Theory:

Evaluate whether Neo-Realism is still a useful theoretical approach for studying international relations or has it become a degenerative paradigm or possibly even worse, simply a straw man for other theories to use as a comparison? In your answer, be sure to briefly describe Neo-realism, the criteria for determining whether a theory is still useful, and evidence to support your argument.

Waltz's (1979) systematic reformulation of classical Realist thought into the structural or Neorealist paradigm has fundamentally shaped discourse and research within international relations.[1] Even theorists seeking a modest reformation in our thinking – say from relative gains concerns to absolute gains concerns – have found it necessary to battle with the predominant mode of thought.[2] In order to evaluate the current state of Neorealism, we must first specify the bones of the theory.

Differing lists of the "hardcore" of Neorealism abound, even within the same edited volume. Keohane (1986, 164-5) declares that they are (1) the primacy of nation-states, (2) rationality of actors, and (3) power as a motivator. Gilpin (1986, 304-08) contends that the true hardcore consists of (1) the essentially conflictual nature of international politics, (2) the aggregation of individuals into groups for action at the international level, and (3) the primacy of power and security concerns. From a less-friendly stance, Vasquez (1997, 899) declares (1) state-centrism, (2) differentiation between domestic and international politics, and (3) characterization of international politics as a "struggle for power and peace" as the foundational assumptions. Clearly parallels exist within these three formulations. All three trace back to the assumptions of the Balance of Power perspective as laid out by Waltz (1979, 118). In my

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[1] Keohane (1986) argues that this was Waltz's primary motivation.
[2] On the relative gains debate and other battles between Neo-realists and Neoliberal Institutionalism, see *Nerealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (1993), ed Robert. O. Keohane.

opinion, however, they gloss over the prior – and thus primary – assumptions Waltz presented in defining his "structural" theory of international relations.

The principles which truly differentiate Neorealism from other philosophies, and which determine Waltz's predictions, center around the organizing principle of the international system, namely *anarchy* (Waltz 1979, 89). The lack of any authority capable of governing the interactions between states in the international system forces all states to think first of their own survival (91), and secondly forces functional equivalence across states (93-7). Neorealism's state-centrism and pre-occupation with power and security stem directly from the anarchy assumption. Thus, I consider the hardcore of Neorealism to be (1) the anarchy assumption, (2) functional equivalence of states, and (3) states' motivation for survival. In order to create a determinate theory, Waltz (1979) then adds the assumption of weak rationality and power as the means of guaranteeing survival under anarchy so emphasized by Keohane, Vasquez and Gilpin.

The continued relevance of Neorealism has at least twice been evaluated according to Lakatosian criteria (Keohane 1986; Vasquez 1997). The main element of Lakatos's philosophy of science on which Keohane and Vasquez fixate is the role auxiliary hypotheses. These addendums to the hardcore must produce "novel" predictions, allow for empirical falsification, and be explanatory rather than *ad hoc*. Waltz (1979, 6) proposed, instead, the following: "Of purported laws we ask: 'Are they true?' Of theories, we ask: 'How great is their explanatory power'". This simpler criterion is not entirely opposed to the Lakatosian framework, which requires essentially that a theory's subsequent iterations encompass an ever wider sphere of empirical regularities. I prefer, whenever possible, to evaluate theories by their internally set criteria. To critique internally provides greater refutation while avoiding charges of irrelevance.

This strategy is especially prudent given the subtleties of applying Lakatosian criteria.[3] I proceed, therefore, with a discussion of Neorealism's explanatory power.

Parsimony stands out as the great virtue of Waltz's Neorealism; he created an entire worldview through the specification of very few substantive assumptions. Unfortunately, the best examples of scholarship within this school must inevitably seek recourse to variables and processes which the hardcore of Neorealism explicitly rejects. Waltz's theory is fundamentally incapable of explaining the course of history; it is a closed, self-contained system, unshakable in its stark outlines. Though Waltz's caution against reductionism[4] is well taken, eliminating all mention of process and variation in the motivations of actors produces an equal problem of indeterminate predictions.

Ruggie (1986, 152) accurately explains that a central failing in "… Waltz's posture is that, in any social system, structural change itself has no source other than unit level processes". Thus, Keohane (1986) notes that Gilpin (1981) must rely upon social processes and economic cycles *inside states* – violating the dictum against reductionist theorizing – in order to explain the rise and fall of hegemony throughout history.[5] Even balance of power politics, the flagship of Neorealism, appears accurately to describe history *only* if we make one of three changes.[6]

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[3] See for example, the charges made by Elman and Elman (1997) and Waltz (1997) to which Vasquez (1997) opened his argument.

[4] I refer to this passage: "Internationally, different states have produced similar as well as different outcomes, and similar states have produced different as well as similar outcomes. The same causes often lead to different effects, and the same effects sometimes follow from different causes" (Waltz 1979, 37). This argument is consistent with the conclusions Waltz reached in his exploration of causes of war located within the first, second and third image in *Man, the State and War* (1954).

[5] In my opinion, Gilpin (1981) – as do all hegemonic stability theorists – also fundamentally abandons the anarchy assumption by positing the ability of a hegemon to set the agenda and norms of appropriate interaction at the international level. I do not find a focus on relative power to be a sufficient indicator of "realism" in a theory.

[6] Vasquez (1997) also evaluates the viability of Neo-realism based on the balance of power literature, concluding that it is a degenerative paradigm by "Lakatosian criteria". I believe that my critique is substantively different and more internal.

First, we might, like the power cycle theorists (c.f. Doran 1996), consider the different patterns and rates of growth across states – violating the functional equivalence proposition – and the tendency for increased aggressiveness in policy decisions at the inflection points of those growth curves – proposing thought-processes closer to those described by prospect theory (c.f. Kowert and Hermann 1997) than weak rationality. Second, we might account for *states' intentions* as Walt (1987) does, and essentially violate the functional equivalence and the universal power motive assumptions of Neorealism while incorporating elements of *idealism* (c.f. Wendt 1999). Finally, we might retreat to the classical Realist domain of the national interest as does Schweller (1994), despite Waltz's explicit attempts to abandon this non-rigorous theoretical device for the functional equivalence and structural constraints propositions of Neorealism.

If the purpose of theory is to explain the occurrence of empirical laws, as Waltz contends, then his Neorealism has failed rather spectacularly to confront the principle empirical regularity in recent international relations research. The democratic peace, essentially an empirical phenomenon in search of theoretical explication, provides a motor for scholarship which even Waltz's "balancing proposition" cannot rival. In this thriving literature, Neorealists can play only the role of naysayer.

Farber and Gowa (1995), for example, attack the norm-based mechanisms of the democratic peace, claiming that they cannot be separated from the more "realist" concept of state interests. This critique is eminently unhelpful: why replace a theoretical concept which can usefully differentiate types of states with an equally abstract theoretical concept which can *not* usefully differentiate types of states? Moreover, the objection reflects a shallow understanding of norms, in that there is no reason for norms to contradict national interests. Norms, indeed,

often emerge precisely because certain types of behavior *are* in the broad interests of states yet are difficult to obtain under anarchy (c.f. Keohane 1984; Krasner 1982; Ruggie 1982; Ostrom 1990). Farber and Gowa (1995) also criticize democratic peace theorists for eliminating cases from analysis which may disprove their hypotheses, yet proceed to perpetrate exactly the same error by excluding from their sample all instances of general war (132-34). I find the reasons for excluding those cases of "jointly democratic wars" more compelling than the reasons for excluding the most influential wars in our history.[7]

Sebastian Rosato (2003) provides another example of unconstructive criticism of the democratic peace literature from the Neorealist camp. His critique is particularly poor, demonstrating a limited understanding of the democratic peace theory (c.f. Doyle 2005; Kinsella 2005) as well as faulty logic (c.f. Slantchev, Alexandrova and Gartzke 2005). In place of the democratic peace mechanisms of norm externalization, structural constraints, interdependence and signaling he offers the influence of U.S. hegemony since the close of WWII. Clearly, this explanation cannot explain the strength of the democratic peace finding prior to U.S. dominance. Nor is it entirely consistent with Neorealist tenets (see my footnote 5).

Explanation of the democratic peace phenomenon requires consideration of states' internal characteristics and of interaction between states (c.f. Doyle 1983a, 1983b; Rummell 1985; Lake 1992; Maoz and Russet 1993; Dixon 1994; Ray 1995; Leeds and Davis 1999). Contrary to knee-jerk realist critiques, the democratic peace does not require democracies to be inherently charitable and good, as demonstrated by the institutional theories (c.f. Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1992; Fearon 1994; Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson and Smith

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[7] For a description of cases often touted as disconfirming the democratic peace proposition see chapter 3 in Ray (1995).

1999; Schultz 1999; Reiter and Stam 1998; Peceny, Beer and Sanchez-Terry 2002). And the system is not silent in the process of democratic pacifism, but it is essentially shaped by rather than immune to the processes at the monadic and dyadic levels (Huntley 1996; Mitchell 2002; Rasler and Thompson 2004).

Within both its self-stated research agenda and the realm of the democratic peace, then, the explanatory power of Neorealism in its essential or "hardcore" formulation fails to inspire confidence. Despite its limited utility, Neorealism still maintains a kind of veto power over alternative explanations. Those interested in pursuing the importance of ideas and norms in international relations collide with an old-guard ontologically prejudiced against such explanatory factors. When formulated in terms of rational decision making and strategic models, lower level analyses are better received by the community (c.f. Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1992; Fearon 1994; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999; Schultz 1999). In this respect, Neorealism remains more than a straw-man to be held up and torn down in the theory-building process. It is a guard dog, against which we must defend ourselves during the theory-building process, lest our arguments fall to a Neorealist critique of reductionism or idealism. This situation is not *entirely* unfortunate: the specter of Waltz's impressive attempt to systematize classical Realist tenets challenges new theory to be self-conscious in its assumptions and consistent in its internal logic.[8]

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[8] Although, see Wendt (1999) for an argument accusing Waltz's theory of failing in both these respects.

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The growth of cooperative relations in the international system has been explained as a result of either centralized, top-down solutions (such as hegemony or international organizations) or decentralized, bottom-up solutions (such as reciprocity and interdependence). In a well-organized essay, survey and evaluate the pertinent literature. Given your evaluation, where would you recommend scholars concentrate their studies? What do you think the prospects are for high levels of international cooperation in the current international environment? Do current events seem to support your views?

It seems to me that many of the major IR theories can be placed in both the centralized or decentralized camps. However, some of these theories are clearly in one or the other category. Beginning with the top-down approaches, I would identify hegemonic stability theory, theories of international organizations, neorealism and systemic democratic peace arguments as having a top-down approach. For the bottom-up approaches, I would identify reciprocity and interdependence (especially relating to the democratic peace) theories as falling more or less into these categories.

Beginning with the top-down approaches, Keohane (1980) and Gilpin's (1981) hegemonic stability theory provides a clear explanation of how cooperation can occur in the international system. When a hegemon is present, there is no possibility of a non-hegemonic state taking over the international system, which allows states to cooperate with each other without fear of being attacked. Considering the post-WWII world, for instance, the US emerged as the clear hegemon. The war-torn European states did not need to worry about their neighbors attempting to take them over because they knew that the US would step in to stop any effort of a weaker state to create an empire. For instance, even if the leader of France had the lust for power hard-wired into him at birth (classical realist assumption), he would not choose to attack Britain for fear of retaliation by the US. The cooperative nature in Europe that we see today (EU, EEC, etc.) can be seen as a result of early cooperation following WWII while Europe was safe under the

shadow of the US. The major problem with hegemonic stability theory is that we have few cases of actual hegemons to look at to prove the theory empirically. Additionally, as Mearsheimer (1993) notes, we should not assume that all hegemons will be like the US. Another hegemon might have decided to take over Europe itself. For instance, had Hitler been victorious, it is very unlikely that he would have provided security while Latin American states built a cooperative community in the same way that the US helped Europe form a cooperative community. Another problem is pointed out by Ruggie (1993) who brings up the possibility that the US forced other states to accept Western ways as the hegemon and to enter into agreements they would have been better without.

Theories of international organizations also provide a top-down approach in explaining cooperation. This comes in many varieties. For instance, Russett and Oneal (2001) explain that international organizations provide a forum where states can communicate and signal their intentions. The forums also provide information that the states can use to better understand each other's positions. Thus, when two states become involved in a dispute, international organizations allow the two states to come together to talk things out. Further, IOs often provide the solutions themselves. For instance, in the 1970s the Western European states became involved in a maritime dispute with Britain over access to the waters surrounding Britain, which contained the vast majority of the fishing resources. This problem was discussed over several years between the states in the European Economic Community (EEC) international organization. Without the EEC, Britain would have likely had to negotiate with each country on a bilateral basis, which would result in inefficient bargaining and possible commitment problems. With the IO, we can see better transparency and enforcement mechanisms (Oye 1986). If, for

instance, Britain had forged an agreement with EEC states that they can take a certain quota from the British waters, we could expect the EEC to provide both monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to make sure the states comply.

In addition to enforcement, IOs provide norms for the community to follow. Bush and Reinhardt (2000) explain that the most important power of the World Trade Organization (WTO) comes with the normative statements that it makes with its rulings. When the WTO rules on steel tariffs, for example, it provides a norm for future acceptable interstate interactions. Kinsella (1982) explains that IOs are so important that states often demand that they come into being in order to increase efficiency and transparency in bargaining. Other authors, such as Chayes and Chayes (1993) and Tallberg (2002) argue that IOs provide states with the technological tools necessary to comply with international agreements.

As we might expect, scholars have also found many problems with IOs. Waltz (1979) argues that IOs may actually increase disputes because they force states to confront each other on minor issues that might otherwise go away with time. Gallarotti (1991) points out that IOs have failed in many "tightly coupled" situations that require specific solutions to complex problems. Regarding cooperation, the main critique comes from neorealists such as Mearsheimer (1995) who argues that IOs are merely epiphenomenal. That is, they merely reflect the common interests of the participant states. Gruber (2000) provides an interesting critique by explaining that IOs force states to join into agreement when they would have been better off had the IO never formed. For instance, Mexico would have been better off had NAFTA never formed. After the US formed a free trade agreement with Canada, however, the status quo changed and

Mexico was forced to join into the agreement while it would have otherwise been better off had the initial agreement never been formed.

As for my views on the subject, I think that IOs indeed have an important and independent effect on cooperation. Drawing on Oye (1986), it seems clear that IOs provide norms to follow, information, and transparency in bargaining. As Keohane and Martin (1995) point out, why would states invest so much into IOs if they did not have an important effect on cooperation? If the US did not care what the UN thought about its potential invasion of Iraq, why did we send Colin Powell (a high level diplomat) to garner support of the organization? This may not be the best case given that we ultimately did not go along with the prevailing feeling in the US, but it at least shows that the US put considerable effort into convincing the members of the UN to go along with the plan (resolve would be the selection problem if this were modeled).

Another top-down theory that explains cooperation can be found with realism and neorealism. We are used to seeing these theories used to explain conflict; however, realism also explains some forms of cooperation. Beginning with classical realism, scholars such as Morgenthau (1956) argue that international stability is most likely in a multipolar world in which states balance against any potential threat. In laying out his six principles of realism, Morgenthau explains that states should join together and balance against the threat. Also, after putting the state that is trying to achieve dominance back down, these states should allow this state to exist rather than eliminate an essential actor. These are both forms of cooperation.

Neorealism also explains some forms of cooperation. For instance, Walt's (1987) test of Waltz's (1979) theory in the Middle East finds that states join together to balance

against threat. Mearsheimer's (2001) offensive realism explains that states may bandwagon with the emerging power in order to survive. These are also forms of cooperation. An example might be found in the recently-formed alliance between Iran and Syria, which is a clear example of two states balancing against the threat of the US.

I suppose the biggest problem with the realist argument I just explained lies in my liberal definition of the word "cooperation." Realism sees that states will only cooperate if they have to. In an anarchic world, states will mainly seek to survive (neorealism) by either balancing against threat (Walt 1987) or by expanding as much as possible (Mearsheimer). Empirically, the biggest problem with neorealism is that we have so many examples of state behaving in a manner counter to the realist expectations. Theoretically, we see cooperation for many reasons that have nothing to do with outside threats. For instance, states go to great lengths to create IOs for cooperation even if they have to limit themselves with agreements such as the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Also, there is little reason for the US not to invade the Bahamas under realist expectations. Haas (1989) provides a unique example dealing with pollution in the Mediterranean where the scientific epistemic community convinced states to cooperate to clean up the Sea, which is cooperation that cannot be explained by realism.

A final top-down approach can be explained using the constructivist analytical framework. Constructivists such as Wendt (1992) explain that behavior under anarchy should be seen as a continuum in which states can fully cooperate and have completely mutual interests (Wilson's world), or, on the other hand, it can be a kill or be killed Hobbesian world. Anarchy, as Wendt argues, is what states make of it. Constructivists focus on the role of intersubjective meaning and constitutive relationships while keeping

with the anarchy assumption of neoliberals and neorealists. In a specific example, Lebovic (2004) uses machine-coded events data to explain alignment behavior in the Middle East. He argues that the Arab states faced ideological constraints in their behavior towards Israel. That is, even though it was strategically and economically profitable to be friendly with the Israeli's, the "peer pressure" of neighbors as well as the ideologies of the people living in the states force the leaders to behave in a hostile manner towards Israel. Thus, constructivism explains that states cooperate because they share the same ideas and orientations towards the world. The US/UK relationship is a prime example. Although the UK already has nuclear capability, the US perceives North Korea's potential to obtain nuclear weapons as a far greater threat because we have an ideological orientation with the UK that is not present with North Korea.

