange' lack of attention to European imperialism, through its long-term perspective on the dialectics of the idea of civilisation. And the key word here was 'civilization' in the singular. He rejected Samuel Huntington's notion of a 'clash of civilizations' less for its emotive language than because his own interest was in how the *idea* of civilisation was, as might be said, essentially contested – it was used both to endorse certain behaviours and to reject them, depending on the agent and on the context.[98]

What is more, no dominant conception of civilisation would last forever, just as a great power could rise but would eventually fall. This was partly an insight from Elias, who claimed in the late 1930s that increasing acceptance of Western ideas was simply the most recent phase 'of the continuously evolving civilizing process'.[99] But it also derived from the Wightian view that any society of states required some sense of common culture and differentiation from 'outsiders' ('othering' by another name). Linklater was wrestling with how to conceptualise long-term change in international relations; the English School furnished the means of understanding how political units managed the dilemmas of security, but it had not developed its scattered insights about norms, values

[96] The book was built on both the lectures he gave at Aberystwyth and the materials gathered for previous writings.
[97] Ibid., pp. 91 and 85.
[98] Ibid., pp. 231–6.
[99] Ibid., p. 184.

and the reasons (if any) for self-restraint. This is what he took from Elias, making possible an original synthesis given that Elias had barely focused on international relations.

George Lawson had criticised Linklater's *Violence and Civilization* as tending towards both ethnocentrism and teleology, even if he was careful not to fall back on these labels.[100] Lawson had been impatient with the Eliasian stress on the genealogies of manners and of ideas in Europe, wanting to substitute capitalism and/or history from below as more convincing explanations of how the modern world had come in its limited way to 'hang together', in Robert Putnam's phrase.[101] It is indeed interesting how the materialism of Marx, an evident preoccupation in Linklater's first two books, had receded to the background by this time. His views on historical materialism were already clear, including his criticism of Marx for neglecting the dimension of political conflicts within and between societies. What is more he had always been at pains not to be seduced by either teleology or classical realism as he strove to achieve a 'higher level synthesis' between explaining on the one hand the political organisation of the world and on the other competing conceptions of civilisation. It can be argued that he did not succeed in this extraordinarily ambitious attempt, but no one could dispute the richness of the argument, the depth of reading and the fineness of sensibility which are on show in this second trilogy.

Linklater was still attached to the English School precisely because he did not see it as realism-lite. He agreed with Bull and Vincent that a pluralist society of states had much solidarist potential through the 'successful cosmopolitanisation of moral ideals' enabled by 'emotional identification between peoples'. At the same time he cited Elias to warn against the danger that short-term security crises could thwart 'the *longer-term diagnosis oriented towards facts, however unwelcome*' (my italics).[102] This last phrase reveals both Linklater's scrupulously balanced approach and the corner into which he had painted himself. His approach now rested to a degree on empirical observation, a task he had thrown himself into with vigour via Eliasian historical sociology. This had provided the long-term 'diagnosis', but in its broad sweep was inevitably subjective and subject to counter-assertions. Yet at the same time it talked in positivistic language about undeniable 'facts', meaning those of human interconnectedness across boundaries, and their inherent consequences. This kind of language not only re-opened the door to neo-Marxist arguments that the rise of capitalism explained more than the spread of

[100] George Lawson, 'The untimely historical sociologist', *Review of International Studies*, 43:4 (2017), 671–85.
[101] 'Hanging together to avoid hanging separately' is usually attributed to Benjamin Franklin. Putnam applied it to modern international society. See Robert D. Putnam & Nicholas Bayne, *Hanging Together: Cooperation and Conflict in the Seven-Power summits*, revised ed. (London: Sage, 1987).
[102] *The Idea of Civilization*, p. 242.

moral awareness, but also to the need for actual research into interdependence, as conducted by functionalists and students of transnational relations.

That kind of thing was never Linklater's interest or *métier*, although *The Idea of Civilization* did lead him, unusually, to touch on current policy issues such as Covid.[103] His range was already wide: he was a political theorist, an historian of ideas and a scholar of International Relations whose intellectual ambition had led him to undertake a study of history – one narrower in scope than Toynbee's massive project but still a formidable undertaking and one arguably more subtle.[104] His IR formation meant that he was not unworldly about inequalities of power, as in this blunt observation about Europe's period of dominance:

> … non-European governments were expected to fall into line with the European certainty that the modern state was the foundation stone and guarantor of 'civilized' interaction.[105]

