

Chapter 5

Realism

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Reader's Guide

Realism is the dominant theory of International Relations. Why? Because it provides the most powerful explanation for the state of war which is the regular condition of life in the international system. This is the bold claim made by realists in defence of their tradition, a claim which will be critically examined in this chapter. The second section will ask whether there is one Realism or a variety of Realisms. The argument presented below suggests that despite important differences, particularly between classical and structural

realism, it is possible to identify a shared core set of assumptions and ideas. Section three outlines these common elements, which we identify as self-help, statism, and survival. In the final section, we return to the question how far Realism is relevant for explaining or understanding the globalization of world politics. Although there are many voices claiming that a new set of actors and forces are collectively challenging the Westphalian sovereign state system, realists are generally sceptical of these claims, arguing that the same basic patterns that have shaped international politics in the past remain just as relevant today.

Introduction: the timeless wisdom of Realism

The story of Realism most often begins with a mythical tale of the idealist or utopian writers of the inter-war period (1919–39). Writing in the aftermath of the First World War, the 'idealists', a term that realist writers have retrospectively imposed on the inter-war scholars, focused much of their attention on understanding the cause of war so as to find a remedy for its existence. Yet according to the realists, the inter-war scholars' approach was flawed in a number of respects. They, for example, ignored the role of power, overestimated the degree to which human beings were rational, mistakenly believed that nation-states shared a set of common interests, and were overly optimistic that humankind could overcome the scourge of war. The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 confirmed, for the realists at least, the inadequacies of the idealists' approach to studying international politics.

A new approach, one based on the timeless insights of Realism, replaced the discredited idealist approach.¹ Histories of the academic field of International Relations describe a Great Debate that took place in the late 1930s and early 1940s between the inter-war idealists and a new generation of realist writers, which included E. H. Carr, Hans J. Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr, and others, who all emphasized the ubiquity of power and the competitive nature of politics among nations. The standard account of the Great Debate is that the realists emerged victorious, and the rest of the International Relations story is, in many respects, a footnote to Realism.² It is important to note, however, that at its inception, there was a need for Realism to define itself against an alleged 'idealist' position. From 1939 to the present, leading theorists and policy-makers have continued to view the world through realist lenses. Realism taught American leaders to focus on interests rather than ideology, to seek peace through strength, and to recognize that great powers can coexist even if they have antithetical values and beliefs. The fact that Realism offers something of a 'manual' for maximizing the interests of the state in a hostile environment explains in part why it remains the dominant tradition in the study of world politics. This also helps to explain why alternative perspectives (see Ch.10) must of necessity engage with, and attempt to go beyond, Realism.

The theory of Realism that prevailed after the Second World War is often claimed to rest on an older, classical

tradition of thought. Indeed, many contemporary realist writers often claim to be part of an ancient tradition of thought that includes such illustrious figures as Thucydides (c.460–406BC), Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78). The insights that these realists offered on the way in which state leaders should conduct themselves in the realm of international politics are often grouped under the doctrine of *raison d'état*, or reason of state. Together, writers associated with *raison d'état* are seen as providing a set of maxims to leaders on how to conduct their foreign affairs so as to ensure the security of the state.

According to the historian Friedrich Meinecke, *raison d'état* is the fundamental principle of international conduct, the State's First Law of Motion. It tells the statesman what he must do to preserve the health and strength of the State³ (1957: 1). Most importantly, the state, which is identified as the key actor in international politics, must pursue power, and it is the duty of the statesperson to calculate rationally the most appropriate steps that should be taken so as to perpetuate the life of the state in a hostile and threatening environment. For realists of all stripes, the survival of the state can never be guaranteed, because the use of force culminating in war is a legitimate instrument of statecraft. As we will see, the assumption that the state is the principal actor, coupled with the view that the environment which states inhabit is a perilous place, helps to define the essential core of Realism. There is, however, one issue in particular that theorists associated with *raison d'état*, and classical realism more generally, were concerned with; that is, the role, if any, that morals and ethics occupy in international politics.