The biggest problem with constructivism is that it lacks an explicit theory of agency. It fails to explain exactly when and why we should expect states to cooperate. It also generally relies on case studies and discourse analysis to prove its expectations, which can be biased by the scholar studying the subject. Further, there is much disagreement among constructivists themselves as to where we should see cooperation and how it should be proven, or even if it should be proven (Lapid).

Bottom up approaches are also useful in explaining cooperation. Beginning with reciprocity, there is much evidence to suggest that states react to each other when bargaining over an issue. Rappoport's tit-for-tat explains that cooperation is most likely to evolve when a state begins by acting in a cooperative manner and then reciprocates the

other actor's move.[1] For instance, Lebovic (2003) used events data to examine

interactions between the US and USSR during the cold war. He shows empirically that

cooperative actions by either state were most often reciprocated by cooperative actions by

the other. The same was true for conflictual interactions.

The biggest problem with reciprocity, as explained by Jervis' "spiraling scenario"

is that states who would otherwise cooperate may find themselves competing in an arms

race. This is because, as Jervis and Van Evera explain, the majority of states prefer a

defensive stance, which means that they focus on weapons to defend the homeland rather

than to expand. However, it is often difficult to tell the difference between the other

side's defensive weapons from their offensive weapons. For example, North Korea may

be building nuclear weapons, as they claim, to prevent being attacked. However, the US

and South Korea see this as the build-up of an offensive arsenal. Back to Jervis, when A

sees B building up weapons, A gets worried about its own security, which makes A

produce more weapons to ward off attacks. B reciprocates A's build-up of weapons. The

result is an arms race that spirals out of control. When these states build up weapons, the

possibility of a war due to miscalculation or an error in judgment increases.

Another problem with reciprocity is that in its original form it assumes a 2 player

game. However, as Goldstein and Freeman (1991) and Goldstein and Pevehouse (1997)

show, there is often a third party involved, which creates a triangular relationship. That

is, the decision by player B in response to player A's move can be affected by an outside

player C. For Goldstein and Pevehouse (1997), for example, the moves by the Serbs

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[1] The citation for tit-for-tat is generally Axelrod (1984) who expands upon Rappoport's original program
theoretically. However, given that it was Rappoport's original work, I think he deserves more credit than
he gets. This is my effort to give him that credit.

towards the Croats in the Bosnian war was affected by the international community.

Thus, the interactions betweens states are seldom as simple as reciprocity explains.

Interdependence theory can also explain cooperation from a bottom-up approach. This theory explains that as states become more dependent on each other economically, they are likely to have more friendly relations (Russett and Oneal 2001; Keohane and Nye 1977). For example, as the US and China become more economically interdependent, we are likely to see more cooperation in other areas. This is likely the reason that we seldom see the US confronting China on issues such as human rights or development and selling of weapons. Empirical evidence for interdependence can be found with Reuveny and Kang (1996) who use COPDAB and WEIS events data to show that there exists a reciprocal relationship between trade and cooperation. That is, the more states became economically interdependent, the more they were willing to cooperation, which in itself led to more trade.

One of the biggest problems with interdependence is explained by Waltz (1979) who argues that interdependence increases the amount of interactions between states, which can increase the probability that these states will disagree on an issue that could lead to war.

A final decentralized theory explains cooperation due to domestic factors within states. Fearon's (1994) audience costs is a prime example. According to Fearon, state leaders are unable to behave in a offensive realism manner because the domestic audience might be angry at the policy. For instance, the US legislators would likely feel the wrath of the voters if they decided to take over the Bahamas. Putnam's (1988) two-level games also speaks to this issue. According to Putnam, a leader must try to sell a

plan at the first level in the international community. In the second level, s/he must sell

the plan to the domestic audience. This affects how the leader plays the game in the first

round. Stastavage (2004) has a nice extension of this argument. He claims, among other

things, that open-door bargaining might lead to excessive posturing by democracies, who

face the highest audience costs, and ultimately lead to lower cooperation.

To answer the final part of the question, I would not recommend that scholars

focus on any particular area because I think both centralized theories and decentralized

theories have much room to develop. For instance, the reciprocity arguments can be

expanded with formal models explaining how 3rd parties might affect dyadic interactions.

At the same time, the systemic literature on democratic peace provides much room for

expansion as data becomes available. There is certainly enough room for scholars to

work at both ends of the spectrum, which will end up having implications for foreign

policy from the decentralized camp and implications for the international community at

the centralized camp. The biggest development I would like to see would come from

constructivists. At this point, there seems to be an obvious disconnect between

constructivism and more mainstream theories (neorealism, neoliberalism). More work

should be done by constructivism to explain exactly when we should expect to see

leaders cooperate and how interstubjective understanding can play a role. Fearon and

Went's (2002) paper explaining the similarities and differences between rational choice

and constructivism is a step in the right direction.

Prospects for future cooperation are good for several reasons. First, it seems that

hegemonic stability is not a precondition for cooperation. Keohane (1984) and Ikenberry

(2001) show quite readily that international institutions can have an important affect on

cooperation in the international environment. This theory falls in line with earlier theories from the English School such as the world of Headly Bull, which focus on the role of international organizations, international laws, and norms in promoting cooperation. Unfortunately, it seems that the biggest problem with future and current cooperation comes from the current hegemon (the US). Recent events in Iraq certainly do not bode well for the future of cooperation. This seems to be a clear case of a hegemon acting as an imperialist power with complete disregard for the feelings of the international community or the institutions that were created in the post-WWII world to constrain the hegemon (Ikenberry 2001) and promote cooperation (Keohane 1984). However, the recent fence-mending efforts by the Bush administration's tour of Europe (Bush and Rice) send important signals that we may be ready to work with the world in the future. Again, however, Bush's appointment for the head of the World Bank may show that these efforts were really false. Overall, however, it seems like states are cooperating more in the international community than in any previous era. The fact that the European Community is united in their stance against the US is a sign of cooperation (even if it's against the hegemon). The movement of people power in Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia and Syria might be clear signs that domestic audiences will play a role in future negotiations, which should lead to cooperation. In my view, the foreign policy of the Bush administration has been a step backward, but overall I see cooperation emerging in the international community.

Question: What forms the basis of our work? What are the key ideas that govern the whole?

basis:
  • **noun** (pl. **bases** /**bay**seez/). **1** the foundation of a theory or process. **2** the principles according to which an activity is carried on. ORIGIN Greek, 'step, pedestal'; related to BASE

As its definition (Soanes and Hawker 2005) demonstrates, the word 'basis' has two related but distinct meanings. The first suggests that the basis of a subject is the foundation upon which it rests, while the second captures underlying circumstances or conditions. In an academic setting, we often sacrifice some of reality's texture in favor of parsimony: we assume things are simple (King, Keohane and Verba 1994:20). Therefore, the foundation of any theory is the set of assumptions and key ideas that drive its insights. Yet every scholar approaches her work with unique vision; exactly what we study follows from who we are. The principles by which we proceed vary across individuals.

 This discussion suggests that the bases of the study of international relations are twofold. We are motivated by the assumptions and key ideas that drive the discipline. At the same time, we are motivated by our individual values and experiences. Thus two forces drive students of international relations. As individuals, the particular substance of our work follows from who we are: our histories and beliefs channel intellectual curiosity to one topic or another. As a result, some of us study foreign policy, while others focus on political economy. Some investigate violent political conflict, others endeavor to understand why states cooperate and conflict. Simultaneously, our work is heavily influenced by how and when we were socialized into the discipline. The assumptions, concepts, values and practices that constitute our stylized worldview underpin many scholars across space, but evolve over time. At any moment there are key ideas that govern the whole, yet those ideas interact with history, developing and changing alongside reality.

I claim, then, that our work rests on two bases. The particular circumstances that underlie our work differ from scholar to scholar. It is unclear whether this basis is governed by a set of key ideas (e.g., if many IR scholars are driven to the field for similar reasons). If so, then identifying those ideas would be an interesting exercise. Unfortunately, at present, I lack the resources to conduct such a survey. Instead, I focus on the idea that the discipline is based in and governed by an evolving set of assumptions and assertions. This suggests that one basis of the study of international relations is the set of key ideas embodied in its dominant paradigm. That paradigm is not fixed; instead, it changes and is replaced as history unfolds.

Tracing one basis of IR over time

The Post-War Period

In the four decades following the Second World War, world politics involved an international system with two major powers. One result of this stability was scholars' ability to develop coherent theories and engage in substantive debate. They discussed realism and liberalism, national interests and international security, stability and instability, etc. (e.g., Morgenthau 1948, Carr 1962, Doyle 1986, Kant 1991). The study of IR was increasingly grounded in and guided by the neorealist/neoliberal paradigm.

That paradigm follows from three assumptions. First, states are the unit-level rational actors in the international system. Second, the structure of that system is anarchic. And third, states pursue power, either for its own sake (Morgenthau 1948), to ensure survival (Waltz 1979), or to enable the aggression that ensures survival (Mearsheimer 2001). Neorealism, then, is a structural theory. Its proponents assert that although states exist and act within the international system, they do not themselves constitute the system. Instead, the structure of the international system—particularly the arrangement of its parts relative to one another—constrains state action.

More specifically, the international system is defined and driven by its fundamental arranging principle (anarchy) and the relative capabilities of it units (states): the two together yield a hegemonic, bipolar or multipolar world. In this context, state behavior is an action or series of actions aimed at self-help and relative power gains. From state interactions come structures designed to reward or punish state behavior: "the game one has to win is defined by the structure that determines the kind of player who is likely to prosper" (Waltz 1979:86-7). By understanding the structure that extracts punishment and/or grants rewards, we can expect to understand and predict international outcomes.

For neorealists, the road to cooperation and stability under anarchy is necessarily hegemonic: As Keohane (1984:32) describes it, "order in world politics is typically created by a single dominant power…and…the maintenance of order requires continued hegemony". However, despite neorealist expectations, cooperation occurs in the international system. This observation gave rise to the neoliberal research program, which built on neorealism and joined with it to guide IR scholarship during the Cold War.

Neoliberals believe that cooperation is possible even in an anarchic world of self-interested actors. Further, "although hegemony can facilitate cooperation, it is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for it" (Keohane 1984:12). Instead, the key to cooperation under anarchy is to decrease uncertainty, especially with respect to the capabilities and intentions of other states. The likelihood of cooperation is affected by three factors: mutuality of interest, the shadow of the future, and the number of actors in the relationship (Axelrod and Keohane 1985). Each factor affects the probability of cooperation by decreasing (increasing) uncertainty.

Two characteristics of the international environment are particularly good at affecting these factors, and therefore at facilitating cooperation. First, international institutions provide a

structure within which common interests, the shadow of the future and the number of actors may be more clearly examined, defined, and potentially simplified for state actors. For example, institutions may serve to systematize interstate relations "by transforming N-person games into collections of two person games" (Axelrod and Keohane 1985:238). This simplifies the situation by increasing the amount and relevance of available information and allowing for more informed and directed decisions. In particular, international regimes facilitate mutually beneficial outcomes by reducing transaction costs, linking issue areas, and reducing uncertainty. International institutions are most easily created by a hegemon, but norms and conventions developed and maintained by institutions will persist even without a hegemon present. This is so for two reasons. First, without a hegemon it is easier to maintain an international institution than to create one, and second, these institutions facilitate favorable outcomes.

Like institutions, norms can facilitate cooperation under anarchy. Particularly in the context of institutions, reputation matters for international outcomes. After all, states are more likely to enter into a mutually beneficial interstates agreement when they expect other states to adhere to the agreement. Thus, states will forgo myopic self-interest to avoid negative consequences from others in the regime, and will instead pursue long-term mutual interests. Norms provide one way to build reputation, and therefore facilitate cooperation. For example, consider the norm of reciprocity in which each player responds in period t+1 with the same action its opponent played in period t. Axelrod (1984:69) shows that this tit-for-tat strategy of mutual reciprocity may produce the most cooperative outcome in an anarchic system: "mutual cooperation can emerge in a world of egoists without central control by starting with a cluster of individuals who rely on reciprocity". Thus mutual reciprocity might be the best strategy to

facilitate cooperation in the international context of institutions, which in turn make such cooperation more likely by favorably affecting the factors that influence cooperation.

So the international system is anarchic, its member states act in their own self-interest, and the arrangement of those states relative to one another influences international outcomes. Under these conditions, cooperation may emerge if a global power establishes and oversees interaction. Cooperation is possible even in the absence of a hegemon, because the principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures inherent in international institutions (e.g., regime) facilitate the pursuit of mutually beneficial outcomes. Because it is easier to maintain a regime than create one (without a hegemon), the persistence of regimes in bipolar or multipolar systems hints that it is better to have an international institution than not to have one. Institutions make cooperation under anarchy more likely, because they increase the amount and quality of available information and thereby decrease uncertainty. These are the key ideas of the neorealist/neoliberal paradigm that governed IR theory in the four decades following World War II.

Paradigmatic Change

One consequence of international stability, then, was academic stability. Despite different motivating principles, the key ideas inherent in the neorealist/neoliberal paradigm provided a common ground for accumulating knowledge. Most analysts spoke a common language and were able to converse about power, strategy, and foreign policy decision-making under conditions of uni-, bi- or multi-polarity. The overarching concern of academics and policymakers was not only to deter nuclear war, but also to deter any conflict that might escalate to nuclear.

Since around 1989, though, the dissolution of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact, the unification of Germany and the reduction of military forces in Europe disrupted the stable world scene and uprooted the neorealist/neoliberal paradigm. The world looks different now, and we are "in the midst of a fundamental paradigm shift in our thinking about the future of world politics" (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff 2001:1). Though we know where we come from, where we are headed remains unclear. Instead, the field is divided by two competing paradigms, rationalism and constructivism, each purporting to provide the basis for twenty-first century IR scholarship. Where once we proceeded under a single paradigmatic umbrella, the current divorce has lead us down two isolated paths. As evidence, I submit the introduction in March 2003 of the journal *Perspectives on Politics*. Although they study the same topics, scholars publishing in *Perspectives* often adopt approaches (e.g., postmodernism) that have been marginalized from mainstream journals like the *American Political Science Review*. As a result our discipline has organized itself so that scholars interested in a single topic are reading, working and publishing in two isolated communities.

Resolving the debate between rationalism and constructivism is critical for the development of IR as a discipline. Today's IR scholarship is based in one of two competing paradigms. We used to play the game; now we argue about its rules. Below, I lay out the key ideas inherent in rationalism and constructivism as applied to international relations, and discuss how those foundations produced the current bifurcation. Then, I look to the future: Although current IR study is driven in two directions by foundations and two sets of ideas, rationalism and constructivism are not conceptually exclusive. Instead, they may be combined and fruitfully applied to international relations, providing a basis and set of key ideas for future scholars.

Modern Paradigms: Rationalism vs. Constructivism

Today, the tensions in the IR literature are driven by a series of frameworks/paradigms aiming to replace the neorealist/neoliberal paradigm that dominated the cold war era. These tensions are methodological rather than substantive: the current debate is not about what to study but about how to study anything at all. Two such paradigms have been particularly successful in international relations: both constructivism and rational choice have attracted a lot of recent attention, leading some scholars to predict that the "next great debate" will be between these two approaches (Lapid 1989)

The key difference between rationalism and constructivism is ontological; it is about how to represent the objects and concepts that surround us. Rationalists ask, 'how do we know what is true?', while constructivists ask 'how do we know what we know?'. It follows that rationalism is material: For example, assume states are interested in the pursuit of power (or survival). The distribution of power is determined by the distribution of material resources across the system. Therefore, state's interests (e.g., the pursuit of power) are determined by the structure of the international system. Actors consider the costs and benefits of outcomes before committing to the one that maximizes their profit or utility (Morrow 1994). Conversely, constructivism is ideational: It assumes that the structures of association are determined by shared ideas rather than material forces, "and that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature" (Wendt 1999:1).

The social world is the outcome of intersubjective and collectively meaningful structures and processes, and material resources acquire meaning for human action only through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded (Wendt 1995:73). The implications of these ideas are threefold: the world is subjective, facts are constructed, and ideas are contextual. Thus individuals carry ideas, knowledge and meaning in their heads, but can only

access those things "in the context of and with reference to collective or intersubjective understandings, including rules and language" (Adler 2002:100; see also Searle 1995).

Rationalists are interested in how things are while constructivists are interested in how they became what they are. The consequences of this ontological difference frame the debate between scholars. Rationalists assume that preferences are exogenously determined, while constructivists endogenize them (Ruggie 1983, Fearon and Wendt 2001). In the literature, scholars have treated these differences as in tension or competition with one another and the two literatures have progressed separately. In addition, in a curiously constructivist twist, they have come to regard each other as 'enemies'.

In 1999, Walt proclaimed the poverty of rational choice for the study of international relations. He argued that rational choice is driven by a "hegemonic ambition" to dominate the field, despite the fact that it has nothing to add. This is so for three reasons: First, formal modeling leads to logical consistency, but does so by sacrificing originality and creativity. Since formal theories do not say anything new, formal theorizing is akin to translating a theory into Japanese or Hebrew: it simply doesn't add anything to the discipline. Second, Walt claims that rational choice models have weak empirical legs. As an example, he highlights Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman's (1992) book. The case studies the authors used, he argues, were 'tweaked' into supporting their argument. In fact, as in their treatment of the Fashoda crisis, at times the evidence explicitly contradicts the authors' expected utility theory. Finally, he charges, rational choice approaches do not examine 'real world' questions. Because of these models' simplicity, they have little or no policy relevance.