Yet even this 'certainty' was to be seen in the context of the 'processes' by which the West came to be hoist on the petard of its own moral claims, for a cultural revolt began before the colonised were able to mount physical resistance. In its turn successful resistance then made it possible to go beyond the Western discourse in order to challenge its very presuppositions, for example about natural rights or 'good government'.[106]

The focus on 'processes' hardly made Linklater a positivist, but it did make it possible for him to see the immanent possibilities in any given order, and not to be surprised by setbacks, or even complete failures, in the signs of what he regarded as moral progress. How could it have been otherwise given that he had devoted so much space in *Violence and Civilization* to the barbarities of Nazism, and continued to reflect on them here? In this succeeding book he cited the contemporary example of the 'largely unanticipated' populist and sovereignist reaction to the forces of globalisation as a striking example of setbacks.[107]

The interest in long-term processes also reinforced his determinedly dispassionate style of analysis. For someone whose values and hopes for the future were clearly visible between the lines, he managed deftly to maintain normative distancing as he worked through emotive cases, arguments and texts – not easy given the controversy surrounding

[103] The onset of the Covid–19 pandemic in 2020 posed an immediate and severe risk to Linklater's health, given the diagnosis of pulmonary fibrosis he was living with. Yet no one outside his close family and his departmental head at Aberystwyth was aware of the danger he was in, least of all the readers of his book.
[104] Linklater was concerned with immanence and process, whereas Toynbee took the view that each civilisation is a distinct entity. See R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 162–3.
[105] *The Idea of Civilization*, p. 141.
[106] Ibid., pp. 187–216.
[107] Ibid., pp. 212–14.

the idea of civilisation. Perhaps only in his increasing enthusiasm for the work of Elias did scholarly detachment seem to slip a little, but even here he pulled himself up by often citing problems and omissions. It is true that in attempting not to be paternalist when talking about civilisation he felt the need to resort to a technical distinction, taken from linguistics and anthropology, between the 'etic' and the 'emic', where the former refers to how 'civilizing' is used as an apparently objective description of civilized behaviour, and the latter to show how a given people understands its own civilisational achievements.[108] In admitting that the distinction is fuzzy Linklater then comes close to talking about soft power – a kind of middle way where a civilisation's achievements might simply be admired and emulated by others without any external imposition. This might be seen as logic-chopping. Yet by the very writing of this book Linklater had been determined to confront head-on the linguistic and political issues inherent in the concept of 'civilization', which others simply abhorred or failed to think through. He had insisted on subtlety despite the risks.

## A life's work

The idea of ranking, which has turned modern universities into businesses, has no place in intellectual life. Andrew Linklater apparently once mused that he would be happy to be categorised as a theorist of the second rank, presumably unlike the famous writers associated with one big idea, say Rawls or Foucault. For those who knew him, and especially those closely familiar with his work, this is a simple misreading deriving from his modesty and lack of pretention. In any case such judgements obscure the particularities of an individual's aims, contributions and context. Ranking Marx against Hobbes or Wight against Walzer is a mere parlour-game.

The substantive facts are that Linklater published six and a half major books, written in a considered sequence, together with a large number of articles, essays and co-operative endeavours. Even during his last year of illness he was working steadily on another major work, on the role of symbols in world politics. This will appear in due course thanks to André Saramago, who made Andrew happy by undertaking to bring it to publication. He showed no signs of losing his intellectual energy and would no doubt have continued to set new research agendas had he not been deprived of the chance. The development of an interest in symbols should be seen in the light of the steady evolution of his thinking and in no way as a valediction. Rather, it grew out of his increasing focus on the non-material sources of political behaviour, meaning ideas, norms and cultural artefacts. In this Elias had naturally been a key influence, but he was also much struck

[108] Ibid., pp. 18–20, 136–38.

by Émile Durkheim's statement that 'a flag is only a piece of cloth; nevertheless a soldier will die to save it' – an image embodied in countless war memorials around the world.[109] Michael Walzer and Pierre Bourdieu were other influences. His 2021 article defines symbols broadly to overlap with norms, principles and myths, thus demonstrating continuity with his evolving critical constructivism. Insights from anthropology and sociology prevailed with a certain struggle evident in his discussion of symbols in international relations beyond those of national pride. He hoped to find symbols of a developing cosmopolitan awareness among peoples and elites, but was reduced to references to the Red Cross or Red Crescent and the symbolic value of individuals like Gandhi and Mandela.

