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The Current Complexities of the International System and its Political and Cultural Manifestations: An Academic Perspective Interview with Christopher Hill¹

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 Professor Christopher Hill, good evening, a pleasure to see you. Chris, thanks very much for taking time for this interview. I prefer to start with some questions, but if you want to improvise, feel completely free to do so. Actually, that's the best thing about interviews, improvisation. First of all, I want to review with you the current state of affairs of the world. What would be your general diagnosis of the international scenario today?

Chris Hill (CH): Well, the situation is grave but not serious, as somebody once said. It is international relations as always, with a number of great crises at any one time, but at the moment it looks as if, with today's reports on climate change, we could argue that we are at one of the most serious points in modern history, facing up to the issue of whether or not the planet is going to survive as an ecosystem. At the same time we have all the short-term crises in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Pakistan. We've got potential crises in the Taiwan Straits, the Horn of Africa, Cuba, and who knows, plenty of other places, too. But that's normal, international relations are always in a condition of actual and potential crises, and we must never forget that even these crises do not affect the lives of the vast majority of people on the planet, who live their own lives often in poverty and hardship, relatively unaffected by the things which preoccupy politi-


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cal decision makers, until war or destruction descends upon them, as it sometimes does. So, those of us who follow international relations and have opinions on the matter have a responsibility to try to engage in the rational and effective discussion of these matters.

 I would like to refer to your latest book, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, in which you elaborate on the co-existence of societies and the obstacles for states. Can you comment in depth on the pros and cons of global governance right now?

CH: Well I can say something about it if you want to, but it's just not a main theme of the book.

 You actually mention that in the beginning and then...

CH: Yes, I give a critical appraisal of the global governance approach.

 Well, we can approach it like that. But you also said –I mean, it seems in the book– that you think that global governance is an expectation. Isn't it? Through the reform of institutions, trying to make them work; this is something I want to address here. The problem of cooperation and the interaction between societies and the states is, I think, especially important at this point.

CH: I'm very happy to talk about it, but the book is about the problem of agency in the world. It is not a system-level discussion; it is an agency-level discussion. Because in my view, there has been so much general talk about globalization and global governance. We often neglect the issues of political choice and, on the other hand, the dilemmas of action. There has been too much generalization about global developments, and not enough examination of the typical choices that states and other actors actually have to make in the structures in which they find themselves. So, I am very critical of the general literature associated with my ex-colleagues of The London School of Economics and Political Science, (LSE) like David Held and Anthony Giddens. It is essentially a sociology of international relations, rather than politics or the political science of international relations.

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Do you believe that there is a political science of international relations rather than a sociology of international relations?

CH: Yes, but you need both. Ironically, the sociologists have dominated the discussion on international relations, and those of us who are professional political scientists within the field of international relations have perhaps not been sufficiently assertive in making our analysis known. Whereas if you look at somebody like Fred Halliday, he is capable of combining the two in his approach to, say, the international politics of the Middle East and understanding both the structures of the regional international politics and the dilemmas of the major players in the system; but if you read the work of Held or Giddens on international relations, it is a combination of sociology and idealism. There is little analysis of politics.



Is that a problem?

CH: It's a serious problem, yes.



And why do you think there is an absence of politics or the political-science approach in international relations theory?

CH: The reason is twofold in my view. One is the reaction against realism, and the idea that anyone who is interested in politics and international affairs tends to be a realist. This is not, of course, true. In the Western tradition there are at least as many liberals and indeed critical theorists as there are realists, but realism has been the straw man attacked by many people in international affairs. Connected to that has been the notion of the decline of the state, or what Susan Strange calls "the retreat of the State". That has led many people to believe that the only form of action possible is action at the level of the global system, or possibly of that of the region, but that the state on its own cannot achieve anything. In my view, it depends entirely on the issue. If you want to consider the problem of international environmental change, then clearly what one state does is not going to change the world; on the other hand, if you want to analyze policy in the Persian Gulf, what the United States, or Saudi Arabia, or Iran does is of the greatest importance. And it is not enough to analyze the transnational forces, whether they are Al-Qaeda, or the oil companies, or the international organizations which are trying to achieve

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some degree of global governance; it's simply insufficient to understand the problems. In my view, as I say in my book, foreign policy is an absolutely critical area of political choice, and one that must now be connected up to the discussion of democracy in a way that it has not been traditionally. It has always been either a democratic foreign policy or a realist one; the argument has always been that foreign policy is either dominated by the Machiavellians or it is in the hands of the people. We know there is not a simple choice in these matters, and democracy now has many, many ways of making a connection between domestic politics and foreign policy.



I think it is important to address at this very moment the weakness of international institutions, and the question I ask is: Are we prepared to make international institutions work functionally? I mean, is the world, the international system, as we know it right now, prepared to agree in order to work functionally through the international institutions we have? That would be the first aspect, and the second is: What do you think is needed to reform international institutions in order to use them toward achieving an equilibrium—if you want to call it that—in international relations?