Rational scholars responded to Walt quickly and voluminously. Not only is logical consistency at least as important as creativity, they claim, it is critical for strong theory: Logic

forces scholars to be consistent in their arguments, and allows theories to be much more specific than they could otherwise be. In addition, coherent formal theories may reveal expectations or explanations that a less consistent or rigorous theory would overlook (Bueno de Mesquita and Morrow 1999, Zagare 1999). Further, rational choice is extremely creative. Creating links between multiple hypotheses tells a cohesive theory, which is in itself original (Bueno de Mesquita and Morrow 1999). For example, Bueno de Mesquita et al. (1999) link a series of democratic peace hypotheses that informal theories had treated separately. Similarly, Niou and Ordeshook (1999) claim that formal modeling itself is a creative process. Finally, rational choice applications help break down traditional distinctions in the literature. Because they focus on micro-phenomena (e.g., actors and actions), rational scholars can move beyond traditional (structural) analyses like those that dominant realist and liberal analyses. In addition, rational choice may be the tool that connects the two dominant subfields of IR: IPE and conflict/security studies. Allowing scholars to ask the same question of both subfields is new and potentially powerful (Lake and Powell 1999).

Looking to the future

The constructivist-rationalist debate has created two divergent bases for current IR scholarship. However, despite ontological differences, the two frameworks are not mutually exclusive. In fact, treating them that way may be counterproductive. Together, they show the ability to overcome individual imitations and explain events and processes in world politics. Below, I briefly outline one way in which constructivism and rationalism may act as complements.

Scholars have argued that rationalist models contain a number of exogenous elements, including preferences over outcomes, the beliefs that actors hold at the start of the interaction, and technological capabilities (Fearon and Wendt 2001). The consequence for researchers is the

need for substantive input; the model must be told who the actors are and what their preferences look like. Therefore, as Kahler (1998:933) notes, rational choice is a tool for analyzing actions in the context of beliefs and preferences, but is marked by "the absence of a theory of [those] beliefs and preferences". As a result, rational models are unable to account for (for example) how actors acquire and change the identities that explain their preferences and actions. In other words, rationalism's focus on materialism leaves it unable to understand its actors or their preferences. The idealism inherent in constructivism provides at least two ways to fruitfully overcome this weakness.

First, constructivism may provide a way for rational scholars to understand preferences. To be applied, rational choice analyses require some understanding of actors' preferences. Yet the core elements of the rational framework provide no leverage on substantive preferences. On the other hand, constructivism endogenizes actors and their preferences (Fearon and Wendt 2001), and is therefore uniquely suited to address questions of identity formation.

Constructivism draws substantive insight from the ideas and actions of states within a system. Intersubjective structures like norms, identity and knowledge motivate action and, in so doing, give meaning to material objects. One way rational scholars may define substantive preferences, then, is by drawing on ideas, norms, or identities. For example, a state's preferences may be defined by the particular logic of anarchy dominant in its environment: Relative gains may be the most valuable outcome in a Hobbesian system, but absolute gains will undoubtedly count more when the environment is Kantian (Wendt 1995, 1999).

This discussion suggests a second way constructivist thought may stimulate rational analyses: Evolving ideas and norms may lead to changes in preferences and therefore to changes in behavior. Because rational analyses tend to set and then fix actors' preferences, they would

miss these changes and the different equilibria they may imply. It follows that constructivism may allow rational scholars to explain change where before it predicted continuity. For example, a state's identity can shape and changes its preferences and, as a result, its actions (Risse-Kappen 1996, Johnston 1996).

In sum, the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of 'basis' suggests that the study of international relations actually has two bases. On one hand, each individual scholar brings her particular views, values and experiences to bear on her research. They provide the principles according to which her work is carried out. On the other hand, at any point in time the discipline is grounded in at least one dominant paradigm, which provides the key ideas that govern academic inquiry. That paradigm is not fixed over time; instead, it interacts with reality and evolves as history changes. Between the Second World War and the end of the Cold War, the neorealist/neoliberal paradigm directed mainstream IR research. Since the collapse of the USSR, both rationalism and constructivism have laid strong claims to the role of dominant paradigm. As a result of this bifurcation, research has progressed dichotomously: scholars read, write and publish in isolation from one another. This is particularly unfortunate when we consider that the two paradigms are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they may fruitfully complement one another.

In the future, either rationalism or constructivism may emerge as a new foundation for the study of international relations. Alternatively, a third foundation may overtake them both and establish itself as alpha. Finally, scholars may progress along the lines suggested above, allowing rationalism and constructivism to complement one another and inform our analyses. Because it provides a general framework that appeals across methodological divides, the last option seems the most able to induce stability similar to what occurred in the post-war period,

and the most likely to facilitate dialogue among many scholars. The key ideas of rationalism and

constructivism together provide a stable basis on which a wide range of scholars could build.

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Question: Assess the contribution of constructivism to IR.

ANSWER #1:

Our world is large and extremely complex. Throughout history, states have interacted with each other, fought wars and signed treaties. For over 2000 years, thinkers have sought to understand the most important questions of international politics: the sources of discord, war, and the underlying conditions of peace and cooperation between states. In order to identify the relationships between events, the reality of the world that we live in has to be segregated into some type of categories. Otherwise, no one would be able to explain phenomena that occur in international relations, "No one can cope with the complexities of world politics without the aid either of theory or of implicit assumptions and propositions that substitute, however poorly, for theory" (Keohane, 1986: 4). Thus, the need and inescapability of a theory in studying world politics has stimulated many thinkers to search for a theory, which would explain events occurring in the world. This quest for a guiding theory has not yet led to the development of one, unified theoretical perspective. Instead, the field of international relations is divided into numerous theoretical approaches, each of which captures important aspects of world politics. Constructivism, is one of these approaches. Since its emergence in the theoretical world of IR, constructivism has significantly contributed to our understanding of both conflict and cooperation.

In this essay, I elaborate upon the most important contributions of constructivism approach to our understanding of international relations. By looking at several aspects of the constructivist thought, I argue that this approach brings to surface crucial questions about factors standing behind actions of humans and states.

The remainder of this essay proceeds as follows. First, I offer a brief description and historical roots of the constructivist thought. Secondly, I elaborate upon the two most important

contributions of this approach to the study of IR: its focus on ideational factors, and its ability to problematize the formation of preferences. Thirdly, I assert that constructivism, through its ability to supplement other approaches, has significantly increased our knowledge of IR. Finally, I offer some concluding thoughts.

What is constructivism and what are its historical roots?

Social constructivism constitutes a rather coherent and, at the same time, extremely significant body of thought in IR. Although it has its roots going back to Durkheim, Weber, and the writings of the English School scholars (Bull, 1977), it is nevertheless regarded by most contemporary IR thinkers as a relatively new school of thought. At the same time, constructivism has already firmly established itself as probably the main contender to mainstream, "neoutilitarian" perspectives in IR (Ruggie, 1998).

In general, constructivists are mostly interested in how practices, intangible phenomena and tangible things are "constructed" (Wendt, 1992, 1999). In short, things that societies and IR scientists usually take as given constitute the main focus of the constructivist thought. Thus, previously unquestioned concepts such as power, sovereignty, or preferences provide for constructivists amazing opportunity to uncover their true meaning and formation. In general, constructivism is a theoretical perspective about the role of ideas, agents, and norms in the process of constitution of surrounding us reality.

The first contribution of constructivism- focus on ideational factors.

How do we explain actions of states, social groups, or individuals? In other words, what factors do we take into consideration while studying phenomena occurring in the world? Prior to constructivism's emergence in IR, most of the theories focused mostly, if not entirely on material, or tangible factors. These "material" approaches, called by Ruggie as "neoutilitarian"

theories (Ruggie, 1998), have always exhibited a definitely narrow view of the role that ideational factors play in social international life.

Waltz's neorealist model, which for a significant time has dominated thinking in IR is mostly physicalist, or material in spirit (Waltz, 1959, 1979). Thus, intangible factors, such as ideas or norms, make only brief, or even insignificant appearance in it.[1] In short, neorealism has focused upon material factors such as, first and foremost, power, in its efforts to explain the world. Waltz's theory has followed in this matter its realist predecessors, who also emphasized power as the most important variable in understanding international relations (Morgenthau, 1948). Nowadays, both defensive and offensive realists still continue to follow in the material, power-centered steps of their realist forefathers (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Generally speaking, neoliberalism also assigns a rather small role to ideational factors. Scholars like Keohane and Axelrod, argue that international cooperation under anarchy is possible through the institutional provision of information, and reduction of uncertainty (Keohane, 1984, Axelrod and Keohane, 1993). Although, institutions can be looked upon as embodiments of ideas or norms, neoliberalism is and always has been a highly materialistic theory. It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that Andrew Moravcsik has claimed that neoliberal institutionalism is a misnomer insofar as it essentially constitutes a variant of realism (Moravcsik, 1997:537).

The above elaboration upon the "neoutilitarian" theories shows clearly that proponents of mentioned above approaches, influenced by materialist conceptions of politics, have for the most part minimized, if not ignored the explanatory role of ideas or other ideational factors.

Perhaps the most important contribution of constructivism is its introduction of intangible factors, such as ideas, norms, and identity to international relations. Quite opposite to

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[1] The process of socialization might provide an example of an intangible process, or norm.

the "neoutilitarian" theories, constructivists emphasize the role of consciousness in social life (Ruggie, 1998:856). In other words, this approach focuses on social intangible factors, such as civilizational constructs, cultural factors, and state identities (Fearon and Wendt, 2003). These nonmaterial phenomena are considered to be highly important in how they shape states' interests and patterns of international conflict and cooperation (Wendt, 1992, 1999).

The most avid feature differentiating constructivists from the neoutilitarian approach is that they make actually the case that principled beliefs can in certain circumstances lead states to change their identities and thus interests. Human interaction is, therefore, allowed to be shaped by both material and ideational factors, among which "intersubjective" beliefs are able to construct the interests and identities of actors (Wendt, 1999, Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001). Thus, constructivism focuses on intangible phenomena, such as sovereignty, or norms, which despite the fact that they do not have any material reality, exist because we, humans, collectively believe that they exist.

In sum, it is difficult to overstate the impact that constructivism's focus on ideational factors has had on the study of international relations. Our world is composed not only of material factors, such as material capabilities of states, but also of intangible phenomena, such as ideas, interests, and norms. Just as "material" realism and neorealism have increased our understanding of power-driven, interest-focused, anarchical world of states, so has constructivism opened our eyes to the world of social intersubjective structures. Just as neoliberalism has drawn our attention to institutions, so has constructivism introduced us into the world of norms and ideas. Both, tangible and intangible factors matter. Constructivism, through its analytical and theoretical lenses provides a way to understand the latter. Thus, the

constructivist approach has allowed us to see the world as it really is, composed of things that we can see or touch and of the things that we cannot recognize or know with our human senses.

Constructivism's second contribution- problematizing of preferences.

Constructivism's focus on ideational factors does not constitute the only contribution of this approach to the study of IR. One of the most recognized characteristics of constructivism is that is chooses to problematize, or endogenize actors and their preferences (Fearon and Wendt, 2003). The neoutilitarian theories, or more broadly theories based on the assumption of rationality take actors preferences as exogenously given. These approaches with their roots deeply anchored in microeconomics, handle interests and identity of actors, be it states or individuals, by assumption (Ruggie, 1998:862). This characteristic of neoutilitarian theories accounts for their elegance or parsimony. It, undoubtedly, also constitutes one of the most widespread critiques of this kind of theorizing. Here lies one of the most important points of contention between the neoutilitarian theories and social constructivism. This point of contention has, at the same time, constituted grounds for the second most important contribution of the constructivist thought to IR.

Theories, which assume the identity or interests of an actor, have no way to answer a very important question: "How do actors, individuals or states acquire their current identity?" Moreover, the neoutilitarian theories are not able to show us how identity and interests of states and other entities mutually shape one another. Constructivism is able to trace and elucidate the process of formation of states' and other actors' preferences. It is also able to scientifically explain how identities of specific states shape and continuously change their interests. Constructivism, therefore, endogeneizes the actors themselves (Fearon and Wendt, 2003:62).

How are preferences formed? Proponents of constructivism suggest that it is intersubjective structures that are able to give the material world meaning. These structures have numerous divergent composing parts, such as norms, identity, and knowledge, which can motivate action, namely norms, identity, and knowledge. Norms, typically ignored by the neoutilitarian theories, can, according to constructivists, have important effect on the process of formation of actor's identity. Thus they are able to have "constitutive" effects (Wendt, 1999, Katzenstein, Keohane, Krasner, 1998, Finnemore, 1996).

Constructivism's enormous contribution is, therefore, its ability to explain why people obey or break specific norms, why states have divergent identities, and where do states' interests come from. Thus, one of the main contributions of constructivism to the study of IR is the notion that state identity fundamentally shapes actions and preferences of states.

In general, constructivists by problematizing the assumptions concerning states' preferences, help us uncover reasons standing behind human action. Their focus on preference-related questions has led international relations scholars to think more broadly about the nature and direction of causality. For constructivists, understanding how preferences are formed and how states acquire their identities is crucial to explain patterns of conflict and cooperation in the world. Knowing how actors acquire their identity is indispensable in uncovering causes lying behind political outcomes.

Constructivism- how does it supplement other approaches?

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the constructivist approaches to the study of international relations is its ability to supplement other theoretical views. Constructivism seems to be able to identify and fill in the gaps left by other approaches. Realism, neorealism, and neoliberalism have all focused on mostly material factors. Cooperation and conflict where

mostly defined by these theories as occurring due to some configuration of tangible things, such as material capabilities. Constructivism has provided a useful tool for understanding how actors are shaped by the social, or intangible milieu, in which they live. Now, international relations scholars have the tools for understanding both of the worlds, the material, or tangible world, and the intangible one. Neoutilitarian theories have successfully helped us understand how material things shape international outcomes. Constructivists have, on the other hand, uncovered previously hidden path to intangible components of international relations.

Constructivism's ability to problematize actors' preferences constitutes an enormous contribution to the study of IR. The neoutilitarian theories assume actors preferences, constructivists ask: "How are these preferences formed?". Again, the novel focus of constructivism has allowed us to fill the gap left behind by other theories. By seeking to understand how preferences are formed and how knowledge is generated, constructivism is able to explain processes that occur prior to the exercise of rationality (Katzenstein, Keohane, Krasner, 1998). Thus, both rational theories and constructivism share an interest in common knowledge and beliefs. Now we are not only able to explain international relations by assuming rationality of actors. Thanks to constructivism we are able to explain how states and other entities become rational, and how their identities are formed.

Concluding thoughts

Is constructivism important? The answer to this question is unequivocally: "yes". Constructivism has shaped IR by asking questions that other approaches chose not to ask. In addition to contributions, which I mentioned in this essay, constructivism has elucidated our understanding of international relations in numerous other ways. We all are probably aware of Wendt's assertion that "anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt, 1992, 1999). In my opinion,

however, constructivism's focus on intangible factors, and its ability to problematize actors'

preferences constitute by far the most crucial contributions of this approach to IR.

Constructivists' focus on identities, interests, and norms has caused us to think much

more broadly about the nature of international relations. By challenging the neoutilitarian way

of thinking, Wendt, Finnemore, and other constructivist thinkers have shaken the very bases of

knowledge that international relations as a field had been resting on. Questions such as "Does

state identity shape state preferences and actions?" and "How do intangible phenomena impact

states' behavior?" have fundamentally changed the focus of IR scientific inquiry.

Constructivism has identified the major weaknesses of its neoutilitarian counterparts and has

found the way to improve them. It has become an alternative way of understanding the world.

Constructivism has made a great and indispensable contribution to IR as a field of scientific

inquiry. It has fundamentally changed my view of the world.

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ANSWER #2:

(Neo)realism and (neo)liberalism have been regarded as the two main rivals in international relations (IR) theory. Despite the diehard rivalry between the two schools of thought, however, neorealism and neoliberalism share important assumptions. Among these important assumptions is their material ontology. Both theories assume that material interests and conditions are the primary factors that determine policies of states. Some IR scholars in the late '80s and early '90s, who were later labeled as "constructivists," challenged this material ontology of these two theories and argued for the central role of ideas and norms in international politics. These early Constructivists were very successful in identifying some missing elements in the mainstream theories and their works spurred a fruitful discussion for the decade to come. Yet when Constructivists later engaged in building up their own theories, they were not as consistent and clear as they were in their critiques. Thus, Constructivism's contribution to IR is still largely limited to their earlier critiques. Below I assess the contribution of Contructivism to IR first as a critique and then as a theory.

Constructivism as a *critique*:

   Constructivist critiques of the two mainstream schools of thought can be collapsed into two broad categories: the role of ideas in international relations and the interaction between states and the international structure. On the one hand, constructivists argue against the material ontology on which the mainstream IR theories are based and the fixed identities and interests these theories assign to states. They argue that norms, cultures, and identities matter in international politics. On the other hand, Constructivists are also opposed to the structure's spontaneous and autonomous character in the Realist thinking. Constructivists view structure both as an *outcome* and as a *medium* of action, which in turn enables action and constrains its possibilities (Dessler 1989; Carlnaes, 1992). Alexander Wendt particularly argues that there is no such thing as "the

logic of anarchy" in the way the neorealists argue and that anarchy is "what states make of it" (Wendt 1992). "Self-help" is not an inevitable outcome of the anarchical nature of the international system; rather it is the practice of states that creates a self-help environment. Thus, changing the practices will change the intersubjective structure of the system (Wendt 1992, 407). This was indeed one of biggest contributions of Constructivist arguments to IR scholarship: some of the structure was man-maid and intentional; and *anarchy*, or lack of it, was about the practice of states, not the presence or absence of a world government.[2]

Another important contribution of the Constructivist approaches to IR has been the purported contingency of power relations and security concerns on the identities of states. Constructivist scholars argued that the meaning of power and the content of interest are largely a function of ideas and identities (Wendt 1999, 96). Thus, for example, the level of a state's relative-gains concern is not the same against all other states. A state will tighten its relative-gains concern against the states which she views as enemies and relax such concerns against states which she perceives as friends. As such, Constructivist approach refuses the realist argument on the ubiquity of relative-gains concerns and understands relative gains as a *construct*, or lack thereof, of two states' interaction.