The forthcoming book develops the cosmopolitan argument much further, not least through its truly *longue durée* sweep from neolithic villages to the present. It also takes further the argument made in *The Idea of Civilization* towards countering the post-colonial critique by providing a truly global perspective. Not only does it cover the great span of human history, but it ranges geographically away from Europe to Russia, Han China and the Islamic world. It is thus inherently non-Eurocentric, given that the West appears simply as one set of societies being analysed. Given the enormous length and ambition of the book its author might well have decided to stop at that point even had ill health not intervened. Equally, he might well have gone on to the next stage, of addressing the transnational interactions between the separate systems as they varied over time.

Symbols include global points of poignancy such as the memorial at Hiroshima, which can provide hope. But Linklater would certainly have remained clear-eyed about the possibilities, no doubt sad but not surprised how even the Holocaust has become instrumentalised in the violent conflicts over Palestine. He always stressed how vital it was to assess moral events in a long perspective and to realise that two steps forwards could mean two – or even three – backwards.

As his work progressed Linklater combined longer and wider lenses through which to view issues of moral awareness. He had always rejected the view of politics as the domain of recurrence which meant that by definition he had to come to terms with historical change and the importance of context. At the same time he saw 'presentism' as the equal and opposite *cul-de-sac*, afflicting both sociology and International Relations. This in turn led him to try to take further the work on comparative state systems which he admired in the writing of Wight and Adam Watson, invigorated by his encounter with Elias's process sociology. This huge task could only be attempted because of his

[109] Andrew Linklater, 'Symbols and world politics: towards a long-term perspective on historical trends and contemporary challenges', *European Journal of International Relations*, 25:3 (2019), pp. 931–54. Norbert Elias, *The Symbol Theory*: *The Collected Works of Norbert Elias*, vol. 13, ed. Richard Kilminster (Dublin: University College of Dublin Press, 2011).

assiduous reading and intellectual self-discipline.[110] Even so, it was inevitably the case that the sheer scope of his work in the second trilogy stretched its plausibility at times, opening him up to criticism the more he went beyond exegesis into normative argument. Linklater had set out on a kind of pilgrim's progress with obvious pitfalls, however careful he was to qualify bold judgments and to anticipate objections.

Leaving aside the post-colonial controversy discussed above, two significant issues arose from the broad approach Linklater had developed. The first ran through almost every line: how to foster a cosmopolitan outlook in a world organised on the sovereign principle. He made a strong case for a widening of moral consciousness in the modern world, notwithstanding cultural diversity, but because he did not deny the realities of political power he was unlikely to convince every reader (including perhaps himself) that a sense of obligation to others was becoming embedded in the mentalities or institutions of international activity. This eternal debate is bound to condition reactions to his *oeuvre*, one way or the other.

The second issue relates to Linklater's epistemology and becomes more apparent the more he moved on from political theory and the history of political thought. Once he began to make claims about the role of ethics, feelings, culture and states systems in explaining change, he opened himself up to the argument that such things were epiphenomenal to the power shifts he acknowledged as having been crucial constraints, even determinants. He was philosophically individualist in that he allowed for human beings being able constantly to re-interpret and remake their world, but he also accepted that his narrative is largely shaped by the changes engendered top-down, by elites. Relatedly it is noticeable how he avoided talking about the problem of causality, preferring to focus on processes. In this he is at one not only with Elias but also with the post-positivist shift in UK IR over the last forty years or so. Yet that does not do away with the difficulties. An uneasy co-existence is on view at times between a systemic perspective, imposed by an interest in changing mentalities over the *longue durée*, and his sensitivity to both contingency and agency. One small example will suffice to illustrate how intrinsically difficult it is in these matters to break into the circularity of causation: he refers to states having engaged in 'symbolic cultivation' to preserve their monopolies of power. His approach allows for the possibility that elites themselves were caught up in the political and emotional currency of their age, but he cannot avoid at times identifying agency and differentials of power.

Linklater would have seen causation as essentially beside the point in his attempt to chart and interpret the changes in the ways in which human societies have thought about restraints on violence and have dealt with the insider/outsider problem. It was in this sense that he can be termed a critical constructivist. He was a key figure in launching

[110] According to Stephen Mennell Linklater read and digested all 18 volumes of Elias's Collected Works.

critical theory within IR in the 1990s and his place in that canon is secure. But both as a scholar and as an individual he resists pigeon-holing. He began, and remained, a theorist of international politics – that is, a 'political theorist', in that he was deeply read in both classical and modern texts, making a major contribution to that field through his first trilogy. He was a major influence on the turn outwards in political theory towards engaging with 'duties beyond borders'. Conversely, he sustained the move begun by Wight to root IR in the ideas of the great philosophers, from Hobbes through Rousseau to Kant, Hegel and Marx. Yet from the start he saw himself not as doing political philosophy *tout court*, let alone the history of political thought, but rather 'philosophical history'. According to Stephen Mennell he came to share some of Elias's hostility to the influence of pure philosophy on the social sciences.[111] He was also always interested in the sociology of ideas. Those two instincts together led him eventually to the work of Elias and to historical sociology, but only after he had made his own clear normative statement about global cosmopolitanism in *The Transformation of Political Community*.