CH: Well, first of all I think that international institutions are a permanent part of the architecture of international politics. Even though they are very often criticized, especially by the powerful, like the United States, which would like to do without them, they are indispensable! They are indispensable at all kinds of obvious functional levels, like the World Health Organization, or the Food and Agriculture Organization, or the International Civil Aviation Authority. We need these things; we simply couldn't organize international affairs without these functional organizations. But we also need political organizations in order to provide frameworks within which problems can be discussed, safe places where people feel there is a structure of expectations, there are agreed rules and procedures, and there are certain resources with which to address problems. And equally, organizations may themselves be actors, with the capacity of agency in the international system. Now, that is a much more difficult business, particularly because most international organizations are simply the sum of their parts, and the parts are independent nation states. Only the European Union has some kind of independent "actor-ness"

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with a degree of supranationality. But that raises the issue of regional organizations, because in almost all parts of the world it is more practical to develop cooperation among a regional group of states than to pursue a universal agreement. That's why for example Interpol (International Criminal Police Commission) is not as effective as cooperation at the European level where the European Union has a *Schengen* agreement to control its borders, and the Europol system or the Eurojust system, to cope with matters of police and justice. Moreover, it has been said for many years that regional organizations would develop in the rest of the world, just as they have in Europe. But that is not true; on the whole, regional integration is not taking place. I feel certain that there will be further development of regional organization, probably very different according to certain steps, in order to enable the very different kinds of state we have in the world to pool their resources on certain issues, and to deal with problems in common, because at the level of the United Nations it is almost impossible to act with consensus when you have 192 separate states.



Let's talk about unipolarity, which is something that, as you will understand, is not only important for the world, but especially important for the neighbors of the main actor responsible for acting unilaterally, the U.S. And there is, of course, a political and theoretical issue involved here in terms of whether or not unipolarity is an obstacle for this achievement –the one you just elaborated on– namely: the enhancing and strengthening of the world's international institutions, and the fact that unipolarity is a threat to this. In this sense, do you think the U.S. is an obstacle for achieving global order? Are there any others that you think are responsible for the same disruption of institutions' ability to work toward achieving the progress and development of the nations of the world?

CH: Well, as you know, there are various different theoretical possibilities for ordering international relations. Most people do not believe we live in a condition of complete anarchy, but there are different models. *Unipolarity* is one model. That is a nice term for what some people call *hegemony*. My own view is that the United States is clearly the single most dominant element in the system, and we have a unipolar system in the sense that every other state in the system has to factor in American foreign policy to its calculations, whereas the United States only factors into its calculations of foreign policies a small number of other States. So, we

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have unipolarity in that sense. But that doesn't mean the United States is dominant in every part of the globe or in every issue area. And indeed, we see that on some of the problems, whether it is the most obvious, of climate change, or even the Israel-Palestine problem, the United States is not able to achieve its goal. Even if we assume that the only interest the United States has in the Middle East is the security of Israel –it doesn't care about the settlement–, it has still not achieved security for Israel, and arguably, that is impossible without a peace settlement. So, there are limits to American power. On the other hand, if you do not talk about unipolarity, it is very difficult to think of another description of the international order as it is at the moment. I do not think multipolarity is right because we do not have a symmetrical relationship among the different poles, the other poles being the European Union, Japan, India, Brazil, Russia. There is such a variety of sources of power and influence that we cannot talk effectively of a multipolar system nor, of course, can we talk about a genuinely international law-based system; international law is still too fragile actually. The second part of your question was whether other states might be threats to international corporations...

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I refer to actors, either rational or non-rational actors.

CH: Well, rationality is a culturally determined notion...



Well, non-state actors and state actors, if you prefer.

CH: Yes, I will talk about both. Let's take state actors first. There are plenty of other states which have a very skeptical view of the value of international institutions and corporations. The most obvious at the moment is Iran, which regards the United Nations as simply a Western tool, and therefore not something they will participate in.



And Venezuela; what do you think of the role it has been playing lately?

CH: Venezuela is probably also on the critical side of the analysis, the skeptical one; on the other hand, do not forget that Chávez came precisely to the United Nations to denounce American policy in its own backyard. He realized the importance of the United Nations as a forum for his

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own diplomacy. So, he was using international institutions as a framework, and without international institutions, states like Venezuela would not have the same access to international publicity and discussion.



And yet, President Chávez lost the race to get a position on the Security Council...