Constructivism as a *theory*:

Constructivism fares less well in building its own theory. The primary reason is quite simple: showing that norms, cultures, and identities matter is a far easier task than accounting for why, how, when, and how much they matter in international politics. Yet what is interesting is that the defects of Constructivist theories appear most on the two areas where they have been criticizing the mainstream theories most: agency-structure relationship and norms' influence on international politics.

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[2] I will deal with that argument in more detail later.

a) <u>Agency-Structure problem</u>:

The early works of Constructivists, which were mainly critiques of neorealism, underlined the importance of the interaction between agency, process, and structure (Dessler 1989, Lapid 1989, Carlnaes 1992, and Wendt 1992). Their common point was that agents (states) and the international structure had a *mutually constitutive* relationship. However, the more recent writings of Constructivists, which are mostly attempts to build up their own theories, espouse unidirectional causations and predominantly deal with the effects of structure on states' identities and interest. The contributors of the Katzenstein (1996) volume, for example, are no less structuralist than Kenneth Waltz.

The problem here is not being structuralist *per se*; rather, the problem is Constructivists' *practical* decision to want to be so. Despite acknowledging agents' influence on international structure, Constructivists prefer to ignore these effects and focus on how ideational structure influences states' identities and interests, for they "aim to develop a *systemic* as opposed to reductionist theory of international politics," (Wendt 1999, 12 –emphasis mine-). Yet this goes against the very idea of constructive theorizing in which, according to Wendt "the 'independent/dependent' variable' talk that informs causal theorizing makes no sense," (Wendt 1999, 85). To me, Constructivism's greatest challenge was its argument about the mutual constitutiveness of agents and structure. But it seems that even its own advocates have failed to handle this challenge, turning into "structural idealists" (Wendt 1999, 1). As Flynn and Farrell (1999, pp. 510-11) comment correctly:

> Instead of fully exploiting the power of the insights they borrow from social theory about the recursive nature of the relationship between agent and structure, constructivists have ended up seeking to demonstrate only that norms as elements of structure (alongside material conditions) can determine the interests and identity of agents, rather than seeking to locate the power of norms in the process whereby they are created in the first place.

To give a concrete example, Wendt argues that culture is a "self-fulfilling prophesy". International cultures and norms shape state identity and interests. States, whose identities and interests are shaped by the international cultural context, behave in certain ways. These behaviors in return strengthen and reinforce the existing cultural context (1999, 186). However, in this scenario, there is no "construction" but only "reproduction". I therefore think that the term "ideational re-productionism" suits better to Wendt's argument than the term "constructivism". (However, I must confess that under such a conceptual cacophony, I can hardly entrust any meaning to any concept without reservation.)

For Constructivism to be more convincing and more robust, Constructivists should choose one of the following paths with respect to agency-structure problem: they should either convincingly argue that agency's impact on structure is secondary or negligible, or they should incorporate agency in their accounts. The third option –accepting the effects of agency on structure but bypassing them for the sake of theory- robs Constructivism of internal consistency and persuasiveness.

b) Ideas vs. Material Capabilities and Interests:

Constructivists have criticized the material ontology of the mainstream IR theories. They argued that power and material interests are embedded in ideational and cultural context and cannot be understood without it. Indeed, the central thesis of Wendt's book is that "the meaning of power and the content of interests are largely a function of ideas," (Wendt 1999, 96). The causal direction in Constructivism is thus as follows: [ideas → interests (context) → power (meaning)]. In Realism, it was "interest defined in terms of *power*"; in Constructivism, it is "interest defined in terms of *ideas*".

Norms have been increasingly effective in the 20th-century world politics and continues to be so in the 21st century. Non-intervention, human rights, democratic governance, and even free trade are norms that influence the behavior of states in modern times. As IR students, we no longer have the luxury of early IR scholars who focused solely on material capabilities and national interests to explain international politics. Norms are there and influence the behavior of states - either as 'rational yet unwilling resignation' or 'internalized and willful compliance'. The hard task, however, is not to observe the ostensible influence of norms on state behavior, rather to disentangle it from the exigencies of national interest. At times when norms are in congruence with the national interest of a state, it is difficult for us to gauge which one is the primary driving force, even if in rhetoric ideals and norms are given more credit. As Goertz and Diehl warn us, "rational behavior may appear similar to norm-following behavior depending on the situation. The key point is that norm-like behavior may be driven by pure interest," (1992, 637).

Thus, the problem of Constructivism with respect to ideas is not that it underlines the importance of ideas but that it treats them in an "ideas all the way down" manner. This creates a twofold problem. On the one side, Constructivist's overemphasis on the effects of ideas on material capabilities and interests obscure the mutually constitutive relationship between the two. Ideas and norms influence interests and give meaning to power, but at the same material capabilities and interests influence the ideational and cultural context. To give a popular example, whereas both British and American hegemonies contributed to the spread of liberal ideas, multipolar periods of modern times are associated with increased protectionism at the international level. On the other side, absorbed in ideas and norms, Constructivists introduce ideational and normative arguments even when material interests are all too obvious. I simply

cannot understand, for example, why Barnett (1996) is so eager to attribute the "specialty" of the US-Israeli relation to these countries' supposed shared ideas, while it is obvious that they share common material interests and face common material threats.[3]

To have a better and more precise understanding of the real effects of norms and ideas on state behavior, we are to look at cases where the requirements of norms are at odd with the national interests of states. If a state follows a certain norm when it is in line with its interests and violates it when it is not, then we would be justified to conclude that it is the national interest that 'determines' state policy. The attitude of such a state toward norms would be: "norms are welcome so long as they are benign at least". In such a case norms would have no more than a mere rhetorical value, because they do not have any function with respect to "limiting the range of choice and constraining action" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 394). The real effect of norms, then, can be understood by studying how states act at times when their national interest conflicts with the prevalent norm.

To sum up, I do not think that the Constructivist treatment of international politics in an "ideas all the way down" manner and their defining power in terms of ideas is the right way to understand the influence of norms in international politics. Rather, I tend to side with Robert Cox's approach, which speculates about the mutually constructive relationship between ideas (norms), material capabilities, and international institutions. Borrowing the neoliberal institutionalists' argument for the role of international organizations in international relations, I tend to view international norms more as intervening variables than as independent (or either totally dependent) variables. Norms are not independent from the national interests of the nation

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[3] Interestingly, Barnett lists four identities of Israel: religion (Judaism), nationalism (Zionism), the Holocaust effect, and liberal democracy. Although Barnett admits that the last one is the most susceptible one, he sticks to that element of identity because it is "the norm that worked." This situation highlights an important drawback in norm-based arguments, which Kowert and Legro nicely call "embarrassment of norms": "one can always identify, *post hoc*, a norm to explain a given behavior," (Kowert and Legro 1996, p. 486).

states; yet once they start evolving, they may gain the 'potential' to be influential even at times when they are at odds with the interests of nation states.

A conclusion:

By highlighting the importance of ideas and norms in international politics, Constructivism brought "fresh air" to the discipline and contributed to the "enhanced reflexivity" ideal of the Third Debate. Constructivist approach helped us better understand the role of nonmaterial forces in international relations on the one hand, and refined such important concepts as "anarchy" and "relative gains" on the other. Yet at the same, Constructivists theories' reduction of agency-structure relationship from a mutually constitutive relationship to a unidirectional causal one and their treatment of norms as independent phenomena in their recent works disappointed the early expectations they created. Thus, the status of Constructivist theories as viable alternatives to neorealism and neoliberalism has yet to be proven.

ANSWER #3:

The major contribution of constructivism is that it provides alternative ways of viewing the world and the international system within it. Put another way, it allows us to consider more options, or as Wendt (1992) explains, to ask additional questions. Kowert and Legro (1996: 454) insist that constructivist arguments do not negate other theories of international relations, but rather point to "…blind spots and gaps" within them, and Checkel (1998:1) asserts that constructivist critiques of neorealism and neoliberalism concern "…not what these scholars say and do, but what they ignore…."

Approach

Constructivism is not a theory per se, but may be viewed as either/both a supplement to the major theories or a competing approach to the study of IR. It has a social basis and is concerned with ideational and interaction matters such as norms, identities, interests and culture. Ruggie (1998) contends that constructivism is about human consciousness and notes Durkheim's belief that ideational factors are real and susceptible to scientific inquiry. As a result, constructivists see a need to explain what realists and liberals accept as given (identities, norms, etc.). Wendt (1999) argues that the structures of human associations (international systems) are cultural, not material, and that a socially based approached can open additional doors to research.

By following the constructivist line of reasoning, in addition to asking new questions we can also search for alternatives to old questions about actions taken by states. If there are such alternative answers which appear sound, then we should have second thoughts about previous ones, especially if these new answers were not considered when arriving at the old. That obviously doesn't mean the old ones are wrong, but does not preclude the possibility that they might be. Further research may be called for to make a better determination.

Components

Norms provide an example for this line of thought. Norms are generally accepted or expected behavior. Under realism it is generally accepted that countries don't use nuclear or chemical weapons for fear of reprisal attack, in which case everybody loses. Price and Tannenwald (1996) come to a different conclusion. They acknowledge that most theorists stress the material cost-benefit value of actions, but they cite a number of examples where one side could have used these weapons without threat of retaliation, yet chose not to do so. Among instances are the U.S. in Korea and Vietnam, the French in Indochina, and the Soviets in Afghanistan. Even though the opposing sides had no chemical or nuclear capability of their own, the major powers did not make use of these weapons in spite of an obvious tactical advantage to be gained.

Since deterrence does not seem to be the issue, Price and Tannenwald appear to be on solid ground looking for another cause. They attribute two other possible factors as playing roles in these instances: unpreparedness for using such weapons (maybe true in some cases, but not all); and the abhorrence of using them (in all cases). The latter, of course, is a prime example of a norm constraining a state's actions. Price and Tannenwald recognize an irony here in that some conventional weapons can be similarly devastating, as fire bombings in World War II did more damage than atomic bombs, but other weapons and tactics lack the almost universal abhorrence attributed to "gas and nukes." I dare say that fact is most likely due to people's ignorance of what devices such as daisy cutters and fuel-air weapons can do (or even the fact that weapons such as daisy cutters and fuel-air weapons exist). With their notoriety in recent years land mines have attained the spotlight, and new norms may be in the process of being formed and internalized that will someday eliminate or greatly restrict mine use. Here we see constructivism possibly explaining a change in progress.

Like norms, constructivists see identity as an important aspect that affects behavior. Identity, according to Wendt (1999: 224), is whatever makes a thing what it is. More specifically, or less, as the case may be, it is a subjective quality rooted in an actor's self-understanding. Constructivists offer the proposition that who/how an actor sees himself will influence how he acts. Under this reasoning pre- and post-war Japan would be a good example.

From a constructivist view point, prior to World War II Japan saw itself as a military power and as such sought more power through the use of force. After the war its identity changed to one of a peaceful nation and it transferred its interests to peaceful economic areas, concentrating on trade. This contrasts with the realist view that would see Japan's preference for power as unchanged, but because the distribution of military power was different (Japan was weak and its former enemies were strong), it merely pursued power in a different way – through international economics. In this case constructivism has provided an added option that deserves attention.

There are other instances with stronger identity arguments. Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein (1996) see state identity as having been a major problem in Europe in the past when wars were somewhat frequent, but as much less contentious now, especially in Western Europe where the EU has a firm foothold. Conversely, they remind us of the relatively new players on the world stage such as terrorist groups and ethno-religious factions who in effect see themselves as the avengers of their holy causes, leading to an accepted norm (within their groups) of killing their enemies, to include noncombatant women and children.

As noted earlier, identity is a subjective concept. Constructivists may sometimes "tinker" with it to arrive at the conclusion they seek, though they often make a credible case for doing so. The alignment of Europe with the United States after WW II demonstrates this. Risse-Kappen

(1996) looks at the birth of NATO and finds collective identity in the democratic community. He believes that if Western Europe had followed Waltz's idea that alliances are formed against the most powerful nation, it would have joined the Soviet Union against the U.S. Risse-Kappen suggests instead that NATO's formation fits more closely with Stephen Walt's idea of "balance of threat" rather than a "balance of power" (1996: 360), positing that threat perception is caused by power, ideology, and behavior, or a combination of the three. In the late 1940s, according to Risse-Kappen, both Great Britain and France *identified* with the more powerful but democratic U.S., as opposed to the closer and more aggressive acting totalitarian Soviet state. A similar situation could be seen recently as the Republic of Georgia invited the United States, from the far side of the world, to help with terrorism as opposed to Russia, conveniently, or inconveniently, located next door.

I suggest the results of the study of the identity crises of the Arabs to be a major advance for the constructivist approach. Barnett (1996) reviewed the Pan-Arab movement of the last half of the twentieth century. Real threats and potential adversaries for Arab states seemed to matter much less than cooperating with and being publicly allied to other Arabs. During that time period any Arab government not seen as being dedicated to the eventual unification of the entire Arab world under one nationalistic banner could expect serious domestic dissention. The Arab identity was extremely powerful and constrained the freedom of Arab governments from pursuing courses they may otherwise have considered best for their countries. Even though the oil wealth of some Arab states (as opposed to all) and the ambitions of many of the Arab leaders ensured there would never be one Arab super state, it wasn't until Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990 that the idea ceased to carry weight.

With that invasion came the realization that Arabs were not just one big family, and governments were finally free of the Pan-Arab yoke. But it was a short reprieve. Today Arab leaders are just as sensitive to anti-Islamic criticism as they ever were to Arab nationalist issues. Even Saudi Arabia, the home of Islam, whose practices are arguably the strictest in the world and whose king bears the official title "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques," is routinely criticized by fundamentalists for not being Islamic enough. The Arabs have traded one set of identity constraints for another.

The restraints involving Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islam were/are real, yet in this case theories such as realism and liberalism do not provide for identifying underlying causes. I see this as one of the strongest examples of constructivism doing what it seeks to do, allowing for the expansion of research using alternative approaches. Without the consideration of identities, any evaluation of the Arab situation would find itself devoid of information and most likely would totally miss the mark.

There are times when identity and norms can blend or overlap and lead to behavior neither envisioned nor explained by realists. Kowert and Legro (1996) suggest that this combination allows states to sometimes forego their interests and assume risks merely for humanitarian reasons. In support of this conjecture they cite Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) analysis of Western nations' actions in Somalia and Cambodia. More recently one could add the Balkans. In these cases, however, constructivism must compete with liberalism, which contends that power is to be used to attain desired goals for the international community (Goldstein 2005: 77).

A third area that constructivists have opened for research and debate in the IR world is culture. Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein (1996) contend that culture affects both state

behavior and basic state character (identity). They see at least three layers of cultural

environments in national security: institutions and regimes (NATO, WTO, etc.); political culture

(rules of sovereignty, international law, and transnational political discourse); and patterns of

friendship and hostility. Culture is often in the eye of the beholder and a number of researchers

have had difficulty operationalizing the concept. In this case, however, I think Jepperson et al.

have found an effective way to organize and analyze it.

They suggest that changes in the world, major cultural changes, affect the way security is

defined and conceptualized. Among the examples they cite to support their position are war and

trade. According to Jepperson et al., most states today see war as a sometime necessary evil as

opposed to the glorious enterprise it was in past centuries. Trade is no longer a core security

issue because of its worldwide spread. Realism, and in particular neorealism, has been criticized

for not being able to explain major changes like these.

Constructivists also see interests as an important part of their approach. While they can

be argued to be a significant influence on IR, this aspect is not unique to constructivism.

Interests are simply preferences, which are a major part of the liberal literature, as explained by

Moravcsik (1997). But there is a difference. Constructivists are concerned not with just what

preferences are, but how they are formed (Katzenstein, Keohane and Krasner 1998: 681; Wendt

1999: 120), as the formation determines what the preferences are.

Preferences are ideational: those from groups come from group identities or norms; those

from the state come from national identities and norms. Understanding *why* those preferences

are what they are can not only define what states want but can empower a national executive by

suggesting ways to manipulate those preferences to meet his own position(s).

An area that I foresee constructivism having strong potential in is the democratic peace. According to the tenets of realism the democratic peace should not exist. Liberalism would contend that it should exist everywhere. With its views on norms and identities, I propose that constructivism has the best opportunity, at this point, for providing an in-depth explanation of why democracies generally don't fight with each other.

Summary

As previously stated, constructivism is more of a supplement to research than a stand alone theory. It adds a distinct, socially based approach that broadens research by opening up more possibilities for the underlying causes of IR behavior. It has added to our knowledge in such areas as norms (chemical weapons use) and identities (Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islam). Notwithstanding that, with a few notable exceptions, up to this point the overall impact of constructivism has been rather modest, though it has potential for making major contributions in the future.