Linklater epitomised the true values of scholarly integrity through his immaculate professionalism, deep learning, originality, intellectual honesty and perpetual curiosity. He took a constructive approach even to the most hostile and uncivil critics. Most unusually he was set on a project right from the start, even if he could naturally not see precisely where it would lead. As a result what he most needed was the opportunity to think and to write. At one stage, he recalled, 'I did think hard about moving back to Aberdeen … but Aber gave me so much – generous research time, an excellent environment, and a copyright library'.[112] He could easily have gone down the road of being a head of department, head of School etc. (and indeed he had been Dean of Postgraduate Affairs at Keele for two years), but scholarship was his priority. As Chris Brown has said, temperamentally he was far more a hedgehog than a fox.[113] His work is notably detached from debates of the day, a detachment rooted in both temperament and scholarly conviction.[114] At the same time he was never the type of scholar for whom students and academic responsibilities were irritating distractions to be swatted away impatiently. He was open to engaging with everyone from first-year student to senior colleague, and always remembered that there was an outside world where academic fripperies meant nothing. The cultural hinterland derived from his upbringing in a northern Scottish city, combined with his first job in Tasmania, meant that while he moved easily in the environment of

[111] Elias's hostility is explained in Stephen Mennell, 'Norbert Elias's contribution to Andrew Linklater's contribution to International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 43:4 (2017), 660.
[112] Personal email, 22 December 2022.
[113] Personal communication. The reference is to Isaiah Berlin's famous distinction, made in *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1953).
[114] Indeed, 'detachment' was a pervasive term in his writings, as noted by Mennell in 'Norbert Elias's contribution to Andrew Linklater's contribution to International Relations', p. 662.

top universities, he was never seduced by status or felt the need to blow his own trumpet. He wore his seriousness lightly and could explain difficult ideas with great lucidity, in person as in writing. His wisdom was self-evident. Former students remember Andrew as a truly inspiring teacher, and those whose PhDs he supervised knew they had won the jackpot.[115]

Away from his desk Andrew loved to follow horse racing, even owning a fetlock of a horse or two as part of a collective ownership scheme, and was delighted when one of them, Soviet Song, turned out to be top-class, winning the Group One Falmouth Stakes at Newmarket in 2004. He had already owned a quarter share in a well-named horse, Sober Tourist, in Melbourne, which he sent to a happy retirement once it started to bleed from the nose. His concern for animals was real. He also began to collect books on racing, leading (inevitably) to him becoming an amateur authority on breeding. In combining political philosophy and the turf he was one of the few to follow the example of Michael Oakeshott, whose book on the 'classics' was a joke Andrew enjoyed.[116] Their Australian years meant that Andrew and Jane also collected aboriginal art, while their time in Keele further fostered an interest in Wedgwood pottery. He much appreciated north European jazz, via Manfred Eicher's ECM record label. He loved living in the Welsh countryside, enjoying keeping the trees surrounding their house in check, and playing his twelve-string guitar. Andrew was well-grounded, not least through the strength of his marriage. He had a good sense of humour, often expressed through a dry chuckle. He is missed by so many because he was a wonderfully likeable, kind and engaging human being, as well as a deeply impressive intellectual. His work and his personality have left a major mark.

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[115] Information about teaching is taken from the obituary of Andrew Linklater placed online by the Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth. https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/development/alumni/obituaries/obituary-profiles/andrewlinklater/

[116] The top races on the English flat are the five thoroughbred classics, two at Newmarket, two at Epsom and one at Doncaster. Guy Griffiths & Michael Oakeshott, *A Guide to the Classics, or How to Pick the Derby Winner* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936). The book had an intellectual undercurrent in its insistence that scientific systems were not needed to pick winners. Andrew only half-agreed with this view.

providing information on Andrew's last, unfinished, book on symbols. I have also been fortunate to be able to call Chris Brown, Richard Devetak, Stephen Mennell and Hidemi Suganami as critical guides. Most particularly Jane Linklater's help and patience has been indispensable. She has corrected factual errors while also helping me to maintain the balance between the personal and the professional in assessing her husband's work. She better than anyone knows the depth of Andrew's commitment both to scholarship and to the hope of a better world.

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