CH: Yes. Well, it doesn't mean to say that simply because you don't achieve every goal, you are skeptical of the whole value of international institutions. The fact is that he wanted to be on the Security Council, he saw it as a value. He realized that international institutions are a very important platform for small countries. He has always accepted that small countries prefer multilateralism because it gives them the opportunity to collaborate against the big powers, and it also gives them a framework of rules which can safeguard their interests. It is the big powers who are usually more skeptical, or rogue states who see the system of rules as designed to overthrow them or control them. So Saddam Hussein, Ahmadinejad, and of course North Korea are very hostile toward the UN system. But if you look at more sophisticated foreign policies like that of China, you will see that they are perfectly capable of using the UN system while being aware that it might be dominated by the United States and the Western powers. Actually, the Security Council is not a tool for the Western powers because there are the Russian and the Chinese permanent seats in there for a veto. Consequently, the Security Council is very important for all the big countries who are members, and as you know, there are countries who are desperate to become members, like Germany, Japan, Brazil, India...




Mexico...

CH: Mexico, South Africa. But that tells you something: it tells you that the United Nations is not just seen as a waste of time or "talking shop." Talking shops are also important, if we live in a world where most of us think that ideas are important, and ideas are about language, and discussion, and debates, and rhetoric, and the United Nations is a way in which that is expressed. Now, you also asked about non-state actors, and clearly...


It is the big powers who are usually more skeptical, or rogue states who see the system of rules as designed to overthrow them or control them.

 Let me just clarify a point I did not fully understand. You said that small countries are more interested in international institutions, because through international institutions their interests can be better negotiated.

CH: Yes, there are two possibilities.

 But you mentioned Iran, North Korea...

CH: Iran, North Korea, Saddam's Iraq. They regard themselves as... well, they *are* isolated by the system because the system is mobilized against them. Serbia to some extent, as well. Serbia wanted to be saved by Russia over Kosovo in 1999, and at the level of the United Nations, but it was still attacked and bombed by the United States. Now, with today's plan for settlement for the Kosovo problem, if the United Nations Security Council does not approve the Ahtisaari² Plan for Kosovo, then it will not have the legitimacy or legality that will be right for the future of the country, and Serbia and Russia will be very concerned to use the United Nations Security Council as a means of stopping that. We have seen that Turkish Northern Cyprus has never got proper sovereignty and legitimacy because it is not recognized by the United Nations system. Taiwan has lost its seat on the UN Security Council to China, and that is a significant loss in its political position.

 And the non-state actors...

CH: Well, obviously non-state actors like Al-Qaeda regard international institutions, whether the UN or NATO, as something different from themselves because they are inherently controlled by states (and usually by the Western powers), so they look on them as a bourgeois trap. But there are many non-governmental actors who are deeply committed to international institutions and to multilateralism. If we think of the Red Cross,

There are many non-governmental actors who are deeply committed to international institutions and to multilateralism. If we think of the Red Cross, or Amnesty International, or Oxfam, they work very closely with international organizations.

² The Ahtisaari Plan on Kosovo settlement entails granting the autonomous region wide attributes of independence, practically excluding any possibility for Belgrade to exert any kind of influence on the domestic life of Kosovo. Furthermore, the document supposes a certain control over Kosovo by international, particularly European organizations. This plan was designed by the United Nations special envoy for Kosovo, Martii Ahtisaari, who was designated on October 2005 to conduct the process whereby the status of Kosovo could be resolved. [Editor's Note.]

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or Amnesty International, or Oxfam, they work very closely with international organizations. In fact, they see them as ensuring their own security and as a way of providing money because many organizations like the UN or the EU encourage non-governmental actors, and to some extent subcontract their work. The European Union now increasingly uses non-governmental actors in the field of development policy to do its work, and you could argue that even in Iraq this is occurring to some extent. The UN used private security companies in Baghdad before the withdrawal. There is a privatization of a lot of international politics going on, through mercenaries, through aid organizations, through educational organizations and so on. I would say the majority of non-governmental actors are extremely supportive of international organizations because they see them as a way of limiting state power. Without international organizations, States would revert to *machtpolitik* which is obviously very dangerous for civil societies.



So, in that sense the fact that these organizations participate in the international system as actively as you say is perhaps the possibility for society to have a strong influence in decision-making?

CH: Yes. There is a form of transnational politics going on. I have devoted a chapter of my book to that. But it is not just independent civil society operating. To some extent there is a kind of corporatism at work, with governments being very sophisticated in using NGOs by recruiting them into their own networks. It also raises problems of democratic politics at home because some people have privileged access to foreign policy through a favorable relationship with the foreign office, with the development agency, or with the conflict-prevention organization, and while they are drawing closer, the mass of the people are still quite remote from foreign policy questions, even though they may be affected by it through migration, or terrorism, or war, or pollution, whatever it might be. They are affected by them; but most people are still passive; they are not actors. Now there are certainly more actors, and part of the reason why is that, over the last 30 years, people like you and me have produced more and more students of international relations, who now want to go out into the world and practice the subject. Students have a great interest in international relations, making it the most flourishing subject in terms of demand; and on graduation, they do not all go to a foreign office; there

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are not enough positions. They go into NGOs, into the press, or into companies, and they do international relations in a myriad of different ways. This means that they create networks and structures. There is a certain vested interest in all this, but it is not necessarily democracy, because it is not operating through normal public institutions.



