While some modern and post-modern approaches like quantitative methods and discourse analysis have by now become familiar in various branches of classical studies, the rich field of international relations (IR) theory has hitherto remained largely unexplored.

E. sets out to fill this gap by submitting an analysis of interstate relations in antiquity from the heyday of the Greek polis to the establishment of Roman hegemony in the Mediterranean. Undoubtedly, it represents the most ambitious and most comprehensive attempt so far to apply the interpretative tools and heuristic concepts of IR theory to the study of the ancient world. E. thus seeks to foster a better understanding of ancient interstate relations and the parameters of Rome’s rise to supremacy but also endeavours to turn the classical world into a test case for the validity of modern theories (pp. 9f and 35f).

Within this frame of analysis, E.’s theoretical presuppositions are of crucial importance, of course. They are set out in chapters 1 and 2, which are at the same time meant to introduce classicists to the world of IR theory. Unfortunately, this is done in a most partial and selective manner; for rather than outlining the major strands of the field, E. structures his argument around the tenets of one particular school, namely that of Realism, suggesting that the ancient interstate system was composed of units that aggressively pursued power-maximising strategies to assert themselves in an anarchic environment marked by violence and the absence of enforceable rules. While variants of Realism are not discussed at great length, it is noteworthy that E. regularly quotes the Neorealist theoretician Kenneth Waltz and leaves no doubt that he subscribes to a particularly crude version of his favourite doctrine (p. 10: «the grimmest and most unforgiving of Realist paradigms»).

To put it mildly, this is a rather one-sided view of international relations, and one should therefore expect E. to defend it against some of the alternative models developed by political scientists. However, none of these alternatives is seriously considered: while Institutionalism, which is admittedly somewhat difficult to ap-

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ply to the pre-modern world, is flatly rejected with a few questionable remarks about the current direction of Russian and Chinese foreign policy (pp. 29f), the Constructivist challenge is brushed aside by stressing the harsh reality of violence in the international arena as supposedly confirmed by the shocking events of September 11, 2001 (pp. 31–33). Other models are not even mentioned in E.’s introductory discussion, including the promising approach of the so-called ‘English school’, which seeks to identify rules within a basically anarchic society of states. What is more, the significance of domestic factors is downplayed to the extent of reducing them to a function of power capabilities and responses to the pressures generated by the international system (pp. 27f and 30f, also 186–91).

This is not to say that the assumptions of Realism are without merit in terms of understanding ancient interstate relations, which are certainly marked by a comparatively low degree of institutionalisation and interdependence, as E. rightly points out (pp. 18f). Accordingly, Realism may indeed be more relevant to the ancient world than some of its alternatives, the more so as its main ideas can to some extent be traced to ancient thought. Not surprisingly, E. repeatedly quotes Thucydides (pp. 48–57 and passim), whom some Realists would consider a pioneer of their approach, though this may not do justice to the complexity of his historical interpretation. Be that as it may, E.’s theoretical discussion is quite unbalanced and obviously inadequate as an introduction that is mainly targeted at classicists hitherto unfamiliar with IR theory.

Inevitably, the shortcomings of E.’s theoretical presuppositions entail far-reaching consequences for his historical analysis in the following main part, though there are also plenty of perceptive observations on the ancient interstate system and the way it affected foreign policy decisions. On the whole, the depth of E.’s insights correlates with his readiness to supplement the Waltzian vision of an unforgiving anarchic interstate system by providing a broader context in terms of cultural setting and connexions between the domestic and foreign arenas. Thus his chapter on classical Greece not only highlights the prevalence of war in a system of militarised anarchy, but also includes a fairly detailed discussion of customs and norms of interstate conduct (pp. 37–42), as well as dealing with fear, perceptions of danger, and the «discourse of compellence, honor, and threat among the Greek poleis» (p. 62). While it is probably fair to say that treaties and arbitration mechanisms often meant little in the face of military force, it is quite unfortunate that E. primarily employs these sections as a means of reinforcing his constant stress on the validity of the Realist paradigm (p. 67: «the impact of Greek culture on events only intensifies the importance of Realist insights»).

E.’s outline of the dynamics of the Hellenistic world is broadly similar: incessant warfare and the systemic pressures deriving from multipolar anarchy are regularly emphasised, with Polybius taking up the position assumed by Thucydides in the preceding chapter. Again, additional factors are occasionally considered, such as the rules and norms of interstate relations (pp. 79f), the «Hellenistic royal ideology of militarism» (p. 83), and the personal ambition of Philip V and Antiochus III (p. 111), but again this mainly serves to reveal the supposed limitations of non-Realist models. Interestingly, E. also mentions the concept of international society as formulated by Hedley Bull, a leading exponent of the aforementioned ‘English school’, yet the idea is scornfully cast aside rather than
seriously explored (pp. 81f). Finally, the stage is set for the advent of Rome in a section that employs the Realist concept of ‘power-transition crisis’ to describe the consequences of the collapse of Ptolemaic power around 200 BC (pp. 104–16).

