

Editorial

90 volumes of *International Affairs*

When *International Affairs* first appeared in 1922, recording contributions to the equally new British (later Royal) Institute of International Affairs, the journal set itself the modest goal of becoming ‘a source of information and a guide to judgment in international affairs’. It was originally intended only for members of the BIIA, but quickly expanded its readership and impact by beginning to sell copies to non-members as well. In 1931 it took the name *International Affairs*.

At that time the world was recovering from the First World War. Estimates now put total military and civilian casualties at around 37 million (including prisoners and missing), and there was a widespread sense that that catastrophe had been caused at least in part by unrestrained, reckless manoeuvrings of national governmental elites. Both the BIIA and *International Affairs (IA)* were established better to inform the public, to challenge governments and to promote more responsive and responsible international policy-making, though the idea of wider discussion was deplored in some official circles. Until the 1960s, *International Affairs* mainly comprised addresses and speeches given at Chatham House; since then, however, it has been publishing stand-alone academic articles, which today constitute the overwhelming bulk of its output. Though based at Chatham House, *IA* can thus no longer be considered a ‘house journal’.

International Affairs has always had a major concern with policy, with major contemporary questions, and with the foreign policies of major countries. But it also encompasses thinking on international relations, international history, and normative and moral questions. It is committed to exploring the role of both ideas and material factors and to including a wide range of approaches from increasingly diverse parts of the world. An acknowledged strength in which the journal takes pride has been the substantial section of every issue devoted to book reviews, spanning the whole gamut of world affairs and including reviews of books published in languages other than English. Based in London, *IA* has a natural and recurring interest in British foreign policy; nonetheless, since its inception it has had a global passion and curiosity and today most of the articles published analyse developments outside the UK.

The world that *IA* originally confronted had been shaped by the end of the First World War. The Versailles Peace Treaty and the creation of the League of Nations were intended to lay the basis for a new, more equitable world order. Many new

nation-states had been created and recognized. Despite the optimism of those early years, the seeds of future conflict were already being sown. Many features of the old order still persisted; some colonial empires survived for another 30 years. More fundamentally, international affairs remained predominantly the preserve of nation-states, an arena of national foreign policies and security concerns. These remain the focus of many articles up to the present. *IA* has always sought to trace continuities in international relations as well as to highlight the new, often taking the long view of the historical underpinnings of national foreign policies and the international order. *International Affairs*, like Chatham House, was noted for contributions from the international historian Arnold J. Toynbee, for many years Director of Studies at Chatham House and the editor of the authoritative annual *Survey of International Affairs*. The content of the current issue recalls that legacy.

Since the Second World War, and especially in the past two decades, the scope and agenda of international affairs have continued to expand, and *IA* has evolved to keep pace. From the 1950s it gave prominence to issues related to the Cold War. In the 1960s its coverage expanded to cover the aftermath of decolonization, the Vietnam War and conflict in the Middle East. In the 1970s developments in Europe and British membership of the European Community featured prominently in its pages. In the 1980s issues such as the Iranian revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Falklands War all received attention. The demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, as well as conflict in the Balkans and the first Gulf War, demanded sustained analysis in the 1990s. Over the past decade western intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, the ‘war on terror’, the rise of China, the recovery of Russia and the elaboration of various regional institutions around the world have all been scrutinized in *IA*’s pages. The list of global issues within the fields of international relations, diplomacy and international security continues to expand. And though new issues emerge, old ones continue to shape policies and priorities—a case in point being the way in which the origins of the state of Syria now have an impact on the current fighting. A proper awareness of such legacies is often necessary for understanding conflicts and formulating viable solutions; historical perspectives remain vital.

Over recent decades two further trends have complicated our understanding of international relations. The first has been the expansion of the range of international issues needing attention and analysis. This has gone well beyond the ‘high’ policy of traditional diplomacy. The environment and climate change, international migration, global health policy and control of the spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, the impact of technology dissemination, cyber security—these are just some of the new topics. The scope of international law, not to mention the proliferation of legal norms, has expanded far beyond the rules guiding traditional diplomacy. States seek to deploy ‘soft’ as well as hard power in pursuit of national objectives. Above all, international economics and trade permeate international relations. In 1970, Susan Strange wrote an article for the journal bringing together the two areas; it was entitled ‘International economics and international relations: a case of mutual neglect’. A great proportion of *IA* articles has been devoted not

only to trade and economic relations, but subsequently also to International Political Economy.

The second trend has been an almost exponential expansion of the range of actors that play a role in international events. In part, this refers to the rise to prominence of states that have closed the gap in development between themselves and the West. Changes in the power and position of the United States and of the West more generally have opened the way for a wider range of states and societies to play new and more significant roles in both global and regional affairs. The impact of international business and multinational corporations on global governance has been documented for decades. But now civil society is rising, too. As they seek to influence policy outcomes, NGOs, national as well as international, scrutinize international events more intensely than before. The rise of the internet and new social media has provided opportunities for groups and even individuals in one country to influence thinking abroad—in real time—on issues as varied as human rights, the environment, commercial practices and social obligations of companies, religious practices and aid policy.

All of this has led, at the very least, to greater complexity in international affairs and it has transformed this journal. Partly to do justice to this widened agenda, *International Affairs* moved to publishing six issues each year in 2006. There has been an increasing discomfort of power-holders, especially in governments, who are now confronted with a bewildering array of issues on the one hand and with a proliferation of actors on the other. Trying to grapple with all these considerations in formulating viable policies is enormously challenging. *IA*'s mission is to provide its readers, whoever they may be, with rigorous, informed analysis and debate that will help them to make sense of the kaleidoscopic range of insights and comments on international affairs with which they are bombarded on a daily basis.

The geography of international relations is gradually shifting. A new international order is emerging, as it was in 1922. By the time of *IA*'s 100th anniversary, China's GDP will very likely have surpassed that of the United States. Of course, the US will still remain the dominant global power, but it will encounter more competitors and potential partners. Asia is rising, though at varying speeds. The changes stretch beyond that. According to UN median demographic projections, by 2030 the global population will have grown by almost 22 per cent, or roughly 1.5 billion, as compared with 2010, but the regional distribution will have changed. The Asian share of the world's population (including the Middle East) will have fallen slightly from the 2010 figure of 60.2 per cent to 58 per cent, while the African share will have risen from 14.9 to 19.4 per cent. The Latin American and Caribbean share will remain steady at around 8.5 per cent, making it almost equal to Europe's. By contrast, the European proportion (including the Russian Federation) will have fallen from 10.7 to 8.7 per cent, while the North American figure will have fallen from 5 to 4.3 per cent. As states outside the West continue to develop, the weight of the rest of the world in the global economy will grow too, adding to the challenges facing policy-makers. Now the journal will need to analyse the consequences of these new shifts, include perspectives from outside

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the western world and illuminate the choices that confront all those involved in global affairs.

International Affairs has been conspicuously successful in responding to such challenges in the past, and this helps to explain why it has maintained its leading position and should flourish as it embarks on its tenth decade.

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