It is not formal; there are no institutions, no normativity...

CH: Exactly. It is not formal democracy, no.



OK, now I want to talk about foreign policy, which is your area of expertise. You have already mentioned foreign policy and the people, but I want you, perhaps, to elaborate on this perspective: Is foreign policy too distant from citizens or from state actors, or from both equally? Why is that the case?

CH: Well, foreign policy by definition is conducted mostly by state actors, but it depends which state actors. A very interesting development in recent years, at least in countries like Britain, has been the tendency for the Foreign Ministry to become less important in foreign policy. So, foreign policy is conducted especially by the head of government and his private office, and to some extent also directly by other ministries; now, even the Interior Ministry has a foreign policy to some degree. As a result, there is a serious problem of coordination between the various –let's call them– external policies of the different domestic ministries. Currently, there is hardly a ministry in most countries which does not have direct external relations, whereas in the old days, everything had to go through the Foreign Ministry. The result of this is that the apparatus of the head of government has been strengthened enormously, because it is there where coordination takes place, and of course most heads of government are easily seduced by foreign policy. They come into office sometimes not knowing very much about international relations, perhaps not being interested, but they have to go to more and more meetings and summits, and then they realize the publicity advantages of being seen as an actor on the world stage. The best example of this was Silvio Berlusconi, who used his international relations activities for domestic policy purposes to create an image of himself as a statesman, as somebody with important friends, whether it was Putin or Bush or Blair, and so on. Blair himself in Britain has been very much pulled

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into foreign policy, and he has got rid of his foreign ministers whenever they look like becoming rivals to him. However, this may not apply in every country. I am not really informed of the situation in Mexico to know what happens there, but there is a tendency for heads of government to be pulled into foreign policy. Now, does that mean that foreign policy is too distant from the citizens? Not necessarily, because heads of government get a lot of publicity. They are followed by the press and the TV. Foreign policy sometimes, therefore, gets more attention than if it was simply left to the technicians or experts in the Foreign Ministry. Although, it is a rather superficial kind of relationship between the public and the head of government on issues of foreign policy. Everything centers on big issues, image, spectacle, summits like the G-8, and so on. Whereas in practice most foreign policy is a much more complicated, difficult, and sometimes dirty business than it appears in the media. A colleague of mine at Cambridge, Stefan Halper, has just written a book called *The Silence of the Rational Center*, attacking the tendency in American foreign policy to follow one big idea after another, to bounce from simplisms in foreign policy, rather than to deal with the difficult detail. I think this is absolutely correct, but it is true that to some extent, the big idea, whether it is clash of civilizations, the end of history, the war against terror, or European integration, answer the need for communicating through the media with the mass public. Most people are not interested in or informed about the detail of affairs in Darfur, or Palestine even, or Mexican-American relations. People are affected by them, so in terms of relations between Mexico and the United States, people who want to travel from Mexico to the United States would be interested, people who live in New Mexico or Arizona in the United States would be interested, but they would be interested in only one aspect, particularly the question of legal mobility, immigration, and so on. They will probably not have an overall view. And it is an extremely difficult political and intellectual challenge these days to understand politics, even at home, because domestic politics is increasingly interconnected with international relations, and it cannot be separated out. So, in order to understand local politics you have to have a mastery of a huge range of different issues and amount of detail. And yet we live in the age of democracy of the masses in which the masses are supposed to take a bigger part in politics, which is a contradiction in itself. There is no way in which we can go back to the older idea of the "elite," the technocracy within politics on behalf of the masses. International politics is now affected by mass politics and the most obvious

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example is Al-Qaeda, but at the same time it does not mean that it is simple politics. And very often mistakes are made because of this tension between mass politics and technical analysis. Even expertise is far from guaranteeing good judgment or right behavior.



Meaning a tension between the ones who make decisions and what is needed...

CH: There is a tension. On the one hand, we have the need to communicate with the mass and to engage with civil society and, therefore, to use the simplicities of big ideas; to rely on spectacles and images, rather than arguments. That is a very real factor of democratic mass politics. But at the same time, the issues, whether it is the Doha Round, or weapons of mass destruction, or climate change, are increasingly technical multi-dimensional questions, which even experts cannot fully understand. So decision-making bounces from one side, the mass, to the other, the insiders, rather erratically, and it is very difficult to integrate different kinds of considerations.



I would like now to touch upon what are considered the five fundamental values of the international system. I am referring to security, freedom, order, justice, and welfare. Do you think they overlap, contradict, or perhaps, are an obstacle to each other, in the context of foreign policy nowadays?

CH: Well, as you know, the results of the tensions between order, justice, and freedom mean many different things, and there is a tension between welfare and freedom at the economic level, in the sense that many of the more liberal economies have very serious doubts about the amount of state resources that should be brought into welfare. So, of course, there are always tensions, and different understandings of what these terms mean. I do not know who thinks that this is a simple matter, but politicians, of course, come out with their slogans all the time. However, this is not a question of international relations. Within each state, the government has to balance all the values you list.