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ANSWER #4:

Constructivism is clearly trendy (Checkel, 2004: 229). More and more scholars claim to be constructivist or to be borrowing from the constructivist tradition (Checkel, 2004; 229). Nevertheless, it is important to remember that not all trends are for the better. Not so long ago, many people lost a lot of money by following a trend of chasing, what turned out to be, worthless tech stocks. Is constructivism headed for a similar bubble? Should veteran scholars who are interested in constructivist type arguments get out while they still can, and should tyro practitioners avoid constructivism like a burning building?

In the following pages, contrary to the critics, I argue that constructivism is alive and well, and that performing a post-mortem is extremely premature. Following, Checkel (2004), I ask the question: Would the study of international relations be any worse off if the constructivists' works had never been written?[4] Admittedly, there are some strands of constructivism[5], which eschew scientific endeavors; and thus, cannot be said to have contributed much to international relation, at least international relations as a scientific enterprise (i.e. because they are by definition unscientific).[6] Nevertheless, there are several scholars who have contributed greatly to the discipline, and it is those scholars' arguments that I will highlight in

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[4] Admittedly, more exacting tests could be administered, but I believe this is an adequate way to assess constructivists' contributions, particularly since constructivism in international relations is still fairly new. Wendt's attempt to generate a true and complete social theory of international relations did not appear until fairly recent (Wendt, 1999). Furthermore, it is arguable that constructivism is more a "metatheoretical" approach to social reality rather than a substantive theory of international relations (Katznelson, and Milner, 2002: 598) and not suspect to the sort of criticisms that might be levied at a substantive theory.

[5] Checkel (2004) argues that there are at lest three strands of constructivism: conventional, interpretative, and critical/radical. Both the interpretive and the critical radical variants use methods encompassing multifaceted discourse-theoretic techniques and are inspired by linguistics and continental social theory (i.e. the philosophies of Derrida, etc.) (Checkel, 2004). On the other hand, conventional constructivism is primarily concerned with the role of norms and identities in shaping political outcomes (Checkel, 2004). Furthermore, as Checkel puts it: conventional constructivists "are largely positivist in epistemological orientation and strong advocates of bridge-building among diverse theoretical perspectives (Checkel, 2004: 230-231). Checkel (2004) classifies, Wendt (1999) and Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), among others, as conventional constructivists. My paper will primarily focus on the contribution of the conventional and perhaps some of the less critical, critical constructivists.

[6] I am not arguing that critical constructivism is per se useless, but only that it makes no attempt to be scientific. Conventional constructivists, on the other hand, attempt to situate constructivism in terms more commensurate with the established scientific practices of the discipline. In fact, Wendt in *Social Theory of International Relations* adopts at least one chapter to arguing that constructivism is a scientific endeavor. (Wendt, 1999: ch. 2).

this paper. Before getting into the specific contributions of several constructivists, I will highlight some commonalities.

Although many constructivists can be classified according to their epistemological differences, they generally assert three common ontological considerations (Frederking, 2003: 364). First, constructivists oppose a primarily materialist ontology, and assert that it is social factors that primarily influence human interactions. (Frederking, 2003: 364). In other words, material structures only have meaning for agents, within the context of social rules. For example, military capabilities have different meanings depending on whether enemies or friends possess them. Second, constructivists oppose an individualist ontology and instead assert that purposeful agents are "enmeshed in a web of social rules that both constitute and regulate human agency (Frederking, 2003: 364). Finally, agents and structures are mutually constitutive. In other words, people create the social world, and are in turn created by it (Frederking, 2003: 364). Before moving on, it is important to point out that the preceding was an extremely compendious introduction to constructivism, generally. Furthermore, the following discussion will for the most part bracket the epistemological and methodological differences between constructivists and instead focus on the specific contributions of various constructivist approaches to international relations.

Arguably constructivism's main contribution to international relations is its concern for the origins of beliefs and desires. As Bueno de Mesquita points out, two of the central questions about politics are: (1) what do people [states][7] want? and (2) what do they do to fulfill their wants? (Shapiro, et al., 2004: 236-237). Although game theory does a very good job answering the second question, it has only limited applicability in answering the first, because initial beliefs

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[7] The bracketed term [states] is my addition and is not attributed to Bueno de Mesquita. In the cited selection, Bueno de Mesquita is concerned with the strategies of individual decision makers and not states per se.

and preferences over outcomes are taken as a given or determined non-strategically (Shapiro, et al., 2004: 237). On the other hand, constructivism can prove very useful in answering the first question (Shapiro, et al., 2004: 237).

For example, Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein point out, that cultural environments are instrumental in shaping incentives for state behavior and can even form the basic identities of states (Katzenstein, 1996: 33-34)[8]. In other words and to put this into the context of the above discussion by Bueno de Mesquita, cultural environments can help us understand what states want. According to Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein, there are three levels of the international cultural environment at which policies are formed (Katzenstein, 1996: 33-34). There are the formal institutional or security regimes, such as NATO. Next, there is the world political culture, which includes international law, conceptions of sovereignty, and related elements. Last, policy may be formed by international patterns of friendship and ill will (Katzenstein, 1996: ch. 2).

These three cultural environments, in turn, shape state identities and thus security policies in three main ways. First, environments may affect the very survival of states as entities. For example, the recognition of juridical sovereignty by the society of states has enabled some small and relatively powerless states to survive. Second, cultural environments may affect the modal character of statehood over time. For example, today no state would readily vote to become a colony. Finally, cultural environments may cause variation in the character of statehood within a given international system. This can be clearly seen by contrasting France's strong ties to the

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[8] In the Katzenstein (1996) selections, culture is defined broadly and "denotes collective models of nation-state authority or identity, carried by custom or law. Culture refers to both a set of evaluative standards (such as norms and values) and a set of cognitive standards (such as rules and models) that define what social actors exist in a system, how they operate, and how they relate to one another" (Katzenstein, 1996: 6).

European union to Britain's relatively week ties, which are due to France's identity of interest to the European Union based on the fact that France is a founding member (Katzenstein: ch.2).

At this juncture, it is important to stress, that constructivists' concern for how the environment shapes states' interests and behavior can also help us better understand both conflict and cooperation than if we were to simply take these environments as a given. Whether states will behave cooperatively or conflictual depends, in large part, on what environment they are in (Wendt, 1999: ch 6; See also Wendt, 1992).

Wendt agrees with neorealists and others who propound that the international system in anarchic (Wendt, 1999: 246). However, unlike Neorealists, Wendt does not assume that "self-help" is a constitutive feature of anarchy (Wendt, 1992: 396-397). The self-help argument is basically that the costs of cooperation can be exceedingly high, including obliteration, so that even well intentioned states will have to be on guard for their own best interests and act "selfishly" (Wendt, 1999" 300-301). This conception of international relations often results in Pareto inferior outcomes, where mutually beneficial solutions are lost. In game-theoretic terms, the international system can be represented by the prisoner's dilemma. States will defect, not cooperate, even when mutual cooperation will provide more benefit than mutual defection, because neither state wants to be a sucker.

Wendt (1999; 1992) is essentially questioning the nature of the game. In some sense, the question he asks is how did we get in the prisoner's dilemma in the first place, and how can we change the game? Admittedly, it is easier to understand how the self-help system developed than it is to change it. As for how the system developed, Wendt (1992; 1999) argues that conceptions of self-help could not have existed prior to interaction, but rather developed from repeated

interactions where the parties acted in ways that were perceived as threatening. Therefore, states find themselves in a self-help system because their behaviors made it that way.

Different behaviors would have made for a different system. In short anarchy does not create the culture of self-help; rather it was threatening behavior. If states had acted differently, a different culture of anarchy would have developed and the international system would not be stuck in the prisoner's dilemma type situation, but rather some other game where mutual cooperation is the norm (Wendt, 1999: ch. 6)[9] Since behaviors created the self-help system, behaviors could also change the system (Wendt, 1992).

However, and to reiterate, as Wendt (1992) acknowledges, changing the system, once established, is a difficult task. According to Wendt (1992), there are four factors required for change to occur. These factors are: 1) There needs to be a breakdown in identity commitments; 2) Critical examination about old ideas about the self and others; 3) Acting as if the system was already the way you intended it to be, through unilateral acts of trust; and 4) Waiting for the other to respond (Wendt, 1992: 420-422).

One example of a unilateral act of trust is Gorbachev withdrawing from Afghanistan and implementing asymmetrical cuts in nuclear and conventional weapons (Wendt, 1992: 421-422). All of these actions were intended to take away the "western" excuse not to trust the Soviet Union (Wendt, 1992: 421-422). Another possible demonstration of a unilateral act of trust is Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, and declaring "no more war" before Israel's parliament.

Clearly, unilateral acts of trust are very dangerous to make, and it is not clear when an actor would be willing to take such actions nor is it clear why that actor will not be exploited. This is probably why most constructivists seek to explain how various cultural factors affect

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[9] At some times, Wendt seems to eschew the commensurability of game theory and constructivism (Wendt, 1992: 416). Other times, he recognizes their commensurability. In fact, Wendt states that rational choice is part of his own understanding of agency and must be assimilated into a constructivist framework (Wendt, 1999: 115).

agents and not vice versa. This is problematic because constructivism claims to be a constitutive theory, and yet constructivists seldom address how agents affect structures.[10]

To put this another way, constructivism does not provide an adequate theory of action (Shapiro, et al., 2004: 237; Checkel, 1998).[11] This is why Bueno de Mesquita suggests that constructivism be combined with game theory (Shapiro, et al., 2004: 237). Game theory provides the theory of action while constructivism provides "a plausible theoretical framework for empirical research into the endogenous generation of preference profiles and structures of beliefs," i.e. helping us understand what states want (Shapiro, et al., 2004: 237).

Not only does constructivism help us understand what states want, constructivism also contributes to the study of international relations in that it gives us a more complete picture of the international milieu than some of the "dominant" theories in international relations. For example, neorealism with its focus on capabilities as the primary impetus to action, rarely tells the whole story of the relationship between power and politics Katzenstein, 1996: ch. 1). For instance, a capability-centered focus cannot completely explain how Gandhi was able to free India from British rule or how the civil rights movement flourished in the United States. If either one of these movements were initiated in Nazi Germany, the result would most likely not have been decolonialization and inclusiveness, but rather obliteration. It was the United States and Britain's commitment to democratic ideas, which mattered, not their respective capabilities.

Additionally, Price and Tannenwald in *Norms and Deterrence: The Nuclear and Chemical Weapons Taboos*, further and profoundly illustrate the importance of ideas in shaping

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[10] Admittedly, one of the most difficult tasks constructivist face is in the operationalization of mutual constitution (Checkel, 1998: 332). The usual analysis is to bracket agents or structure (Checkel, 1998: 332). However, this seems unsatisfying to me because it in some sense defeats the purpose of having a constitutive theory.

[11] To be fair, some constructivists do attempt to explain agency. For example, Fennimore and Sikkink (1998) in *International Norm Dynamics and Political Change* suggest that norms have their genesis in the minds of norm entrepreneurs with the resources and access to a forum to do the job. This formulation attempts to answer the criticism levied by Jeffrey Checkel and others; however, clearly more can be done as suggested by Bueno de Mesquita (Shapiro, et al. 2004: 2370).

domestic and international policy (Katzenstein, 1996: ch. 4). The thesis of this article is that the use and nonuse of nuclear and chemical weapons cannot be fully explained by rational choice arguments, but rather to get a complete picture, you have to look at the underlying norms, which shaped the taboos. (Katzenstein, 1996: ch. 4) For one thing, chemical weapons are not necessarily any more insidious than other weaponry. Senator David Reed succinctly and persuasively stated the irrationality of the chemical weapons taboo in the congressional record:

"From using gas against the next savage race with which we find ourselves in war, and would compel us to blow them up or stab them with bayonets, or riddle them and sprinkle them with shrapnel, or puncture them with machine gun bullets, instead of blinding them for an hour or so until we could disarm them. That is the humanity of the Geneva Protocol" (Katzenstein 1996: 129).

Although, today, chemical weapons can do more than just temporarily blind someone, the tone of the above quote still rings true. Chemical weapons are arguably no less humane than shrapnel. Furthermore, according to Price and Tannenwald, the ban on chemical weapons was born out, not of rationality, but rather by the mostly fortuitous proscription at the Hague Convention of 1899 (Katzenstein 1996: 129).

Finally, Price and Tannenwald's arguments regarding the taboo against nuclear weapons run the same course as their arguments concerning chemical weapons. There have been times when the use of nuclear weapons would have been less costly, in terms of human lives and expense, if they would have been used, instead of conventional weaponry. The only logical distinction between the two taboos is that the nuclear weapon taboo was initiated domestically, while the chemical weapon taboo was born on the international scene. Both, according to Price and Tannenwald, were created by elites and could have easily went other routes, but for the fortuitous hand of chance. (Katzenstein, 1996: ch. 4).

Although the Price and Tannenwald selection is insightful, there is one important criticism of their piece that I must address. Kowert and Legro argue that finding that a norm, such as the taboo on chemical weapons is largely fortuitous, renders the constructivist account primarily descriptive and contingent. (Katzenstein. 1996: ch. 12). This is a salient criticism; nevertheless, it is encouraging that the criticism was in fact to be found among constructivists' proponents. However, constructivists must do more than simply address this as a problem, they need to make attempts to fix it.

Before moving on, I would like highlight a few additional constructivists' arguments about how cultural norms have a greater impact on international relations than do capability-based approaches. Constructivism can help us to better understand: the prominence of NATO; Arab relations; and the United States relationship with Israel.

First, Thomas Risse-Kappen powerfully demonstrated that NATO is a collective security arrangement where shared norms lead the parties to behave differently than might be expected under realism (Katzenstein, 1996: ch. 10). For instance, President Kennedy consulted his allies, particularly Britain, much more than might be expected. Also, there was a strong sense of regret when the community temporarily broke down over the Suez Canal crisis. (Katzenstein, 1996: ch. 10) These factors cannot be adequately and completely explained under realism

As for Middle East Relations, Michael Barnett showed that the culture of Pan-Arabism played a much more dominant role than capabilities, in determining the way Arab Nations dealt with each other and foreign powers (Katzenstein, 1996: ch. 11). Finally, Barnett demonstrated how the United States relationship with Israel has more to do with shared ideas than it does with military strategy; shared ideas explains why the United States continued to support Israel after

the end of the Cold War, and why U.S. support wanes where Israel acts contrary to democratic ideals in its dealings with Palestinians (Katzenstein, 1996: ch. 11).

Finally, constructivist arguments have also opened up new understandings regarding the role of institutions. For example, Finnemore has shown how international institutions are able to reconstitute state actors. In short, international institutions can teach states to value certain goals (Finnemore, 1996). Furthermore, these goals or values arise without the support of powerful countries but rather originate from whom she calls norm entrepreneurs. However, it is not clear how these entrepreneurs could get the job done, again this might require a game theoretic theory of action. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that the alleged divide between rational choice and constructivism (particularly in the realm of the study of institutions) is beginning to wane (Shapiro, 2004: 237; Katznelson and Milner: 597-623).

In conclusion, although much still needs to be done to improve constructivism, it has contributed much to international relations. Probably its most important contribution is its concern for the origins of beliefs and desires. Furthermore, constructivism with its concern for ideas provides a more fine-grained understand of international relation than can be gleamed from a solely capability based approach. Finally, it seems the most fruitful avenue of research would be to combine the insights of game theory and constructivism. Doing so would allow researchers to take advantage of constructivist theories regarding preference and belief formation, and at the same time, benefit from game theory's understanding of human agency.

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Name the three books that have had the greatest impact on your thinking about IR. Why did you select these books? What are their strong and weak points? What is your view of their impact on the field of IR?

ANSWER #1:

International relations in the present times and throughout all of the history of the human kind have been characterized by both conflict and cooperation. Violence has occurred repeatedly not only within states, but also in the international arena, where nations, unable to resolve their grievances peacefully, have resorted to forceful resolutions of their disagreements. Despite extreme frequency, severity, and scale of conflict in the world, nations still seem to cooperate with one another. Thus, both conflict and cooperation ever present in the world have prompted numerous scholars to investigate their causes and effects. Copious books have been written, and quite a few theories have been put forth in order to solve puzzles characteristic to international relations.

In this essay, I elaborate upon three books that have had the greatest impact on my understanding of international relations. Throughout my journey in the world of IR theories, the following books have significantly shaped my own thinking about the world: Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* (1979), Robert Keohane's *After Hegemony* (1984), and Robert Gilpin's *Global Political Economy* (2001). The remainder of this essay proceeds as follows. First, I elaborate upon Waltz's *Theory of International Politics,* pointing to its weaknesses and strengths. Secondly, I present my arguments why Keohane's *After Hegemony* has influenced my understanding of IR. Thirdly, I turn my attention to Robert Gilpin's *Global Political Economy* (2001), after which I offer some concluding thoughts.

Kenneth Waltz's Theory of International Politics

Kenneth Waltz has significantly increased our understanding of conflict and cooperation in the world. That realism has remained a vital and powerful theory in the field of IR is thanks in part to the work of this scholar. His extremely influential 1979 work, *Theory of International Politics* has caused the realist scholarship to move into the new plains of the structural world. Because this piece of scholarly work contains one of the most important theories of international relations, past and present, it is hard to deny that its impact on my thinking about the world has been enormous.