Realists are sceptical of the idea that universal moral principles exist and, therefore, warn state leaders against sacrificing their own self-interests in order to adhere to some indeterminate notion of 'ethical' conduct. Moreover, realists argue that the need for survival requires state leaders to distance themselves from traditional morality which attaches a positive value to caution, piety, and the greater good of humankind as a whole. Machiavelli argued that these principles were positively harmful if adhered to by state leaders. It was imperative that state leaders learned a different kind of morality which accorded not to traditional Christian virtues but to political necessity and

prudence. Proponents of *raison d'état* often speak of a dual moral standard: one moral standard for individual citizens living inside the state and a different standard for the state in its external relations with other states. Justification for the two moral standards stems from the fact that the condition of international politics often make it necessary for state leaders to act in a manner (for example, cheating, lying, killing) that would be entirely unacceptable for the individual. But before we reach the conclusion that Realism is completely immoral, it is important to add that proponents of *raison d'état* argue that the state itself represents a moral force, for it is the existence of the state that creates the possibility for an ethical political community to exist domestically. Preserving the life of the state and the ethical community it envelops becomes a moral duty of the statesperson. Thus it is not the case that realists are unethical, rather they find that sometimes it is kind to be cruel⁴ (Desch 2003).

Although the advanced student might be able to detect some subtle differences, it is fair to say that there is a significant degree of continuity between classical realism and modern variants. Indeed, the three core elements that we identify with Realism—statism, survival, and self-help—are present in the work of a classical realist such as Thucydides and structural realists such as Kenneth Waltz.

Realism identifies the group as the fundamental unit of political analysis. When Thucydides and Machiavelli were writing, the basic unit was the polis or city-state, but since the Peace of Westphalia (1648) realists consider the sovereign state as the principle actor in international politics. This is often referred to as the state-centric assumption of Realism. Statism is the term given to the idea of the state as the legitimate representative of the collective will of the people. The legitimacy of the state is what enables it to exercise authority within its domestic borders. Yet outside the boundaries of the state, realists argue that a condition of anarchy exists. By anarchy what is most often meant is that international politics takes place in an arena that has no overarching central authority above the individual collection of sovereign states. Thus rather than necessarily denoting complete chaos and lawlessness, the concept of anarchy is used by realists to emphasize the point that the international realm is distinguished by the lack of a central authority.

Following from this, realists draw a sharp distinction between domestic and international politics. Thus while

Hans J. Morgenthau argues that 'international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power'; he goes to great lengths to illustrate the qualitatively different result this struggle has on international politics as compared to domestic politics (1948) 1955: 25). A prominent explanation that realists provide for this difference in behaviour relates to the different organizational structure of domestic and international politics. Realists argue that the basic structure of international politics is one of anarchy in that each of the independent sovereign states consider themselves to be their own highest authority and do not recognize a higher power above them. Conversely, domestic politics is often described as a hierarchical structure in which different political actors stand in various relations of super- and subordination.

It is largely on the basis of how realists depict the international environment that they conclude that the first priority for state leaders is to ensure the survival of their state. Under anarchy, the survival of the state cannot be guaranteed. Realists correctly assume that all states wish to perpetuate their existence. Looking back at history, however, realists note that the actions of some states resulted in other states losing their existence (for example, Poland has experienced this fate four times in the past three centuries). This is partly explained in light of the power differentials of states. Intuitively, states with more power stand a better chance of surviving than states with less power. Power is crucial to the realist lexicon and traditionally has been defined narrowly in military strategic terms. Yet irrespective of how much power a state may possess, the core national interest of all states must be survival. Like the pursuit of power, the promotion of the national interest is, according to realists, an iron law of necessity.

Self-help is the principle of action in an anarchical system where there is no global government. According to Realism, each state actor is responsible for ensuring its own well-being and survival. Realists do not believe it is prudent for a state to entrust its safety and survival on another actor or international institution, such as the United Nations. States, in short, should not depend on other states or institutions to ensure their own security. Unlike in domestic politics, there is no emergency number that states can dial when they are in mortal danger.