It is perfectly evident that security sometimes collides with freedom. We have seen it in Britain this week.³ There was an arrest of nine people

³ The interview took place approximately during the week of February 26 to March 2, 2007, when there were a series of detentions of alleged terrorists in Birmingham.

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from Birmingham. They will be held without trial for 28 days, under the Emergency Anti-terrorism legislation. And this, for most British people, is regarded as a necessity, in order to protect their security, but it is an unfortunate necessity, and anyone who is concerned about our basic rights as citizens must be very alert to the possibility that the government will gradually increase its power at the expense of the citizens. We are already the most spied-on country in the world –watched over by cameras– while everybody who sends an e-mail knows that they are potentially at risk of having their private affairs watched over by the government.



Even more than in the U.S.?

CH: I have no idea, but about the same, I think. The U.S. also has the capacity to interfere in the internal affairs of others, which few states can match...




Now, let me ask you something that I think is relevant to this issue, especially when talking of security overtaking welfare. We are in agreement that people are waiting for the government to fulfill their economic expectations –to reduce inflation and to increase employment and the like– and that there is real interaction among states, especially when talking about trade and trade agreements. Don't you think that it is evident right now that security –or the dream of having security– sacrifices development?

Obviously, if you do not have basic security in terms of freedom from invasion, or freedom from civil war, then economic life cannot take place at all.

CH: It might do, it might not do. Because, obviously, if you do not have basic security in terms of freedom from invasion, or freedom from civil war, then economic life cannot take place at all. Of course you can argue that you could have security under an invader, under a foreign power and that would increase your welfare. You know, Hitler used to promise improved welfare for people under his rule, so long as they were Germans, and they were not Slavs or Jews or whatever. It is complicated, but most people think that security is provided as a kind of umbrella for the equally important values of freedom and independence. Thus, in conditions of peace and security, economic activity takes place. It is a very different set of choices, however, for a government in a developed country than it is for one in a developing country because most developing countries are still in the process of nation building; they do not have internal security,

and often crime and even civil war are just around the corner. At the same time, their citizens are not having their economic needs fulfilled. So there is a need for economic and political human rights in parallel. Whereas here, in most developed countries, we have a high degree of political freedom and a high degree of economic welfare. This is something that is a historical miracle in the sense that, as you know, in Western Europe we have gone through terrible conflicts, killings, and phases of economic depression over the last 100 years. But since 1945, things have steadily improved in Western Europe and indeed in North America, and in other parts of the world—some other parts of the world, but not all. So, to some extent you could argue that there is some kind of progress in different spheres on parallel lines. In this sense it is a virtuous circle, but it can also be a vicious circle. It is not a straightforward choice. General Pinochet argued in Chile that you had to sacrifice freedom in order to have economic achievement, which was highly paradoxical given that it was the ideology of *laissez-faire* economics, which was gaining ground as a result of political repression. In many countries, I believe, we have now moved on beyond that, and think that economic and political freedoms are mutually self reinforcing. This is true whether you are on the right wing and are a neo-conservative, or on the left; they both believe in political and economic freedom. It is just that the left takes a different view of what economic freedom is. The right thinks that economic freedom and the achievement of prosperity are brought by free markets, while the left thinks that it is brought by some kind of socialism, although nobody uses that word these days, preferring some vague notion of managed capitalism.

Terrorism is a major issue for Western Europe, the United States, and some other countries in the world, but this is not true for everybody. For a lot of countries, for a lot of peoples, it is simply somebody else's remote problem.

 From the international events that have taken place from 9/11 onwards, including 7/7 in London, and 3/11 in Madrid, do you see the state being overborn by non-state actors? I think perhaps you already answered that, but I want you to elaborate a little more. Do you think that terrorism—like war, pandemics or epidemics and the like—is the new big issue of international relations? And in this context, I would like your comment on multiculturalism. Do you think that multiculturalism is dead in Europe?

CH: Let me answer your first question. Obviously terrorism is a major issue of the moment for Western Europe, United States, and some other countries in the world, but this is not true for everybody. For a lot of

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countries, for a lot of peoples, it is simply somebody else's remote problem. And there is unfortunately a dialectical relationship between the growth of terrorism and the growth of state power. So, the more the terrorists hurt a state, the stronger the power of the state grows as a way of trying to resist terror. In a way that is what terrorists want. They want to provoke a crisis within a democratic country through reaction, through state repression, and through creating fear and alarm in a population. That is what terrorism actually means: creating a state of terror, which causes all kinds of other political problems. But basically, it depends on the country and the situation. All countries are nervous about terrorism, and if a nuclear weapon, or a dirty bomb were to be involved, it would have consequences far beyond one city. But if we are talking about the kind of terrorism that took place in London in 2005, where a bus was blown up less than a kilometer from where we sit now, that was a tragic event, in that it killed 52 people –I think– and created fear and uncertainty in millions of others. Nevertheless, the main effect was to increase the power of the British state within British society. However, that has not been the case necessarily in other societies which have not been so threatened by terrorism. Each country is different in this respect.