From Thomas Hobbes' idea that in the absence of an overarching authority an environment is in the stage of anarchy, Waltz infers major consequences for the character of international relations. According to him, international relations constitute an anarchic rather than hierarchic realm, populated by units (states), which perform similar functions. Changes in behavior of the states, and system outcomes, are explained not on the basis of variations in their characteristics, but on the basis of changes in the attributes of the system itself. Concerned with relative gains, states differ only in the distribution of capabilities, and, "at minimum, seek their own preservation and, at maximum, drive for universal domination" (Waltz, 1986: 117). From the anarchic nature of international system and the characteristic of states, Waltz deduces that balance of power must necessarily emerge.

Strengths of Waltz's 1979 work- why did I select this work

Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* has numerous strong points. Exactly these positive attributes of his work have caused this piece of scholarly work to have a profound impact on my understanding of the world. Strong points of *Theory of International Politics* are at the same time strong points of contained it this book theory.

Perhaps one of the most important strengths of Waltz's 1979 work is that it has placed realist thought on a firm social scientific foundation. Basing on insights from the philosophy of science, systems theory, and microeconomics, Waltz developed an extremely parsimonious and elegant theory of international relations. In the words of Waltz himself, "Elegance in social-science theories means that explanations will be general" (Waltz, 1986: 57). In deed, presented in Waltz's 1979 work theory is, by far, one of the most parsimonious and general theories of international relations up to this day. Waltz's emphasis on parsimony continues to remain the main source of his theory's analytical beauty, which numerous IR theories simply lack. This parsimony and scientific character of *Theory of International Politics* has undoubtedly impacted IR as a field, because it directed it in a much more scientific direction. The theory presented in this book has also enormously impacted my view on how a theory should be constructed.

The second reason that elevates *Theory of International Politics* to such an influential position is the fact that it identifies the international system as an autonomous and ever-active causal force. At the same time, Waltz hereby rescues realism from the negative moralism of Morgenthau and other earlier realist thinkers. According to Carr (1946), or Morgenthau (1946, 1948), conflict occurred because humans craved power, and international anarchy allowed human aggressiveness to express itself. For Waltz, it is anarchy that forced all states to be concerned with their security.

Thirdly, history shows that neorealism remains strikingly relevant for understanding the world that we live in. The powerful U.S. response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 confirms that great powers are not overly concerned with diplomatic 'subtleties' when their internal security seems to be at risk. No matter where in the world we look, we see quite a few signs of neorealist enduring importance and relevance.

Weaknesses of Waltz's 1979 work

As I see it, the most important criticism lodged against Waltz's theory presented in his 1979 work is that it fails to account for major changes in world politics. I agree with Ruggie, who asserts that Waltz's theory simply cannot explain the transition between the medieval and modern period (Ruggie, 1986). We cannot explain system's transformation from one period to the other if we focus only on differences in capabilities between units. These two systems (medieval and modern) should be distinguished by "the principles on the basis of which the constituent units are separated from one another" (Ruggie, 1986:142). Unfortunately, Waltz's theory fails to account for such changes. Change constitutes a major characteristic of the world since its beginnings. It seems to me that Waltz's 1979 work contains almost a static theory, unable to explain major shifts in the system. Because of this and quite a few other weaknesses of *Theory of International Politics,* my view of IR has been influenced also by other prominent scholars.

Robert Keohane's After Hegemony

Robert Keohane is, as the major proponent of neoliberal institutionalism, one of the most important scholars of international relations. His by far the most important book, *After Hegemony* (1984) has enormously influenced my thinking about phenomena occurring in the world. Acknowledging the importance of the structural factors employed by neorealists, neoliberalism argues that international institutions are necessary to explain state action. These institutions facilitate self-interested cooperation be reducing uncertainty, stabilizing expectations, decreasing transaction costs, and increasing the flow of information. In the words of Keohane,

"cooperation can under some conditions develop on the basis of complementary interests" (1984:9). In general, while presented in *After Hegemony* theory of neoliberalism denies the neorealists's dreary picture of international relations, it accepts many of Waltz's assumptions, including the notion of anarchy and states as the system's primary actors.

Strengths of Keohane's 1984 work- why did I select this work

One of the most important contributions of *After Hegemony* is its optimistic notion that the emergence of cooperation among egoists is possible, even when the common government does not exist. The extent of cooperation in such a case, according to Keohane, depends on the existence of international institutions and international regimes. Keohane has, therefore, successfully shown that seeking to understand and predict the behavior of states only on the basis of power and interest does not lead to full success until one supplements it with theories that stress the importance of international institutions, and regimes. In general, in Keohane's *After Hegemony,* a rather pessimistic picture of international relations painted by Waltz has been successfully changed. Cooperation is possible. This is Keohane's 1984 work most important strong point. It is hard to overestimate contribution of this theory to IR.

The present developments in Europe also strongly support Keohane's expectations about the international system. The scope of EU's competence has expanded enormously from coal and steel in the European Coal and Steel Community to trade, investment, agriculture, transport, environment, and economic and monetary union. Some progress has even been made in the extremely difficult area of common foreign and security policy, as the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties show. In general, the European integration has continued and has even become stronger, which seems to undoubtedly support Keohane's theory. In 1993, Keohane has

declared: "I expect the European Community to become larger and more significant…"
(1993:297). His predictions seem to be continuously fulfilling. Cooperation is possible!

It is the relevance of Keohane's 1984 work that causes it to constitute very useful analytical lenses to see the world. *After Hegemony* continues to be highly applicable to nowadays world, and this feature is its most important strong point. That is why this work helps me understand IR for what it really is.

Weaknesses of Keohane's 1984 work

Despite its numerous strong points, Keohane's *After Hegemony* unfortunately has quite a few important weaknesses. By far the most crucial of these is its inability or rather refusal, to open the "black box of the state". According to my understanding of the matter, neoliberal institutionalism takes state preferences as fixed, or exogenous, and seeks to "explain state policy as a function of variation in the geopolitical environment" (Moravcsik, 1997: 537). Although Keohane's theory constitutes a significant improvement over Waltz's neorealism in that the former takes into consideration international institutions, it still leaves the black box of the state unopened. Thus, I agree with Andrew Moravcsik's opinion that neoliberal institutionalism is a misnomer insofar as it virtually constitutes a variant of realism (Moravcsik, 1997:537).

Robert Gilpin's Global Political Economy

Gilpin's work, *Global Political Economy (2001)* constitutes the third book, which has had the greatest impact on my thinking about IR. As the successor to his *Political Economy of International Relations* (1987), Gilpin's 2001 work focuses on powerful economic, political, and technological forces, which continue to transform the world that we live in. According to

Gilpin, economy and politics are enormously intertwined. Interactions of states, including their conflict and cooperation, constitute a framework of political relations, within which market and economic forces exist (Gilpin, 2001:23).

Strengths of Gilpin's 2001 work- why did I select this work

The main strength of Gilpin's *Global Political Economy* is the theoretical framework that it presents. Gilpin elaborates upon the world of politics and economy within a theoretical framework, state-centric realism, which he places in the tradition of the classical realism with roots deeply anchored in the writings of Thucydides and Machiavelli. His theory, however, substantially differs from the original version of the realist thought in that states are not treated by Gilpin as billiard balls. Gilpin's state-centric realism recognizes the significance of nonstate actors such as international institutions, multinational firms, and nongovernmental organizations (Gilpin, 2001:17). Here lies its most important strong point. Finally, actors other than states are acknowledged.

In short, Gilpin assumes that the state still continues to be the principal actor in international and domestic economic relations, but he disagrees that the state should be treated as the only actor. Furthermore, state-centric realism presented in this book stressess that policies and interests of states are primarily determined by powerful groups, political elites, and the characteristics of national system of political economy (Gilpin, 2001:18). The remaining assumptions of Gilpin's theory are very much similar to basic assumptions of the classical realism. He, along with other realists admits that national security and power is and will be critically important in international affairs, and that states coexist in a self-help, anarchic system (Gilpin, 2001:17, Grieco, 1988, Morgenthau, 1948).

Two analytical strengths stem from Gilpin's state-centric realism. First of all, he is successfully able to accept the realist theoretical framework, and open the "black box of the state" at the same time. Gilpin, as stated above, focuses on the process, in which interests of states are determined by powerful groups and political elites. I consider his attempt to unpack the

state as highly successful. In short, Gilpin has shown that we can keep the parsimonious framework of realist theory, and look within the state at the same time.

The second strong point of Gilpin's approach is that, as shown above, he disagrees that state should be treated as the only actor. According to Gilpin, other significant players, such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the organs of the European Union should be focused upon as important actors in the international arena. Put simply, not only states matter; different actors, oftentimes ignored by other versions of realism, are also crucial.

These two characteristics of the theoretical framework presented in *Global Political Economy* constitute its indisputable strong points. Gilpin's framework continues to remain parsimonious and elegant, but the two shortcomings of realism are, at the same time, overcome. The black box of the state is successfully opened, and other than states actors are aloud to play a significant role in the world of politics and economy.

Thirdly, I cannot overstate the impact that *Global Political Economy* had on my view of the relationship between politics and economy. He continuously emphasizes that we have to synthesize both economic and political analyses in order to understand the forces that stand behind state cooperation and conflict. Both of these factors endlessly interact with one another. Both of them affect the process of globalization, international trade, investment and international financial relations. Market and politics and inseparable, and thus economic factors "impose limits on what states can achieve" (Gilpin, 2001:24). I think that IR has been enormously enriched by Gilpin's theoretical contribution. Certainly, my thinking about IR has been influenced by it.

Weaknesses of Gilpin's 2001 work

The main strengths of Gilpin's *Global Political Economy* account, unfortunately, for the main weaknesses of his analysis. Gilpin stresses that policies and interests of states are primarily determined by powerful groups, political elites, and the characteristics of national system of political economy. He, thus, looks inside the state, but fails to elaborate upon the actual process that accounts for formation of states' interests. How do these elites and powerful groups determine states' interests? Are they able to define and shape its identity? How do they do it? What channels are explored? Simply put, Gilpin by uncovering the black box of the state opened his theory to numerous critiques that the traditional realist theories do not have to worry about.[1]

Concluding thoughts

No single approach, or theory can capture all the intricate phenomena occurring in contemporary world. Thus, no single theoretical framework and no single book is able to guide my understanding of world politics. Neorealism presented by Waltz in his 1979 *Theory of International Politics* has enormously increased my understanding of conflict and power relations present in the world. It still continues to be one of the most important general frameworks for perceiving power politics. States continually pay attention to the balance of power and military capabilities. The international system seems sometimes to be plagued by great and never-ending anarchy. It undoubtedly directed IR into a much more scientific direction. It also has shown me how an elegant and parsimonious theory should look like. It taught me that we can explain the complex world with a simple framework.

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[1] A successful in my opinion attempt to look inside the state is presented by Moravcsik's liberal approach. According to him state is simply not an independent actor, but merely a "representative institution" (Moravcsik, 1997:518). Here the explanation of how the state's interests are formed in much more clear. Some of Moravcsik' success in this endeavor might be attributed to his assertion that individuals and private groups, and not states are fundamental actors in international politics. State preferences simply represent the interests of a subset of society.

Yet neorealist thought and Waltz's incredible 1979 work is not able to explain all of the phenomena occurring in international relations. It is, therefore, other complementary approaches expressed in the other two books, Keohane's *After Hegemony,* and Gilpin's *Global Political Economy* that guide me in understanding the complexity of politics. Keohane's neoliberal theory is able to identify the ways in which states can cooperate with one another in the anarchical world. Gilpin's state-centric realism is able to show me how the powerful forces of market determine political outcomes.

In sum, each of the mentioned above books has been able to capture some unique characteristics of IR. I assert, therefore, that our view of the world politics would be greatly impoverished, if all of the scholars agreed upon one theoretical framework expressed in one book. Is Waltz's neorealism able to fully elucidate international cooperation? No! Can Keohane and other proponents of the neoliberal approach guide us through all of the complexities of politics and economy? No! Is Gilpin's *Global Political Economy* able to answer exhaustively all of my many questions? No! But all of the three books have, no doubt, had an enormous impact on the IR as a field and on my understanding of the world of politics.

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ANSWER #2:

MY FAVORITE BOOKS IN IR

I remember Tolstoy once saying something like, "we do not read books to get new information and ideas, rather we read books to confirm our existing opinions." If this is true, then "favorite books" simply mean "good mirrors"... There are few books that had a dramatic impact on my thinking about IR. But I found some books more helpful and persuasive than others. If I were to pick three, these would be Kenneth Waltz's *Man, the State, and War* (1959); Hedley Bull's *The Anarchical Society* (1995)*;* and Robert Keohane's *After Hegemony* (1984). Below I go into detail as to why I like these books and how they contributed to my understanding of IR as well as to the literature.

Man, the State, and War

IR scholars has long debated on which level of analysis is the most appropriate and helpful level in approaching international relations. In his seminal book *Man, the State, and War*, Kenneth N. Waltz becomes the first to analyze the political philosophy behind each level of analysis and their interaction with one another. Unlike his later writings in which he develops a purely structural theory of international relations, in *Man, the State, and War* Waltz offers a more balanced view on the importance of each "images" for the study of world politics: "the 'third image' describes the framework of world politics, but without the first of and second images there can be no knowledge of the forces that determine policy," (238).

To briefly summarize Waltz's images, the "first image" is about human nature. Human-nature accounts explain war by analyzing the common characteristics (or defects) of human beings. These theories tend to attribute war to an "ultimate cause" that derives from human nature: "the root of all evil is man, and thus he is himself the root of the specific evil, war," (3). Waltz's

problem with searching for an "ultimate cause," however, is that ultimate causes frequently turn out to be the cause of everything. Therefore, Waltz criticized theories that explain war through human nature by arguing that human nature is the cause of as many good (and benign) things as evil ones (39).

The "second image" is about the characteristics of states: "the idea that defects in states cause wars among them," (83). Waltz analyzes several state-level accounts of war and peace some of which are very fashionable today, such as the peaceful nature of democracies and peaceful impact of free trade. The notion here is similar to the first image, if "bad" states (such as non-democratic or interventionist) can be erased then there will be no war (119). However, Waltz notes that there is no guarantee that good states will not revert to war. Waltz rejects state-level theories that would rely "on the generalization of one pattern of state and society to bring peace to the world," (122).

The "third image" is the international system. The absence of a world government renders the international system an anarchical one; and "in anarchy there is automatic harmony," (160). Thus, wars occur "because there is nothing to prevent them," (232). Waltz tends to view third image as the most important account of war among nations. Yet unlike in his later theorizing, he underlines the importance of the other two images: "we still have to look to motivation and circumstance in order to explain individual acts," (231). Hence, multiple levels of analysis.

My personal view on the levels of analysis question is that among the three different levels from which IR scholars approached to the study of conflict among states, state-level approach has been the most productive and helpful in terms of accounting for the conflict among states and providing us clues as to how to reduce or manage them. Thus, I do not share Waltz's inclination to the third image in *Man, the State, and War*. Yet in the final analysis, any single level is

incomplete by itself. Waltz's *Man, the State, and War* is important for being the first to analyze the philosophical foundations of each levels of analysis and to argue the complementary relationship among them. "The real problem of IR scholars," Lipson observed, is "to integrate choice and structure," (1884, p. 20). And a successful integration of choice and structure inevitably requires making use of systemic *as well as* state-level theories. Indeed, this is the current trend in both theoretical approaches (Moravcsik 1997; Gilpin 2001) to and empirical analyses (Huth 1996) of international relations.

The Anarchical Society

The concept of "anarchy" has enjoyed a privileged status in each of the two main schools of thought of IR, namely neorealism and neoliberalism –albeit in varying size and nature. I have always believed that this overemphasis on anarchy was unjustified and misleading. I think what is important is not the mere presence or absence of a governmental body at the international level, but rather whether any mechanism exists that functions against Waltz's assertion that "wars occur because there is nothing that prevents them" (1959, 232). In our modern global world, no state except the hegemon can get away with a "fait accompli" that will change regional of global balances of power. This simply means that every state except one has an "impediment" to behave like a "rogue" state. Thus, the absence of a material world government to punish the deviant states does not necessarily create an anarchic international environment, because the practical function of such a government is fulfilled to a large extent by the *hierarchical* nature of the international system.[2] This is true for multipolar systems where there is a balance of power

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[2] The anarchy-mitigating outcome of the hierarchy in the international system might not be the same for every state, however. The hegemon, or more broadly "great powers", have greater incentives to prevent wars between the states which are economically (or politically) more important to them. So far as their economic reverberations are concerned, a war between France and Britain is "unthinkable" for the world system, a war between Argentina and Brazil is "destructive", yet a war between Eritrea and Ethiopia is "tolerable", though unpleasant. Thus, rephrasing Waltz's assertion, I believe that "wars occur when there is no one who is *willing* and *able* to prevent them." Anarchy

among major states as well. Throughout modern history, each state that sought a global hegemony found a community of others against her. Thus, balance of power has indeed been an *order*ing principle in international relations.[3]

I found my inspiration as to the "order" in the international system in the writings of some British scholars. Contrary to the central place of anarchy in the North American theories of international relations, "international society" thinking and its resultant emphasis on "order" has been a tradition in post-war Britain. "The English School" argued that there is a persistent order in the international system alongside "anarchy" and that the preservation of a minimal order has been a common objective of the major members of the international system. Hedley Bull was one of the most influential scholars within the English School. In his *The Anarchical Society* he defines order in international system as "a pattern or activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states," (p. 8). In further elaboration, he lists these goals as 1) the preservation of the system and society of states itself, 2) maintaining the sovereignty of states, 3) maintaining peace, and 4) sustaining the elementary goals of the individual, i.e. life, truth, and property (pp. 16-18). He argues that the maintenance of order is a common goal of states, because –whatever the further goals of states- the existence of a minimal order is a necessary condition to achieve these higher goals. Like individuals, states value order because they value

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prevails more in regions of the world where the great powers allow it to be so. As a result, anarchy is a "conditional" element in world politics, not a ubiquitous and overarching one.

