

PRESENT AT THE CREATION

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In choosing this title, I am borrowing shamelessly from the title of Dean Acheson's superb memoir of his years as President Truman's Secretary of State. My reference is to the creation of the International Studies Association in 1958, an organization that today has some 6,500 members, 6 regions, 28 sections, and publishes 5 journals. But whereas Acheson was at the core of the action in formulating foreign policy during a critical period of American history, I was a beginning graduate student in political science at Stanford—an outsider with no personal role in the process of creation but a very interested observer.

The origins of the ISA can be explained in part by describing the international, institutional, and intellectual contexts of the time it was created.

International context

Nineteen fifty-eight was the thirteenth year of the atomic age. The existence of those weapons, now in the arsenals of both the United States and Soviet Union, posed unprecedented threats to international security. Whereas international studies in the prewar period was largely the province of political scientists and diplomatic historians, now such organizations as the RAND Corporation drew on a broader range of analysts, including, for example, Thomas Schelling [an economist who would later win the Nobel Prize].

During the postwar period the U.S. had been involved in a limited war in Korea and was soon to be engaged in another land war in Asia. The question of how best to deal with such

wars while avoiding escalation to the nuclear level gave rise to several controversies. General Douglas MacArthur's proposal to bomb supply routes in Manchuria during the Korean War led to his dismissal by President Truman. Such policies as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's "massive retaliation" were also controversial. Among those involved in the debates included not only political scientist Henry Kissinger but also physicist Herman Kahn, and economist Thomas Schelling.

Institutional context

Many students of international relations were political scientists, but there was a growing sense that the American Political Science Association was not necessarily the ideal professional organization given their interests. The roster of APSA presidents did include at least one very distinguished IR scholar—Quincy Wright—but the broad scope of political science subfields precluded a focus on any one of them. Moreover, an important source of intellectual ferment at the time was the so-called "behavioral revolution" that was largely centered on American politics, but much less if at all on international relations or foreign policy.

Intellectual context

During the postwar years, "realist" theory was the dominant perspective on international relations and foreign policy. Its core tenets were that all countries pursue their "national interests" and that national interests are defined in terms of power. A growing number of students of IR felt that realism might be a good starting point, but that it was not wholly sufficient. Several books published in the mid-1950s challenged the adequacy of the realist school. Two deserve special mention:

Foreign Policy Decision-Making by Richard Snyder, H.W. Bruck and Burton Sapin, 1954, introduced a much more complex perspective on the foreign policy process, one that called into play the perspectives and evidence of other disciplines, including sociology, psychology, organization theory and the like. Information processing, perceptions and motivations of leaders came into play in “definitions of the situation.” The concept of “national interest” was not necessarily limited to power calculations but might be in fact be a contested part of the domestic political process.

Differences prior to the Pearl Harbor attack between two notable Americans—President Roosevelt and the noted aviator Charles Lindbergh—provide a good example of the latter point. FDR viewed the survival of Great Britain in the face of Nazi attacks as a vital American interest and he engaged in a number of highly non-neutral actions, including sending 50 aged destroyers to Britain and the “lend lease” policy that enabled London to acquire American arms without having to pay for them. In contrast, Lindbergh was a vocal proponent of neutrality, asserting several times that if Jews and Brits would leave us alone, we could avoid getting involved in the war. He had been a special guest of Luftwaffe chief Hermann Goering at the 1936 Berlin Olympics and had witnessed an impressive display of German air power. Lindbergh was convinced that Germany was unbeatable, but that we could live with German domination of Europe just as we had lived with French or British domination in earlier eras.

Critics pointed to the proliferation of categories and the absence of an overarching theory in Snyder, Bruck and Sapin, but for many it opened up new and important ways of analyzing foreign policy and international relations.

Quincy Wright was the author of a massive 6-volume *Study of War*, one of the most important international relations studies. In 1955 he published *The Study of International Relations*, an analysis of what each of several disciplines might contribute to the understanding of IR. Although Wright was a political scientist and, as noted earlier, had served as president of APSA, in his view the “core” disciplines were geography, which provides insight into the context for IR, and psychology, which provides insight into the dynamics of action.