As to your question about multiculturalism, I don't think it is dead; no. But there is a big difference between theory and practice. Brian Barry, the political theorist, made a distinction between multiculturalism and multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is the fact of living in a country with many different ethnic minorities. In London there are, I think, over 100 different languages spoken in its schools. This is multiculturalism. Multiculturalism, by contrast, is a project: that of allowing groups special rights and freedoms. And the French have the opposite approach, which is integration, or trying to create a single culture.



Did they fail?

CH: Arguably they failed, although it has to be said that the riots they have had are not about religion. They were about class and alienation and economics. And they have not failed in the sense that they passed a law saying that there was not be *hijab* in the schools. There are, indeed, no *hijabs*⁴ in French schools. And there are no riots on the streets about

I believe in people's freedom to wear whatever they like, including if they want to wear a scarf or a skullcap or a cross, whatever; but there are certain limits, and this is one of them, namely, "we need to see each others' faces".

⁴ The *hijab* is the scarf used to cover a woman's hair.

that issue, whereas in this country [the U.K.], we are having a big debate about the *burkha*,⁵ which is well beyond the *hijab*. You know, we allow the *hijab*. As a result some –a small minority, but increasing– wish to wear even the *burkha*. That has been a debate which Jack Straw⁶ started in this country a few months ago, by saying that he didn't wish women to wear the full veil when meeting him. He was immediately attacked as being racist and lacking in understanding of the position of Muslim women, and so on. While the secularists argue that women are oppressed by men, who do not have to wear the *niqab* but demand it of their women; and also that there is a threat to the British way of life, which depends on open relations and seeing each others' faces, and so on. My own position is this: I believe in people's freedom to wear whatever they like, including if they want to wear a scarf or a skullcap or a cross, whatever; but there are certain limits, and this is one of them, namely, "we need to see each others' faces". It is central to our culture, and indeed to the workings of a modern society.

What is interesting is that they do not say, "I feel more Pakistani than British." They say, "I'm Muslim." So, religion is their signifier, their identity. They are not nationalists at all.



To see in order to be seen. OK, let's go back a little bit. The difference you draw between multiculturalism and multiculturalism is very relevant. But about integration, would you say minorities in this country are "integrated" as well? They are part of the power structure. The Muslim population has representatives in the Parliament ...

CH: I was using the word in the French sense. The French use the word *integration*, meaning a single culture, "French-ness"; everybody has to become French. And in this country it means a different thing. It is not so strong a term. It simply means that we all understand each other, and we share the same set of rules; we feel that we are members of the same society. And it is true that in the opinion polls a lot of young Muslims in this country say they happen to live in Britain but they do not feel British. They feel Muslim; their identity is Muslim. Yet, you do not find people on the whole saying, "I feel Christian first and British second," or "Jewish first and British second." And many immigrants do say, "I am British. I may be less patriotic than you, or I am not nationalist, but I am British."



You are a citizen of this country...

⁵ The *burkha*, is the full veil, leaving only the eyes showing, sometimes known as the *niqab*.

⁶ British home secretary of the time, that is, the minister of the interior.


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CH: Yes. But the interesting question for most people in Britain is not, “Do you feel Christian or British, or whatever?” It is, “Do you feel more English than British... or more Scottish than British?” And it is true, I feel English first, British second, European third probably, and religion doesn’t come into it. It is irrelevant, at least for very many inhabitants of these islands.

 We are dealing with a problem in the West, with social integration. Even though you have a country like Britain that has included so many minorities like the Muslim community, which is so large...

CH: Not as big as in France, by the way. France has the biggest Muslim population in Europe, both relatively and absolute.

 But the representation they have in power, the representation they have in business, and the representation they have been able to establish in different levels of social life is impressive, isn’t it?

CH: Muslims?

 Yes. The Muslim community in this country happens to be a part of the “British way,” the British national project. I do not want to go into the likelihood of racism having a role to a certain extent, but the important thing to me is to try to identify why those British citizens who are of Muslim origin have other priorities beyond those that identify them as citizens of this country, a priority of being someone from elsewhere but not from Great Britain, or wherever. If we agree that this is a negation, such a negation is also a contradiction in itself, isn’t it? Why are they here, ultimately?