You may at this point be asking what options are available to states to ensure their own security. Consistent with the principle of self-help, if a state feels threatened,

it should seek to augment its own power capabilities by engaging, for example, in a military arms build-up. Yet this may prove to be insufficient for a number of smaller states who feel threatened by a much larger state. This brings us to one of the crucial mechanisms that realists throughout the ages have considered to be essential to preserving the liberty of states—the **balance of power**. Although various meanings have been attributed to the concept of the balance of power, the most common definition holds that if the survival of a state or a number of weaker states is threatened by a hegemonic state or coalition of stronger states, they should join forces, establish a formal alliance, and seek to preserve their own independence by checking the power of the opposing side. The mechanism of the balance of power seeks to ensure an equilibrium of power in which case no one state or coalition of states is in a position to dominate all the others. The cold war competition between the East and West, as institutionalized through the formal alliance system of the **Warsaw Pact** and the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** (NATO), provides a prominent example of the balance of power mechanism in action.

The peaceful conclusion of the cold war caught many realists off guard. Given that many realists claim a scientific basis to their causal account of the world, it is not surprising that their inability to foresee the dynamics that led to the end of the bipolar cold war system sparked the publication of several powerful critiques of realist theory.

Box 5.1 Realism and intra-state war

Since the end of the cold war intra-state war (internal conflicts in one state) have become more prevalent than inter-state war. Since realists generally focus on the latter type of conflict, critics contend that Realism is irrelevant to the predicament of the global South that has been wracked by nationalist and ethnic wars. But this is not the case and realists have turned their attention to analyzing the causes of intra-state war and recommending solutions.

Structural realists maintain that when the sovereign authority of the state collapses, such as in Somalia and Haiti, internal wars happen for many of the same reasons that wars between states happen. In a fundamental sense, the dichotomy between domestic order and international disorder breaks down when the state loses the legitimate authority to rule. The resulting anarchy inside the state is analogous to the anarchy among states. In such a situation, realist theory contends that the different groups inside the state will vie for power in an attempt to gain a sense of security. Barry Posen (1993) has applied the key realist concept of the **security dilemma** to explain the political dynamics that result when different ethnic, religious, and cultural groups suddenly find themselves responsible for their own

(history) and space (geopolitics). Thus while political conditions have changed since the end of the cold war, realists believe that the world continues to operate according to the logic of Realism.

The question whether Realism does embody 'timeless truths' about politics will be returned to in the conclusion of the chapter. In the following section we will begin to unravel Realism in order to reveal the way in which the tradition has evolved over the last twenty-five centuries. After considering the main tributaries that flow into the realist stream of thinking, the third section will establish a core set of realist principles to which all realists could subscribe.

One Realism, or many?

The intellectual exercise of articulating a unified theory of Realism has been criticized by writers who are both sympathetic and critical of the tradition (M. J. Smith 1986; Doyle 1997). The belief that there is not one Realism, but many, leads logically to a delineation of different types of Realism. A number of thematic classifications have been offered to differentiate Realism into a variety of distinct categories. The most simple distinction is a form of periodization that differentiates realism into three historical periods: classical realism (up to the twentieth century), which is frequently depicted as beginning with Thucydides' text on the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta and incorporating the ideas of many of those included in the classic canon of Western political thought; modern realism (1939–79), which typically takes the so-called First Great Debate between the scholars of the inter-war period and a new wave of scholars who began to enter the field immediately before and after the Second World War as its point of departure; and structural or neo-realism (1979 onwards), which officially entered the picture following the publication of Kenneth Waltz's landmark text *Theory of International Politics* (1979). While these different periods suggest a neat historical sequence, they are problematic in so far as they close down the important question about divergence within each historical phase. Rather than opt for the neat but intellectually unsatisfactory system of historical periodization, we outline below our own representation of realisms that makes important

Key Points

- Realism has been the dominant theory of world politics since the beginning of academic International Relations.
- Outside the academy, Realism has a much longer history in the work of classical political theorists such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau.
- The unifying theme around which all realist thinking converges is that states find themselves in the shadow of anarchy such that their security cannot be taken for granted.
- At the end of the millennium, Realism continues to attract academicians and inform policy-makers, although in the period since the end of the cold war we have seen heightened criticism of realist assumptions.

connections with existing categories deployed by other thinkers in the field. A summary of the varieties of Realism outlined below is contained in Table 5.1.