In the next chapter, E. takes a broader look at the longue durée of Rome’s exposure to security threats and her engaging in hegemonic rivalry in Italy and the Western Mediterranean. Focusing in turn on Latium, Etruscan city-states, the Celts, the Samnites, Tarentum, and Carthage, he seeks to demonstrate that all of them were militaristic, bellicose, and aggressive, and hence similar to Rome in consequence of the ‘tragic pressures of the interstate system’ (p. 175). Even if some of E.’s arguments about who was the aggressor in particular conflicts may be debatable, his stress on the warlike culture of the res publica’s neighbours certainly provides a most useful corrective to the prevailing view of Roman exceptionalism as an ‘imperialist’ predator state. However, the fundamental problem with E.’s thesis is that he essentially treats ancient states as if they were indistinguishable ‘billiard balls’ responding to the ‘objective’ reality of interstate anarchy and pursuing ‘rational’ policies designed to gain power and influence.

This becomes even clearer in the following chapter on Roman militarism, which is written as a challenge to William Harris’ ‘War and Imperialism in Republican Rome’ (1979) with its focus on the cultural, political, and socio-economic underpinnings of Rome’s drive for expansion. Again, E. does not contest the notion of a warlike and aggressive Rome but rather calls attention to similar features in Persian, Carthaginian, and Greek culture in order to show that other ancient states were no less warlike and aggressive. This perspective on Rome’s competitors and their systemic interaction is undoubtedly an important one, yet its relevance is no excuse for E.’s way of dismissing the specifics of domestic culture and politics as secondary for making sense of Roman imperialism. What is more, in a section on Rome’s religious tradition and moralising discourse (pp. 216–29), he argues that the res publica may in some respects have been more restrained than other polities, stressing the ‘prevalence not of triumphalism but of anxiety’ (p. 224). Along with his focus on the ‘security dilemma’, the whole structure of E.’s argument thus serves to revive much of the old view of ‘defensive imperialism’, though he seems to prefer the term ‘‘preclusive’ expansionism’ (p. 144).

The final chapter is opened by a well-argued section on Rome’s capacity for inclusion and integration, which duly underlines her success in mobilising and managing resources more efficiently than other ancient polities (pp. 245–57). According to E., this – rather than Roman militarism and belligerence – is the key to understanding the Republic’s rise to hegemony in the Mediterranean, and it is therefore quite regrettable that the argument is not further developed to explore the particulars of the Roman state-building process in Italy.¹ What follows is a rather detailed account of the aforementioned ‘power-transition crisis’ and Rome’s wars against Philip V and Antiochus III (pp. 257–316), which is predictably focused on geopolitical considerations and the balance of power within the interstate system. Granted, domestic and personal factors are occasionally

addressed in more or less extensive digressions (esp. pp. 280–85 on Rome’s decision to go to war with Macedon), yet they provide little more than a backdrop to E.’s unremitting insistence on the «Primat der Außenpolitik» (p. 288).

On the whole, the strengths and weaknesses of E.’s study are to a large extent those of Realism: while offering a useful perspective on the incentives and constraints generated by an essentially anarchic environment, the enquiry largely neglects the importance of norms and ideas, of cultural aspects and domestic structures, as well as of the admittedly primitive elements of order in ancient interstate relations. E.’s use of modern theory thus produces new insights but also imposes new limitations owing to his rigorous way of upholding the tenets of one school at the expense of others. Among his blind spots are specifically Greek and Roman concepts like philia and amicitia, the impact of personal relations and bonds of patronage between individuals and families, and the implications of current debates on Rome’s political culture and the nobility’s state-centred ethos of service to the res publica.¹ There is no doubt, then, that Roman imperialism is far more than the reflection of a «pathology [that] lay mostly within the anarchic system of which Rome was a unit» (p. 241).

Notwithstanding its theoretical and conceptual shortcomings, E.’s book is an innovative and important one. Above all, it represents a major step towards opening the field of ancient interstate relations to the world of IR theory. This is definitely a promising avenue to pursue, though future research will hopefully be less one-sided in its theoretical orientation than E.’s crude version of Waltzian Realism.

Trier


Françoise des Boscs-Plateaux ist nicht die erste, die nach der Existenz eines hispanischen Clans im kaiserzeitlichen Rom fragt. Das hatte unter anderem bereits Robert Étienne im Jahre 1964 auf einem internationalen Kolloquium in Madrid/Italica getan und die Frage insofern beantwortet, als er von der Existenz einer hispanischen «pressure-group» in Rom sprach und die These formulierte, daß diese Lobby in großem Maße den Aufstieg Trajans befördert habe.² Damit war er auf große Skepsis und vehemente Kritik gestoßen: Ronald Syme, Hans-Georg Pflaum und André Pignoli warfen ihm in der Diskussion seines Beitrags insbesondere die schmale Basis vor, auf die er sich stütze und die es nicht erlaube, eine derartige Vermutung als These zu vertreten.