CH: Yes, but the interesting observation is that the more militant members of the Muslim community tend to be young people of second or third generation. The first generation, the actual immigrants themselves, the parents, are often not very politically militant. I think sociologists tell us that most first generation immigrants work hard; they want to make money, maybe send some money home; they want to be accepted, and they do not want any trouble. But then the children, or the grandchildren, who have been raised here and may have suffered racism or do not

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feel completely an identification with the culture of the country which they are in, are torn between two cultures; they sometimes get very angry and they may suffer alienation in general. But when you get a foreign policy –here they are focused on the government's foreign policy in Iraq and Afghanistan– as something that is not in their name, they do not identify themselves with it, and they are passionately opposed to it, therefore, some of them, a very small but damaging group, decide to take action against it. And the more the Blair government continues with this policy, the more they will be radicalized. There is an opinion poll this week that showed that some young Muslims in Britain believed they wanted to live under the *Sharia* law. I think this is a serious matter. They may do it just to shock conventional opinion, especially in "white" society, or perhaps they may believe it. What is interesting is that they do not say, "I feel more Pakistani than British." They say, "I'm Muslim." So, religion is their signifier, their identity. They are not nationalists at all. It is religion that has become the focal point, like communism was to some extent four generations, even two generations ago in Britain. That was a transnational movement. That is why in my own university, in Cambridge, there were so many spies for the Soviet Union; they identified more with the transnational movement against fascism, their loyalties were there, and they were alienated by what they saw, the poverty and the depression in British economic life in the 1930's, and also, *nota bene*, by British foreign policy, which they saw as being pro-fascist. So, interestingly, there is a parallel.



So, Pandora's box was opened by Blair's decision to go to Iraq.

CH: Yes. You have then to ask yourself: When Blair goes, and when the British troops are withdrawn from Iraq and Afghanistan, will the problem cease? I think some of the problem will cease, yes. I think that Britain will be a less likely target for a major terrorist action. But at the same time, I do not think that young Muslims are suddenly going to become happy about living in the British bourgeois, liberal society. There are still going to be serious conflicts over the way of life, and the more fundamentalist beliefs of those who look to Hezbollah, or to Ahmadinejad in Iran. The fundamentalists believe in a theocracy; they believe in religious values determining political relationships, and that is something that no liberal democrat can accept. I mean, we spent 400 years escaping from the rule of the Pope and were killed for our beliefs, by both Protestants

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and Catholics. And finally we've achieved the rule of law, the secular rule of law. That is our society.



A difficult problem to deal with.

CH: Extremely. And none of us predicted 10 or 15 years ago that the biggest issue in politics would be religion. I don't think you or I, or almost anybody who comments on politics thought that religion was going to be the big issue of the early twenty-first century. Most of us thought the conflict between the state and religion came to an end in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. The Enlightenment had ended all that. But actually, there has been a reaction against the Enlightenment, and the reaction has come through the young Muslim, but also religious Jews, and the Christian Evangelicals.



But they are saying –Muslims– that this feeling and this problem have always been there below the surface.

CH: Yes. Well, there will always be a minority who will take these views. The question is over the moment in which the minority becomes active and damages the rest of the society through terrorism; if there is also a sort of silent majority or silent support for that, then you have a problem. But there is a general move in the world toward fundamentalism and religion; you can see this. Apparently, even in British universities there have been fundamentalist Christians who have been sending messages to handicapped students saying "Find Jesus and you will be cured." And this is crazy. Absolute impertinence. It's a form of aggression, religious aggression against other people.



That is a fascinating topic in itself, but let me continue with the other one. We are reaching the end of the interview. What major issues do you think need to be studied by academics and scholars when approaching international politics? In the same vein, I would like to ask you, what is to be done by national actors and states, given the current state of world politics? The questions are related because, on the one hand, we can explore how theory and other academic approaches should be pursued, and on the other, how real-world actors react and behave in the present.

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CH: Well. They are related questions, but they are also separate in some respects. Let me give an answer first of all on the issue of academics and intellectuals. I think the main thing we have to bear in mind is the danger of falling into two opposite traps. The first trap, I am afraid, we have already fallen into, by following some of the other social sciences into an obsession with methodology, with epistemological and philosophical questions, and thus neglecting the substance of politics and society. So there is far too much academic social science which simply feeds off itself. It is self-referential. The theoretical developments of international relations over the last 15 years have been interesting and important in the sense that they have helped us to understand the foundations of the work that we do, but at the same time they have become far too dominant. That is the trap on one side. The opposite trap is that we just talk about current affairs, that we do a kind of higher journalism. There is no point in scholars just trying to do the same work as journalists or politicians in commenting on current affairs. Inevitably, we do some of that, but that is not our main contribution. We can never do it as well as those people, we do not have the information, and we have to do other things as well, like teaching and writing. What we can do is to link the two together: to address the problems of the world –real problems– but at the same time with a perspective which comes from a deep theoretical and historical knowledge, so we have a different perspective on events from those who are actors, whether they are journalists or politicians. And in that way we can help wider society to understand the main causes of events.