Classical Realism

The classical realist lineage begins with Thucydides' representation of power politics as a law of human behaviour. The drive for power and the will to dominate are held to be fundamental aspects of human nature. The behaviour of the state as a self-seeking egoist is understood to be merely a reflection of the characteristics of the people that comprise the state. It is human nature that explains why international politics is necessarily power politics. This reduction of Realism to a condition of human nature is one that frequently reappears in the leading works of the realist canon, most famously in the work of the high priest of post-war Realism, Hans J. Morgenthau. Classical realists argue that it is from the nature of man that the essential features of international politics, such as competition, fear, and war can be explained. Morgenthau notes, 'politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature' (Morgenthau [1948] 1955: 4). The important point for Morgenthau is, first, to recognize that these laws exist and, second, to devise the most appropriate policies that are consistent with the basic fact that human beings are flawed

key realist principles. The Case Study reconstructs the dialogue between the Athenian leaders who arrived on the island of Melos to assert their right of conquest over the islanders and the response this provoked. In short, what the Athenians are asserting over the Melians is the logic of power politics. Because of their vastly superior military force, they are able to present a *fait accompli* to the Melians: either submit peacefully or be exterminated. The Melians for their part try to buck the logic of power politics, appealing in turn with arguments grounded in justice, God, and their allies the Spartans. As the dialogue makes clear, the Melians were forced to submit to the realist iron law that 'the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept.'



MELIANS. So you do not agree to our being neutral, friends instead of enemies, but allies of neither side?
ATHENIANS. No... if we were on friendly terms with you, our subjects would regard that as a sign of weakness in us, whereas your hatred is evidence of our power... So that by conquering you we shall increase not only the size but the security of our empire.

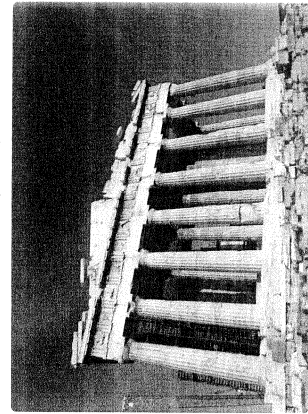
MELIANS. But do you think there is no security for you in what we suggest? For here again, since you will not let us mention justice, but tell us to give in to your interests, we, too, must tell you what our interests are and, if yours and ours happen to coincide, we must try to persuade you of the fact. Is it not certain that you will make enemies of all states who are at present neutral, when they see what is happening here and naturally conclude that in course of time you will attack them too? ... Yet we know that in war, fortune sometimes makes the odds more level.

ATHENIANS. Hope, that comforter in danger!

MELIANS. We trust that the gods will give us fortune as good as yours, because we are standing for what is right against what is wrong, and as for what we lack in power, we trust that it will be made up for by our alliance with the Spartans, who are bound, if for no other reason, then for honour's sake, and because we are their kinsman, to come to our help.

ATHENIANS. So far as the favour of the gods is concerned, we think we have as much right to that as you have... Our opinion of the gods and our knowledge of men lead us to conclude that it is a general and necessary law of nature to rule whatever one can. This is not a law that we made ourselves; nor were we the first to act upon it when it was made. We found it already in existence, and we shall leave it to exist forever among those who come after us. We are merely acting in accordance with it, and we know that you or anybody else with the same power as ours would be acting in precisely the same way. And therefore, so far as the gods are concerned, we see no good reason why we should fear to be at a disadvantage. But with regard to your views about Sparta and

(continued)



ATHENIANS. Then we on our side will use no fine phrases saying, for example, that we have a right to our empire, because we defeated the Persians... And we ask you on your side not to imagine that you will influence us by saying that you, though a colony of Sparta, have not joined Sparta in the war, or that you have never done us any harm... you know as well as we do that, when these matters are discussed by practical people, the standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel and that in fact the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept.

MELIANS. Then in our view (since you force us to leave justice out of account and to confine ourselves to self-interest)... you should not destroy a principle that is to the general good of all men—namely, that in the case of all who fall into danger there should be such a thing as fair play and just dealing.

ATHENIANS. We do not want any trouble in bringing you into our empire, and we want you to be spared for the good both of yourselves and of ourselves.

MELIANS. And how could it be just as good for us to be the slaves as for you to be the masters?