[3] Indeed, this is why realism's emphasis on relative gains is unfounded. In a multipolar world, the primary goal of major powers becomes the maintenance of a balance of power among each other and the prevention of establishment of hegemony by any single state. This creates a *tacit* 'collective security' understanding among these powers, something like "one for all, all for one". Consequently, State A does not have to be obsessed with relative-gains in its relations with State B, because she *knows* that State C and State D will cooperate with State A in case State B attempts to take advantage of a new power imbalance between State A and State B. This happened that way in early 19th century against the Napoleonic France, in 1853-6 against Russia, and in 1914-8 and 1939-1945 against Germany. Thus, self-help is an irrelevant concept with respect to great power politics and this helps major powers relax their relative-gains concerns in their bilateral relations. This argument is also in line with Morrow's game-theoretic approach to balance of power among major powers where he argues that "essential" states (states that can form a "minimally winning coalition" with another state) can *never* be eliminated (2000, p. 180).

"the greater predictability of human behavior" that comes as the consequence of conformity to the elementary or primary goals of states (p. 7).

According to Bull, **"**balance of power" is the primary and most effective instrument for the maintenance of international order. It is primary, because it provides the conditions in which other institutions of order (diplomacy, war, international law, and great power management) have been able to operate; it is the most effective, because by preventing the emergence of a hegemon, balance of power helps preserve the existent order.

Two of the instruments that Bull argues states use to preserve international order are particularly interesting. First, Bull directs our attention to the *positive* functions of war with respect to the maintenance of order. While in the traditional IR literature war is associated with conflict and disorder, Bull argues that war has widely been used by states (in particular the great powers) as a means of enforcing international law and preserving balance of power (p. 102). Thus, for Bull, war is a two-faceted phenomenon: a threat to be limited in most cases, but also an instrument to be used for order-related purposes in some cases. Second, he contends that great power politics contribute to the preservation of international order as well. Bull argues that great powers do so by preserving the general balance of power, avoiding major crisis among themselves, and respecting each other's "spheres of influences" (p. 200). In that respect, the English school warns us that the great power politics is not a wholly "tragic" story.

I think *The Anarchical Society* made two important contributions to our understanding of international politics. First, it persuasively argued that we are not living in an international "jungle". In Bull's (and my own) view, anarchy is an element of international structure, but neither the only nor the predominant one. States purposively try to limit the negative effects of anarchy by working together to preserve a minimal level of order in order to attain higher

objectives. Second, Bull helped us realize that some crucial elements of international politics - war and great power politics-, which are generally associated with conflict, many times play positive roles in terms of the preservation of international order.

An important shortcoming in Bull's approach is that Bull remains quite when it comes to the "nature" of international order. The question of what causes the emergence of different international orders is outside the scope of *The Anarchical Society*. Actually, Bull admits this point when he says that "we are concerned only with what may be called the 'statics' of international order and not with its 'dynamics'," (19). Hence, Bull does not offer us a "theory" of international relations.

After Hegemony

I have never shared realism's pessimism towards international politics in general and international cooperation in particular. For me, cooperation among states was *logical* and *practical*. It was logical, because in the long run cooperative states were better off than non-cooperative ones; it was practical, because most international problems –such as nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, setting up an international monetary system, and alleviating international poverty- required collective solutions. What makes Robert Keohane's *After Hegemony* important in my eyes is its logical and empirical support to the possibility and existence of cooperation among states.

The aftermath of WWII witnessed a mushrooming of international organizations/institutions to facilitate international cooperation in political as well as economic issues. The dominant realist theory of international relations did not have a well-defined theory of international organizations. But a sub-theory of realism –*hegemonic stability theory*- argued that the unchallenged hegemony of the United States was the driving force behind this international

institutionalization and the relative peace it espoused (Gilpin 1981). All these institutions were established under the hegemony of the US and therefore their influence on world politics was dependent on the hegemonic status of the US. Thus, when in 1970's and 1980's the hegemony of the US declined with the recuperation of the Japanese and the West European economies, hegemonic stability theory expected a reversal in the impact of international institutions on world politics.

Keohane's central aim in *After Hegemony* is to challenge these pessimist realist evaluations of the decline in US hegemony. Keohane rejects realism's pessimist evaluations on two grounds. First, he argues that international cooperation is possible among nations and does not require a hegemon in the first place. Second, he argues that even though the national interests of states have a role in the establishment of international institutions, these institutions take a life of their own once they start rolling.

Keohane first challenges the neorealist link between states' egoism and the rarity of cooperation among them. He states, "Realist assumptions about world politics are consistent with the formation of institutionalized arrangements, containing rules and principles, which promote cooperation," (67). He maintains that egoistic governments "can rationally seek to form international regimes on the basis of shared interest," which actually reflects "rational egoism," (107). From his perspective, only a "myopic self-interest" understanding prevents states from cooperating when it is actually in their interest if the issue is evaluated with other issues (99).

Keohane then develops a theory of international institutions in which he argues that international institutions, or more broadly international regimes, influence the way and the extent to which states cooperate with each other. He states that by providing principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures, regimes "prescribe certain actions and proscribe others," (59).

However, international regimes are valuable to governments not because they enforce binding rules on others, "but because they render it possible for governments to enter into mutually beneficial agreements with one another," (13). Regimes do that through multiple channels. First, they create an environment whereby states obtain information about other states' intentions and preferences. Second, international regimes can be regarded as "quasi agreements", which, although lacking a legally binding force, "help to organize relationships in mutually beneficial way," (89). Once a regime is established, states' concern about 'retaliation' and 'reputation' makes them "forward looking" and generally urges them to cooperate. And third, Keohane argues that international regimes decrease "transaction costs" for parties involved, thereby increasing incentives to cooperate (90).

Keohane was heavily influence by Ernst Haas who challenged the statist view in international politics and argued that the actors in international relations are all entities capable of putting forth demands effectively; "who or what these entities may be cannot be answered a priori," (1964, 84). Thus, Keohane is opposed to the realists' argument on the insignificance of international institutions and argues that regimes can affect the interests and policies of states by influencing their "expectations and values," (63). Although he accepts that international regimes are not "beyond the nation-state," he maintains that they are not pure "dependent variables" as argued by neorealists, but rather "intervening variables" with semi-independent effects on states' behavior (63-4). Therefore, international regimes are easier to maintain than to create (50).

I do not have significant problems with the institutionalist theory Keohane develops in *After Hegemony*. Yet I must confess that institutional theory is more a theory of *international cooperation* than a theory of international relations. By borrowing from both realism and liberalism, Keohane succeeded in developing a concrete and persuasive theory of cooperation

among states. Also, like some others (Moravscik 1997, Mearsheimer 1995, Gilpin 2001) I do not think that Keohane's institutional theory can be regarded as a "neoliberal" argument. Keohane shares realism's assumptions of anarchy, rationality, and egoism but maintains a more optimistic view on the cooperation among states. Hence, as he himself states elsewhere, his position is not "against" structural realism, but "beyond" structural realism (1984, 191). Personally, I would rather consider him an "optimistic realist" than a "neoliberal institutionalist". Yet this does not undermine the strength of his arguments.

Finally, if empirical evidence is a support to the accuracy of theories, the history of the European Union since the end of the Cold War gives extensive support to Keohane's argument on international institutions. Some realist (Mearsheimer 1990) expected a reversal in the integration of European countries after the end of the Cold War. By contrast, Keohane argued that because common interests are likely to persists and the institutions of the European Community are well-entrenched, we should expect further integration in Europe (1993, 291). The current deepening as well as expansion of European integration after the Cold War confirms Keohane's prediction and gives further support to Keohane's institutional arguments.

Question: If one assumes that the purpose of theory is to create a framework for distinguishing patterns in the midst of apparent chaos, what theory or theories, if any, serve as an appropriate framework for you in your understanding of international relations? Define what you mean by theory. What criteria do you employ for identifying and evaluating theories? How important do you feel it is to have overarching general or universal theories to guide practice and scholarship? Is the study of international relations guided by an overarching paradigm? Should it be?

In this paper, I will argue that two things are necessary overarching elements for the success of any descriptive academic discipline, including International Relations. First, the effective performance and evaluation of research in any purportedly descriptive field relies on a clearly stated, overarching epistemological assumption that separates "good" research from "bad." In International Relations, this assumption is empiricism. Second, it is necessary to develop well-defined theories that use clearly stated assumptions and generate falsifiable predictions on observable data. More controversially, I argue that theories with empirically verified assumptions are superior to those that operate on the "as if" reasoning common to rational choice research (Friedman 1953). Finally, I argue that theoretical paradigms with a small "hard core" of assumptions are useful motivators of social science research, but should not be confused with theories themselves. As such, international relations should not be guided by an overarching paradigm of research.

Several (though certainly not all) of the debates currently raging in International Relations are rooted in issues of epistemology. Take, for example, feminism's challenge to conventional International Relations theory. While IR feminism is certainly a very diverse field, some "standpoint" feminist scholars have been quite open in stating that epistemological considerations are central to their claims:

> It is necessary "to be aware of the larger sociopolitical context in which knowledge is created and of the way in which such knowledge relates to the perpetuation of specific constellations of super- and subordination. …

> Feminists have pointed out that these [scientific] communities are rather exclusive, not only in the sense of excluding people who lack power, but even more so in excluding the standpoints of those less privileged, the ways of knowing that make sense from their perspective" (Locher and Prugl 2001: 121-122).

Thus, for these feminists, knowledge-creation is an inherently power-laden concept where certain viewpoints are privileged over others thanks to their feminine character. Objectivity and rationality are among these privileged concepts, which serve to "support male power and female subordination and... reinforce the power of dominant groups, since minorities have frequently been characterized as lacking in these characteristics" (Tickner 2001: 15). The solution, according to feminists, is to "give legitimacy to many communities of knowers committed to a diverse range of standards of justification… feminist epistemology needs to 'start from women's lives'" (Locher and Prugl 2001: 122).

Post-structuralist criticisms of mainstream "scientific" International Relations provide another example of an epistemology-based challenge to conventional IR. Post-structuralism, as Richard Ashley argues, "aims to construct the objective relations (linguistic, economic, political, or social) that structure practice and representation of practice, including primary knowledge of the familiar world" by taking apart and revealing the true nature of fundamental, assumed concepts of language and culture (Ashley 1986: 264). Similarly, Robert Cox argues that all observation and thought is inherently laden with ideology (Cox 1986: 246). In short, thinkers in this frame question the existence of any kind of basic, uncontroversial data that scientists can make reference to; "their main purpose is to 'problematize' answers, make 'strange' what has become familiar, and reverse the process of construction in order to reveal how problematic are the taken-for-granted structures… of our social and political world" (Lapid 1989: 242).

Unfortunately, a conversation between epistemic challengers to conventional IR and traditional, empirically-oriented IR theorists is likely to be fruitless, for any epistemological argument is by definition a logically undecidable proposition. The paradox lies in the fact that epistemologies are inherently theories about the truth of theories; they are rules that help us decide which statements are true and which are not. We make reference to these rules whenever we argue about the truth of a theory, including an epistemological theory; we accept certain supporting evidence as valid, including evidence for an epistemological theory, only when it concords with our pre-existing epistemological rules. We cannot analyze the problem of knowledge from a purely objective position; we are forced to tacitly solve the problem before we may begin discussing it. Any epistemological discussion between two people with different epistemologies therefore becomes, by definition, a discussion at cross-purposes: each participant has ideas completely incommensurable with the other's thoughts, and neither is able to decide whose ideas are correct except by the standards already formed in the minds of the discussants.

I therefore argue, against some kinds of pluralists (Haas and Haas 2002; Smith 1999; Smith 2002), for a separation of disciplines around epistemological lines with "limited conversation" between said disciplines. As International Relations is a largely empirical discipline, so it should stay such a discipline (if only for reasons of continuity.) My logic is simple: to accomplish any work beyond epistemological pontification, scholars must have space to perform this work under a set of epistemological standards that they accept. This separation should not be any more exclusive than is absolutely necessary: scholars engaged in the "critical theory" of Cox's definition (Cox 1986) that are willing to accept some form – any form – of basic data on which their theories may be tested are welcome to remain a part of mainstream International Relations. I do not see why the theory-ladenness of observation is inconsistent with

the idea that there is a material ground upon which ideational forces have observable factors (Bhaskar 2000), or the idea that certain features of this ideational ground are *relatively* unproblematic (O'Hear 1989: Chapter 5). However, if anti-positivist scholars cannot accept this basic tenet of empirical research, International Relations scholars have no way of judging the quality of their work; they must seek a home in a discipline that has created non-empirical standards of inquiry.

I take care to limit the scope of the separation I prescribe in two ways. First, International Relations is a fundamentally empiricist discipline, but has substantively benefited from conversations with non-empiricists in the past. Suitably reworked, many non-empiricist theories can become powerful and interesting theories of mainstream International Relations. Certainly constructivism, which has roots in anti-positivism, serves as one example of a powerful substantive theory that (with some epistemological revisions) made its way into mainstream IR. This kind of pluralism, a mutual exchange of substantive ideas between epistemologically separated disciplines, is altogether valuable. Secondly, I do not think that epistemological debates *between* disciplines are toxic; on the contrary, they stimulate us to rethink and clarify our own positions, create new theories through a Hegelian dialectic, and allow students the opportunity to be fairly exposed to all the epistemological options that lay before them. My only claim is that we ought to stop shouting at one another about what truth is and get to the business of discovering it, whatever we think "it" is. Disciplinary division creates the space needed for this work to take place.

Aside from space to work, International Relations needs one other thing to accomplish its goal of knowledge creation: predictive and explanatory theories. By theories, I mean coherent descriptions of observed phenomena that specifically explain the causal mechanisms those

phenomena *and* make predictions about new, previously unobserved causal laws. Some IR scholars, notably J. David Singer, originally subscribed to (1) Durkheim's methodological premise that the pure observation of and empirical analysis of facts must precede any theorizing, and (2) Hempel's idea that explanation is the finding of "covering laws" reliably connecting one observable event to another (Singer 1970). Unfortunately, Singer's Correlates of War project has led to the endless accumulation of more correlational relationships without the promised payoff in reliable causal theories (Dessler 1991). As Waltz points out, laws cannot explain, but only predict; theories explain *why* laws operate and allow us to predict the existence of new laws (Waltz 1986). In sum, theories provide the explanatory power desired from a social science while augmenting the project of building causal laws by, in effect, telling statisticians and comparativists where to look for the likely existence of new laws. They are therefore critical to International Relations' academic project.

In an empiricist field like International Relations, care must be taken to articulate unambiguous theories that deduce novel, observational predictions from clear assumptions. This injunction serves three purposes. First, the *clarity and completeness* of the theory ensures that other scholars know precisely the argument being made, how its causal mechanisms operate, and what we can expect (and *not* expect) this theory to explain. It prevents scholars from arbitrarily adapting their theory to fit found evidence, and limits confusion about the specifics of the theory when it is discussed. Second, *deducing clear-cut predictions* provides the ground for empirical testing that scholars need to judge the truth or usefulness of that theory. Finally, *clarity of assumptions* allows scholars to easily change the theory (if necessary) and to know when it will and will not apply to phenomena. As Lake cautions us, the failure to generate such theories –

and instead our tendency to focus on paradigmatic assumptions – has tended to stagnate the progress of many subfields in IR (Lake 2002).

Furthermore, International Relations should prefer theories with empirically-verified assumptions to those with questionable (or verifiably false) assumptions. In questioning the validity of so-called "as if" assumptions, I break with a tradition of social science research dating back to Milton Friedman's classic statement of the paradigm (Friedman 1953). These researchers (particularly rational choice theorists) believe that a theory's truth lies in its usefulness (Lake and Powell 1999), and that it is misguided to speak of the truth of a theory's assumptions, but only of the accuracy of its predictions. Yet I cannot agree with the "as if" theorists' logic. My reasoning is twofold. First, theories purport to have *explanatory* power, not just predictive power; yet it is impossible to explain behavior on admittedly false premises. Rational choice theories, for instance, may be able to predict behavior to a nicety, but they cannot tell us *why* something happens so long as they assume that people consistently pursuit their complete and transitive preferences under constraint, for we know that this assumption does not characterize the thought process of most people. Furthermore, while it is possible for theories with known false assumptions to make accurate predictions, this alone does not necessarily make the theory good: an infinite set of possible theories is consistent with any given pattern of behavior. It is unlikely that a theory with false assumptions will be able to predict much outside a narrow range of behavior.[1] Here, I draw a distinction between those assumptions that are only *sometimes* operative or true, and those that are *always* false: many theories with unrealistic assumptions can be very useful whenever those assumptions happen to hold true (Bueno de Mesquita 1981: 9).

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[1] I such a theory was able to make a large number of predictions across a wide array of phenomena, I would say that it was time to re-examine whether the assumptions are true!

With an epistemological assumption in place and good theories to test, whither the clashing paradigms that characterize the current state of International Relations? The role of broad theoretical paradigms in International Relations is important, and distinct from (and sometimes confused with) the role of theory itself. Theoretical paradigms[2] provide the discipline with what Lakatos calls a "positive and negative heuristic" of research (Chalmers 1990). The negative heuristic is the body of foundational assumptions that compose a research paradigm, like the three foundational assumptions that Moravcsik identifies in his analysis of realism (Legro and Moravcsik 1999) or the core elements of constructivism and rational choice defined in Fearon and Wendt's article (Fearon and Wendt 2002). The positive heuristic is the research program defined by the paradigm: the questions it seeks to answer, the process it uses to answer those questions, and the general research agenda of researchers within the paradigm. Stated simply, theoretical paradigms put researchers in a position to work effectively by reducing the infinite universe of methodologies and unanswered questions to a manageable set. Progressive research programs build on this initial base to uncover new questions and generalize predictions to new data.