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Now, the second question was about what can actors and decision makers –politicians– do about the world. It is very difficult just to give simple lessons to politicians, but it is rather like I mentioned earlier when talking about the tendency of American foreign policy to bounce from one simple big idea to another. We need to accept that problems should be dealt with in their own terms without always having to be fitted into a single framework, whether the framework is anti-communism, or democracy, or development, or whatever. We must accept the variety of the world; indeed to some extent, international relations is about managing diversity, which means accepting that people have a right to whatever values they think are important or should have priority. This does not mean that we must be indifferent to the sufferings of people under tyrants in other countries. It does mean we must be very cautious about interfering in other countries, especially with the use of force, because it

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may not be suitable for those circumstances, and it will very often be counter-productive. We have therefore to try to engage as many actors as possible –whether it is the leaders of Iran or North Korea on the one hand, or the United States on the other– *in* the processes of dialogue and multilateral negotiation. But at the same time, if we try to link all the issues together, everything will become paralyzed. Therefore, my own preference is for breaking issues down into practical and local units, so that they can be dealt with by those people who know most about them. And this requires the great powers not to take too dominant a role. They have to accept that their security is not always threatened by every development in some remote part of the planet. They have all the advantages already; their security is relatively rarely threatened, and they should be more confident in their own circumstances.

 One last question on the “regional of the international,” if you allow me to put it this way. Is globalization impacting somehow the perspectives and possibilities of regional actors, especially in the South, and broadening their avenues for progress and development?

CH: There has been a lot of talk about the possibilities about South–South cooperation or regional organizations, and you know better than I do that there have been failures of organizations, like the OAS or Caricom, and every decade brings new proposals, new hopes, whether it is NAFTA or Mercosur in the Western hemisphere, or the change of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union. So, there is clearly a need to keep trying the regional solution, but it is extremely difficult because as you know, most of the new states –relatively new– in the world, have only become independent since 1960 (in the case of Latin America since 1822), but they are still in the process of nation building, and nation-building states do not wish to give up sovereignty; they wish to consolidate it. Hence, they have got to understand the advantages of cooperation as a way of reinforcing sovereignty. This is one of the paradoxes of European integration. The well-known historian Alan Milward said that the European Community had rescued the nation state, in such a way that the nation state in Western Europe has managed to preserve itself in a situation of Cold War, after the defeat of fascism, in the processes of the development of modern capitalism. It has reinvented itself through the European Union, rather than abolishing itself. Thus, the Southern countries have no pos-

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sibility of abolishing themselves; they have to reinvent themselves and understand that sovereignty can be reworked through regional cooperation. But they must decide whether they want to cooperate on economics and politics and security, or just on certain limited aspects. Maybe they should start with small functional issues, as the Europeans did with coal and steel, and see if that works first without any big ambitions. What we see in Asia, for example, is ASEAN, the Association of South East Asian Nations. It has survived since 1969, and it has enlarged its membership, but it has not seriously developed as a sovereignty-changing institution. It is a loose association of member states, and it is a way of giving some diplomatic protection against the big powers, whether China or Japan or the United States. My old colleague at LSE, Michael Leifer, who was an expert in that area, called ASEAN a “diplomatic alliance,” which is exactly right; it’s a way of making an alliance, which is yet not military, in order to provide some political shelter. And most states need political shelter; but they have to choose their partners very carefully to make it work.

The Southern countries have no possibility of abolishing themselves; they have to reinvent themselves and understand that sovereignty can be reworked through regional cooperation.



I think that answers the question I was going to ask about the European Union and the future of regional blocs, like the African Union, NAFTA, the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America, or SPP. If you can—I know that it is not your region nor your area of expertise—I would like you to elaborate a little bit more on the likelihood of NAFTA’s survival. In your opinion, is security ahead of prosperity in the priorities of the United States?

CH: My view in general about organizations is that they are difficult to set up, and once they begin, they are impossible to bring to an end. It is what social scientists call “path dependency,” i.e., that what you have done in the past tends to set a path which determines the future to some degree. It is the influence of history; it’s an institutional logic. So, NAFTA will undoubtedly continue; the question is whether it will be useful or effective for the member states. I do not think that any of the members has yet seriously considered abolishing the organization, just as even Britain, which has often been skeptical of the European Union, has never seriously considered withdrawing from the organization. They simply want to change the terms of the discussion or the relationship. They do not want to withdraw. In fact, very few countries leave the United Nations. The neo-conservatives sometimes say the United States is going to withdraw from

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the United Nations, but it doesn't. And even Switzerland, which stayed out of the United Nations for many years, has now joined it. So institutions have a powerful effect, but there is a certain sort of entropy: they have an initial burst of enthusiasm and functionality, and then they settle into a routine which is often rather ineffectual. Obviously, NAFTA is a deeply asymmetrical relationship, just like Comecon was dominated by the Soviet Union. So, I would imagine that there are limits as to what might be achieved in NAFTA in the future.



Is there anything that you would like to add?

CH: I don't think so. I am running out of ideas and energy.



Thanks very much, Chris. I am sure that our readers will learn a lot from the ideas you have developed in this talk.

CH: Thank you for inviting me to give my views to your distinguished audience.