ATHENIANS. You by giving in, would save yourselves from disaster, we by not destroying you, would be able to profit from you.

'Big idea'

International politics is driven by an endless struggle for power which has its roots in human nature. Justice, law, and society have either no place or are circumscribed.

Political realism recognizes that principles are subordinated to policies; the ultimate skill of the state leader is to accept, and adapt to, the changing power political configurations in world politics.

Politics is governed by laws that are created by human nature. The mechanism we use to understand international politics is through the concept of interests, defined in terms of power.

It is not human nature but the anarchical system which fosters fear, jealousy, suspicion, and insecurity.

Anarchy leads to a logic of self-help in which states seek to maximize their security. The most stable distribution of power in the system is bipolarity.

The anarchical, self-help system compels states to maximize their relative power position.

The systemic account of world politics provided by structural realism is incomplete. It needs to be supplemented with better accounts of unit level variables such as how power is perceived, and how leadership is exercised.

Key thinkers

Thucydides
(c. 430–406 BC)

The Prince

Morgenthau (1948)
Politics among Nations

Rousseau (c. 1750)
The State of War

Waltz (1979)
Theory of International Politics

Mearsheimer
(2001)
Tragedy of Great Power Politics

Zakaria (1998)
From Wealth to Power

Type of Realism

Classical realism
(Human nature)

Structural realism
(International system)

Neoclassical Realism

Table 5.1 A taxonomy of realisms

creatures. For both Thucydides and Morgenthau, the essential continuity of the power-seeking behaviour of states is rooted in the biological drives of human beings.

Another distinguishing characteristic of classical realism is its adherents' belief in the primordial character of power and ethics. Classical realism is fundamentally about the struggle for belonging, a struggle that is often violent. Patriotic virtue is required in order for communities to survive in this historic battle between good and evil, a virtue that long predates the emergence of sovereignty-based notions of community in the mid-seventeenth century. Classical realists therefore differ from contemporary realists in the sense that they engaged with moral philosophy and sought to reconstruct an understanding of virtue in light of practice and historical circumstance. Two classical realists who wrestled with the degree to which state leaders could be guided by ethical considerations were Thucydides and Machiavelli.

Thucydides was the historian of the Peloponnesian War, a conflict between two great powers in the ancient Greek world, Athens and Sparta. Thucydides' work has

been admired by subsequent generations of realists for the insights he raised about many of the perennial issues of international politics. Thucydides' explanation of the underlying cause of the war was 'the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta' (1.23). This is considered to be a classic example of the impact that the anarchical structure of international politics has on the behaviour of state actors. On this reading, Thucydides makes it clear that Sparta's national interest, like that of all states, was survival, and the changing distribution of power represented a direct threat to its existence. Sparta was, therefore, compelled by necessity to go to war in order to forestall being vanquished by Athens. Thucydides also makes it clear that Athens felt equally compelled to pursue power in order to preserve the empire it had acquired. The famous Athenian leader, Pericles, claimed to be acting on the basis of the most fundamental of human motivations: ambition, fear, and self-interest.

One of the significant episodes of the war between Athens and Sparta is known as the 'Melian dialogue' and represents a fascinating illustration of a number of

(Continued)

your confidence that she, out of a sense of honour, will come to your aid, we must say that we congratulate you on your simplicity, but do not envy you your folly . . . of all people we know the Spartans are most conspicuous for believing that what they like doing is honourable and what suits their interests is just.

MELIANS. But this is the very point where we can feel most sure. Their own self-interest will make them refuse to betray their own colonists, the Melians.

ATHENIANS. You seem to forget that, if one follows one's self-interest one wants to be safe, whereas the path of justice and honour involves one in danger. . . . Do not be led astray by a false sense of honour. . . . You, if you take the right view, will be careful to avoid this. And, when you are allowed to choose between war and safety, you will not be so insensitively arrogant as to make

the wrong choice. You will see that there is nothing disgraceful in giving way to the greatest city in Hellas, when she is offering you such reasonable terms—alliance on a tribute-paying basis and living way to the greatest city in Hellas, when she is offering you liberty to enjoy your own property. This is the safe rule—to stand up to one's equals, to behave with deference to one's superiors, and to treat one's inferiors with moderation.