Note the difference between theories and theoretical paradigms, as these concepts have been outlined in this paper. Theories are created to explain a series of seemingly unconnected empirical laws, and to predict the existence of heretofore undiscovered new laws. Theoretical paradigms, by contrast, exist as small collections of hard core assumptions that produce no predictions on their own, but serve as starting points for the creation of new theories. As Lake persuasively argues, one cannot replace the other (Lake 2002): they serve different purposes. To argue about theoretical paradigms and *not* about theories is to reduce all conversation in IR to a

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[2] Lakatos calls these "research programs," whereas Kuhn (1996) uses the language of "paradigms." Though subtly different, I use the terminology interchangeably here.

priori discussion of assumptions' appropriateness. Better we should submit these paradigms to the ultimate arbitrator: any paradigm that can produce more parsimonious, explanatory, and empirically provable predictions on existing and novel phenomena would seem to have a strong claim for theoretical value (Gaddis 1992; Ray and Russett 1996).

Because theoretical paradigms' purpose is to drive the creation of new knowledge, I think – contrary to Lakatos' original conception of a research program and Kuhn's conception of a single operational paradigm – that it is inappropriate for the discipline to be driven by one overarching paradigm. The human condition is too complicated for one paradigm to examine all its elements at once. As Legro and Moravscik point out, even four relatively simple aspects of International Relations – power, preference, information, and mutual constitution of structure – have well-developed paradigms of research pursuing questions of International Relations through the perspective of their primary concern (Legro and Moravcsik 1999). As Stephen Walt argues, we need these multiple paradigms to ensure that we do not overlook important aspects of the world as a result of our paradigmatic blinders (Walt 1998).

As might be guessed, the cogency of my argument depends on seeing scientific inquiry itself as *not* a paradigm of research. If science were such a paradigm, we would have to re-admit all the non-scientific theories to the discipline that I earlier dismissed. I do not see science as a paradigm,[3] however, for (like Waltz) I see the basic tenets of the scientific method as a part of International Relations' assumed premise of empiricism. I do, however, think that the qualitative and quantitative approaches to science *within* the scientific method are distinct paradigms, and should be allowed to co-exist. Contrary to Bull's naysaying (Bull 1966), quantitative research in IR has produced novel theories beyond those imagined by qualitative scholars (Leng 2002). Yet

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[3] Nor does the originator of the term "paradigm," T.S. Kuhn. Every reference to a "paradigm" in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is to a substantive theory; there is never a "scientific revolution" that overthrows science itself.

qualitative research is essential, if only to maintain a "deeper familiarity with the substance of politics" necessary to fuel the hypotheses of future quantitative research (Leng 2002: 127).

To summarize, International Relations requires two things to operate effectively: an epistemological assumption, and a body of growing and testable theories. IR is and should remain a fundamentally empiricist discipline, though I do not begrudge other disciplines the opportunity to theorize about states and their behavior in non-empiricist fashion. However, any coherent discipline must have some kind of shared epistemological basis in order to facilitate commensurable discussion about a substantive topic. This does not mean that substantive insights from other, non-empiricist disciplines should be ignored, but instead that they should be explored from an empiricist standpoint to see whither they lead, much as constructivism was profitably adopted into mainstream IR from critical theorist beginnings. Further, theoretical paradigms do not take the place of actually specified theory in International Relations, but focus the effort of scholars on the creation of new theories around existing bodies of work. Only the constant development and testing of true theories can move us beyond debate over the power of paradigmatic assumptions.

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: In the fiftieth anniversary issue of *International Organization*, the editors of the issue, Peter Katzenstein, Steve Krasner, and Robert Keohane, argue that the future fault lines in international relations theory will be between rationalists and constructivists. The suggestion is that both rationalists and constructivist approaches have different starting points for understanding state action and are discovering that they must address questions that are at the heart of the other's research program. In an essay that reflects on this prediction:

   a. Define the core elements of rationalist and constructivist approaches to international relations theory and consider how they can be interpreted as beginning at different starting points for understanding state action.
   b. Consider what rationalist theories might learn from constructivism. What might constructivism learn from rationalist theories?

Briefly discuss whether there can be a fruitful marriage between constructivism and rationalism, what it would look like, and what its limits would be.

I do not find it odd that Katzenstein, Krasner, and Keohane (1998) believe that the next "Great debate" in International Relations will be between constructivists and rational choice scholars. Certain incarnations of these research programs would indeed be in fundamental conflict. However, I tend to agree with Fearon and Wendt (2002) that the "hard core" assumptions of these two theories is not in conflict, and that indeed each theory has much to offer the other if the theorists from both sides can be brought to the same table. Rational choice theory offers a compelling theory of agency, well-developed methods of analysis, and an already large body of substantive work to constructivism, which needs all three. In return, constructivism offers a promising theory of preference formation and a theory of structural change, each of which will prove valuable for (among other things) bridging the agent-structure divide in IR. Having examined the most likely potential conflicts between these two fields, I conclude that most are greatly overstated and usually dependent on ancillary assumptions not critical to the core of either field. I conclude by arguing that a theory of rational choice constructivism is already being developed under the guise of evolutionary game theory, and that these preliminary results indicate a bright future for such a merger of these two fields.

No matter what other assumptions typically accompany a work in this vein, rational choice theory has only one real unifying element: individuals pursue their complete and transitive preferences under environmental constraints (Lake and Powell 1999: 6-7). As Fearon and Wendt point out, these individuals need not be *perfectly* rational (Fearon and Wendt 2002 55-56). Frequently, rational choice scholars find it necessary or convenient to include other assumptions in their theory. For instance, it is usually necessary to assume the homogeneity of every person's preferences to make a model mathematically tractable. As Stigler and Becker argued long ago, this kind of rational choice theory seeks to explain variation in behavior through a change in environmental constraints and incentives (Stigler and Becker 1977): endogenizing preference only complicates the analysis and runs the risk of explaining behaviors by merely naming them.[1]

Note what rational choice does *not* preclude. Though focused on individual agency, rational choice is silent on the construction of the "rules of the game" by which these actors must play; that is, rational choice does not rule out the creation of institutions and other social structures that constraint the context of rational action. Indeed, institutionalism in IR, a movement parallel to a wider disciplinary push toward institutionalism made famous by Douglass North (1990), is often framed in game-theoretic terms that pit wholly rational actors against one another; institutions explain cooperation through the incentive-compatible means they create (e.g., Keohane 1984; Snidal 1993) Furthermore, though often assuming preference homogeneity for the sake of convenience, rational choice theory is completely silent on the issue of preference change in actors. Frieden, in fact, argues that it is perfectly appropriate to infer preferences (and, presumably, preference changes) from a thoroughly stated and predictive

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[1] This concern is closely related to the concern that Waltz expresses about "reductionist theories" (Waltz 1986b).

theory of preference (Frieden 1999); it is *untheorized* preferences, the aforementioned explaining

by naming, that rational choice scholars fear (Lake and Powell 1999: 28).

Like rational choice theory, constructivism is also burdened with ancillary assumptions.

Yet at its core, it is an argument for the mutual constitution of agent and structure by ideational

means from the perspective of the social whole (Fearon and Wendt 2002: 57-58). Built on

identity theory (an import from psychology) and interpretive sociology, constructivism explores

how the interaction of individuals tends to create social institutions, which then exert both causal

and constitutive forces on the individuals who created them (and their offspring.) Some variants

of constructivism embrace post-positivist epistemologies as a part of their ontological, arguing

that one inevitably follows from the other (Locher and Prugl 2001; Smith 1999). If brought to

the fruition of a denial of generalizability, such an epistemology would make a marriage with

rational choice theory problematic, for at its core rational choice theory is an argument for

universal pursuit of preferences (Katzenstein, Keohane, and Krasner 1998: 676). Yet this

epistemology has proven unnecessary to sustain constructivist arguments, as Wendt builds his

Social Theory of International Politics from an ideational yet empiricist basis (Wendt 1999).

There are many weaknesses of pure rational choice theory that could be remedied by the

addition of constructivist ideas, and conversely many problems with pure constructivism that

could be solved with rational choice remedies. For instance, rational choice theory lacks a

theory of *how* preferences form and *why* they change; in their pursuit of comparative statics, they

necessarily put the dynamics of human change in a black box. This limitation has found its way

into other theories of International Relations as well; for instance, John Gerard Ruggie criticizes

the fundamentally ahistorical and static nature of neo-realism (Ruggie 1986), a theory built atop

microeconomic premises(Waltz 1986a: 82-84). Yet constructivism is foundationally about just

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this kind of change, and explains it through the role-formation that takes place at every first meeting (and role-fulfillment that happens afterward). If stated more formally and mathematically, the insight that interaction can change preferences could be the seed that launches rational choice theory into its long-awaited phase of dynamic analysis.

Another complementarity between rational choice theory and constructivism is the theory of agency – and, really, any kind of specific theory – that constructivism lacks, but rational choice theory provides. Jeffrey Checkel argues that constructivism focuses overmuch on the social constitution of actors "at the expense of the agents who help create and change them in the first place," and indeed that "constructivism remains a method more than anything else" (Checkel 1998: 324), a point not lost on others (Kolodziej 2002: 134; Lake 2002). Certainly a few constructivists have articulated real, substantive theories of International Relations that explain and predict behavior; Finnemore and Sikkink's theory of norm-entrepreneurship and cascading norm change certainly qualifies as one such theory (1998). More of these theories would be created if constructivists insisted on rigorous, specific theory about substantive issues; Bueno de Mesquita cites this quality as a strength of game-theoretic modeling (Bueno de Mesquita 2002). Furthermore, Finnemore and Sikkink recognize that "rationality cannot be separated from any politically significant episode of normative influence or normative influence, just as the normative context conditions any episode of rational choice" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 888). It is just this kind of synthesis between rational choice and constructivism that gives constructivists the insistence on rigor, the theory of agency, and the body of extant literature they need to build substantive theories of International Relations that incorporate their insights mutual constitution of agent and structure.

A hybrid of constructivist rational choice would combine the strengths of both individual paradigms to create theories that simultaneously explain static outcomes and dynamic changes. It would resolve the "agent-structure debate" by, rather than declaring one side a winner, making each of its theories simultaneously cognizant of agent *and* structure, as in Dessler's "transformational model" of international institutions (Dessler 1989). Take, for instance, Wendt's model of the three cultures of anarchy in the international system (Wendt 1999). As it currently exists, it is a sketched description of the three general ways that states can interact with one another, depending upon the way that they conceptualize the anarchic order of the world. A version inspired by the incorporation of rational choice theory, however, would be much more specific; the preferences of each state under every "culture" would have to be specified, and a precise (perhaps mathematical) mechanism by which culture changes would be elaborated. Furthermore, any cultural and preference variables would have to be recursively dependent on one another's values, as in a system with constant mutual feedback. Such a theory might look like Fearon's (1995) mathematical model of recurring war as a credible commitment problem, *plus* the addition of an structure that both creates and allows the solution of the commitment problem under different ideational circumstances; this mechanism could include shifts in domestic institutions ultimately provoked by changing population norms, with a carefully specified function describing the path of population norm change and a feedback mechanism from norms to state behavior. A more qualitatively inspired version of this model might resemble Bull's model of the *Anarchical Society* (Bull 2002); in his work, power (as exercised by rational actors) is a fundamentally determining factor of order in the system, but shared ideational conceptions created by power-driven interaction – such as sovereignty and international law – also independently shape state behavior within the system. Nor does Bull

skimp on detailed exposition of his theory: each chapter is a very detailed description of how power and ideology both come to shape state actions in a number of realms.

But what of the many potential conflicts between constructivism and rational choice that Katzenstein, Krasner, and Keohane raise as specters to haunt the marriage of constructivism and rational choice? I believe that most of them are just that: specters, ethereal spirits scaring off interest in cross-paradigmatic work that ultimately fade at dawn. The most salient point of contention, epistemological differences between rational choice theory and constructivism, has been largely dispatched by the emergence of an empiricist constructivism pioneered by Wendt (Wendt 1999). I find the remaining causes for inter-paradigm dissent to be minor at worst. If these bogeymen have any practical import, it cannot be for theoretical reasons that I see, though Smith points out that theoretical justification is hardly needed for academics to exclude theories they dislike (Smith 2002).

Take, for instance, the apparently normative character of constructivist work that may interfere with a merger with rational choice theory. As Katzenstein, Keohane, and Krasner (KKK) argue, "critical constructivists… understand their project not simple as revealing relationships that exist independent of the investigator, but also as having the potential to alter these relationships themselves" (Katzenstein, Keohane, and Krasner 1998: 677). First, I fail to see how this is much different from rational choice theory; many observers have noted that rationalistic theories are as normative (i.e., people *should* act rationally) as they are descriptive. Second, the authors are careful to slip the "critical" modifier in front of the word constructivist, confirming that not all constructivists think this way and that therefore such a belief is not central to constructivism as a paradigm. For both reasons, this barrier to constructivist/rationalist cooperation appears almost nonexistent.

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KKK also argue that constructivism and rationalism are focused on fundamentally different things: constructivists focus on preference development with "thick" information about context, whereas rationalists focus on the pursuit of preferences in a relatively "thin" context of a few environmental parameters (Katzenstein, Keohane, and Krasner 1998: 675-682). If left to their own devices, no doubt this *would* cause conflict among these two schools of thought. Yet the conflict would not be rooted in a foundational disagreement between the two schools, but in their treatment of the same topics highlighting different forces salient in each, producing potentially conflicting conclusions. But as Frieden and Bueno de Mesquita argue (Bueno de Mesquita 2002; Frieden 1999), rational choice theorists are (apparently) more than willing to accept constructivist premises and proceed accordingly; thus, what might have been disagreement can become the recognition that the results of the relatively static rational choice theory and the entirely dynamic constructivist theory are special cases of a coherent whole.

Finally, what of Wendt's claim that constructivism is fundamentally holist, whereas rational choice theory is (in most ways) fundamentally individualistic (Fearon and Wendt 2002: 57-58)? It could be that both schools will claim that the other tends to reduce behavior at one level of analysis to changes in parameters at the other level of analysis (Wendt 1987). My tendency to doubt this supposed point of conflict between the paradigms is based on Wendt's own use of fundamentally individual-level interactions to explain "Process and Structural Change" in his own book (Wendt 1999: 313-369); every process he describes therein is an individual-level one based in psychological identity theory, although these processes do tend to create social-level dynamics that then feed-back once more to individual identity formation. Furthermore, relating structural-level dynamics to individual-level processes is *not* necessarily reductionist when each influences the other (Wendt 1987: 356-361), and therefore I do not see a

logical inconsistency in merging a paradigm of individual action with one of social influence so long as their effects are mutually constitutive.

I am certainly willing to admit that a hybrid rationalist constructivism cannot incorporate every aspect of its constituent paradigms. For one thing, these paradigms have a lot of epistemological and methodological baggage that must be shed in order to merge the two; I cannot, for instance, imagine a radically individualistic positivist and consummate practitioner of "as if" theorizing, such as Milton Friedman, suddenly coming to work with the radically collectivist, hermeneutic, and anti-foundational John Gerard Ruggie. Only the *core* elements of both theories are compatible, and it remains to be seen whether rational choice scholars and constructivists are too attached to their ancillary assumptions to undertake such a merger. I suspect that methodological spats between qualitative and quantitative researchers would also come to the fore in any combination of rational choice and constructivism, even when both parties entered with the best intentions.

Yet I claim that we ought to run these risks, for evolutionary game theory work already being done at the intersection of constructivism and rational choice suggests the great power of the approach to explain substantive phenomena in new and revealing ways. Axelrod's work on *The Evolution of Cooperation* (1984) is an example of one such work. Though not consciously a constructivist piece, Axelrod's argument is one for the creation of population-wide behavioral norms from the combination of individual-level interactions and system-level structuring of those interactions. He finds that, in the habitat of the non-cooperative Prisoner's Dilemma game, cooperative strategies achieve superior fitness to any other simple strategy and can evolve to dominate the population, so long as interaction between individual agents is iterated for a sufficiently long period of time and those agents have a relatively low discount rate on future

earnings. Stated simply, a structural-level property of repeated interaction can cause cooperative norms to evolve and spread by individual-level interaction throughout the population. Axelrod's later work is even more explicitly normative; in one piece, for instance, he finds that "meta-norms" of punishment are necessary (and can evolve) to sustain cooperation in sequential, non-repeated Prisoner's Dilemma games (Axelrod 1986).

This essay can be but a brief view into the possibilities latent in the coordination of constructivist and paradigms of social research. Yet I have outlined the weaknesses inherent in each independent research program, and shown that these weaknesses are complementary with the other program's strengths. I have given examples of fruitful cross-pollinations between these schools in the past. I have demonstrated that many fears of conflict between the two paradigms are not rooted in core differences, and have been greatly exaggerated. Finally, I have demonstrated that work in this area is, for all practical purposes, underway in the form of evolutionary game theory, and that this research has yielded tremendously valuable insights into social interaction. I close with the hope that the links between these two paradigms will only grow in the future, to the benefit of scholars in International Relations and those undergraduate students whom we train to see the world through our theories.

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