Mention should also be made of a new journal, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, which began publication in 1956. Its masthead described it as “A quarterly for research related to war and peace.” The sixteen members of Editorial Board for *JCR* included scholars from eleven disciplines: political science [3], psychology [3], economics [2], and one each from mathematical biology, social relations, geography, journalism, international relations, law, and history.

Founding an organization such as the International Studies Association clearly requires the contributions of many persons. Four scholars, all from what is now the ISA/West region, deserve mention.

Minos Generales of San Diego State was one of the founding fathers and served as the first President of ISA. He was the author of *The Developing Power Centers of the World, 1970-75*. I was unable to learn much more about him, either with Google searches on in the excellent ISA web site.

Charles McClelland of San Francisco State [later of the University of Southern California] received his PhD in history at UC Berkeley, but served in the political science department at SF State. He was a frequent visitor to Stanford and he

collaborated with Robert North, another of the ISA founding fathers, on a project on international crises; his study focused on the crisis surrounding two small islands off the shore of China—Quemoy and Matsu. McClelland had a special interest in “systems theory” and one of his major works was *Theory and the International System.*” He served as the President of the Society for General Systems Research, 1959-61.

Fred Sonderrmann was born in Germany in 1923 and fled Nazi Germany with his family days before the outbreak of World War II. He served in the Pacific theater during the war, and earned his PhD at Yale in 1953. When he was offered a faculty position at Colorado College he asked one of his mentors, the noted diplomatic historian Samuel Flagg Bemis whether that would be a “dead end” appointment. Bemis laughed and pointed out that he had also started at CC and was now at Yale.

Sonderrmann was a legendary teacher at CC. He returned to Germany for a visit exactly thirty years after his departure. That visit was the subject of a noted documentary, “Return.” Sonderrmann served as President of ISA 1962-63 and he edited *International Studies Quarterly*. He also served on the City Council in Colorado Springs. After his premature death in 1978, a 77-acre park in CS was named Sonderrmann Park.

Robert C. North served in the Pacific theater during World War II. He was a member of a communications unit that went in with the first wave of invaders in the American “island hopping” strategy. When the war ended, he was the lone surviving member of his original unit.

Following the war North earned a PhD in political science at Stanford, and received an appointment at the Hoover

Institution on War, Peace and Revolution. After a change of regime at Hoover during the McCarthy era, North's book, *Moscow and Chinese Communism* came to be viewed as insufficiently critical of the U.S. by the right-wingers at Hoover. North was expelled and returned to the Political Science Department.

North served as President of ISA 1969-70. In addition to lifetime achievement awards from APSA [1993] and ISA [1998], his 1948 novel, *Revolt in San Marcos*, received the Wallace Stegner Prize as the best novel of 1948. At the time of his death in 2001 he was working on another novel, based on events in World War II.

North was a wonderful mentor and I was very fortunate to work with him both on my dissertation and several other projects, including one on the 1914 crisis leading up to World War I.

This brief summary unquestionably overlooked many others among the ISA founding fathers, but these four certainly played an important role. All were political scientists [although McClelland's PhD was in history], and they shared the view that the study of IR benefits from the theories, insights and evidence of other disciplines. Thus, there were important reasons to create a professional organization that would provide a receptive home for analysts from a broad range of disciplines.

The western origins of ISA can be seen in the roster of its Presidents:

Minos Generales, San Diego State, 1959-61

Wesley Posvar, Air Force Academy, 1961-62

Fred Sondermann, Colorado College, 1962-63
Ross Berkes, Southern California, 1963-64
John Gange, Oregon, 1964-65

Others from ISA/West who served as Presidents:

Alexander George, Stanford, 1973-74
Kal Holsti, British Columbia, 1986-87
Jim Caporaso, Washington, 1997-98
Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Stanford, 2001-2
Jacek Kugler, Claremont Graduate University, 2004-05
Ann Tickner, Southern California, 2006-07
David Lake, UC San Diego, 2010-11
Etel Solingen, UC Irvine, 2012-13

Last but far from least, ISA Headquarters, which will soon move to Connecticut, have been at the University of Arizona, under the excellent leadership of Tom Volgy, for many years.

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