MELIANS. Our decision, Athenians, is just the same as it was at first. We are not prepared to give up in a short moment the liberty which our city has enjoyed from its foundation for 700 years.

ATHENIANS. You seem to us . . . to see uncertainties as realities, simply because you would like them to be so.

(This is an edited extract from *Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin Classics, 1954): 360–5)

to live, to propagate, and to dominate are common to all men' (Morgenthau 1955: 30). How is a leader supposed to act in a world animated by such dark forces? The answer given by Machiavelli is that all obligations and treaties with other states must be disregarded if the security of the community is under threat. Moreover, imperial expansion is legitimate as it is a means of gaining greater security. Other classical realists, however, advocate a more temperate understanding of moral conduct. Mid-twentieth-century realists such as Butterfield, Carr, Morgenthau, and Wolfers believed that anarchy could be mitigated by wise leadership and the pursuit of the national interest in ways that are compatible with international order. Taking their lead from Thucydides, they recognized that acting purely on the basis of power and self-interest without any consideration of moral and ethical principles frequently results in self-defeating policies. After all, as Thucydides showed, Athens suffered an epic defeat while following the realist tenet of self-interest.

Structural Realism

Structural realists concur that international politics is essentially a struggle for power but they do not endorse the classical realist assumption that this is a result of human nature. Instead, structural realists attribute security competition and inter-state conflict to the lack of an overarching authority above states and the relative distribution of power in the international system. Waltz defined the structure of the international system in terms of three elements—organizing principle, differentiation of units, and distribution of capabilities. Waltz identifies two dif-

ferent organizing principles: anarchy, which corresponds to the decentralized realm of international politics, and hierarchy, which is the basis of domestic order. He argues that the units of the international system are functionally similar sovereign states, hence unit-level variation is irrelevant in explaining international outcomes. It is the third tier, the distribution of capabilities across units, that is, according to Waltz, of fundamental importance to understanding crucial international outcomes. According to structural realists, the relative distribution of power in the international system is the key independent variable to understanding important international outcomes such as war and peace, alliance politics, and the balance of power. Structural realists are interested in providing a rank-ordering of states so as to be able to differentiate and count the number of great powers that exist at any particular point in time. The number of great powers, in turn, determines the structure of the international system. For example, during the cold war from 1945 to 1989 there were two great powers—the United States and the Soviet Union—that constituted the bipolar international system.

How does the international distribution of power impact the behaviour of states, particularly their power-seeking behaviour? In the most general sense, Waltz argues that states, especially the great powers, have to be sensitive to the capabilities of other states. The possibility that any state may use force to advance its interests results in all states being worried about their survival. According to Waltz, power is a means to the end of security. In a significant passage, Waltz writes 'because power is a possibly useful means, sensible statesmen try to have an appropriate amount of it'. He adds,

assumptions of structural realism and incorporated a number of additional factors located at the individual and domestic level into their explanation of international politics. While systemic factors are recognized to be an important influence on the behaviour of states, so are factors such as the perceptions of state leaders, state–society relationships, and the motivation of states. In attempting to build a bridge between structural and unit level factors (which many classical realists emphasized), this group of scholars has been characterized by Gideon Rose (1998) as 'neoclassical realists'. According to Stephen Walt, the causal logic of neoclassical realism 'places domestic politics as an intervening variable between the distribution of power and foreign policy behavior' (Walt 2002: 211).

One important intervening variable is leaders themselves, namely how they perceive the international distribution of power. There is no objective, independent reading of the distribution of power; rather, what matters is how state leaders derive an understanding of the distribution of power. While structural realists assume that all states have a similar set of interests, neoclassical realists such as Randall Schweller (1996) argue that historically this is not the case. He argues that with respect to Waltz, the assumption that all states have an interest in security results in neo-realism exhibiting a profoundly status quo bias. Schweller returns to the writings of realists such as Morgenthau and Kissinger to remind us of the key distinction that they made between status quo and revisionist states. Neoclassical realists would argue that the fact that Germany was a revisionist state in the 1930s and a status quo state since the end of the Second World War is of fundamental importance to understanding its role in the international system. Not only do states differ in terms of their interests, but they also differ in terms of their ability to extract and direct resources from the societies that they rule. Fareed Zakaria (1998) introduces the intervening variable of state strength into his theory of state-centred realism. State strength is defined as the ability of a state to mobilize and direct the resources at its disposal in the pursuit of particular interests. Neoclassical realists argue that different types of state possess different capacities to translate the various elements of national power into state power. Thus, contrary to Waltz, all states cannot be treated as 'like units'.

in crucial situations, however, the ultimate concern of states is not for power but for security' (Waltz 1989: 40). In other words, rather than being power maximizers, states, according to Waltz, are security maximizers. Waltz argues that power maximization often proves to be dysfunctional because it triggers a counter-balancing coalition of states.

A different account of the power dynamics that operate in the anarchic system is provided by John Mearsheimer's theory of offensive realism, which is another variant of structural realism. While sharing many of the same basic assumptions with Waltz's structural realist theory, which is frequently termed defensive realism, Mearsheimer differs from Waltz when it comes to describing the behaviour of states. Most fundamentally, 'offensive realism parts company with defensive realism over the question of how much power states want' (Mearsheimer 2001: 21). According to Mearsheimer, the structure of the international system compels states to maximize their relative power position. Under anarchy, he agrees that self-help is the basic principle of action. Yet he also argues that not only do all states possess some offensive military capability, but there is a great deal of uncertainty about the intentions of other states. Consequently, Mearsheimer concludes that there are no satisfied or status quo states; rather, all states are continuously searching for opportunities to gain power at the expense of other states. Contrary to Waltz, Mearsheimer argues that states recognize that the best path to peace is to accumulate more power than anyone else. Indeed, the ideal position, although one that Mearsheimer argues is virtually impossible to achieve, is to be the global hegemon of the international system. Yet because Mearsheimer believes that global hegemony is impossible, he concludes that the world is condemned to perpetual great power competition.

Contemporary realist challenges to structural realism

While offensive realism makes an important contribution to realism, some contemporary realists are sceptical of the notion that the international distribution of power alone can explain the behaviour of states. Since the end of the cold war a group of scholars has attempted to move beyond the parsimonious

Given the varieties of Realism that exist, it is hardly surprising that the overall coherence of the realist tradition of inquiry has been questioned. The answer to the question of 'coherence' is, of course, contingent upon how strict the criteria are for judging the continuities which underpin a particular theory. Here it is perhaps a mistake to understand traditions as a single stream of thought, handed down in a neatly wrapped package from one generation of realists to another. Instead, it is preferable to think of living traditions like Realism as the embodiment of both continuities and conflicts. Despite the different strands running through the tradition, there is a sense in which all realists share a common set of propositions.

The essential Realism

The previous paragraphs have argued that Realism is a theoretical broad church, embracing a variety of authors and texts. Despite the numerous denominations, we argue that all realists subscribe to the following three *5s*: statism, survival, self-help. Each of these elements is considered in more detail in the subsections below.

Statism

For realists, the state is the main actor and sovereignty is its distinguishing trait. The meaning of the sovereign state is inextricably bound up with the use of force. In terms of its internal dimension, to illustrate this relationship between violence and the state we need to look no further than Max Weber's famous definition of the state as 'the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory' (M. J. Smith 1986: 23).³ Within this territorial space, **sovereignty** means that the state has supreme authority to make and enforce laws. This is the basis of the unwritten contract between individuals and the state. According to Hobbes, for example, we trade our liberty in return for a guarantee of security. Once security has been established, **civil society** can begin. But in the absence of security, there can be no art, no culture, no society. The first move, then, for the realist is to organize power domestically. Only after power has been organized, can community begin.

Realist international theory appears to operate according to the assumption that, domestically, the problem of

Key Points

- There is a lack of consensus in the literature as to whether we can meaningfully speak about Realism as a single coherent theory.
- There are good reasons for delineating different types of Realism.
- Structural realism divides into two camps: those who argue that states are security maximizers (defensive realism) and those who argue that states are power maximizers (offensive realism).
- Neoclassical realists bring individual and unit variation back into the theory.

order and security is solved. However, on the 'outside', in the relations among independent sovereign states, insecurities, dangers, and threats to the very existence of the state loom large. Realists largely explain this on the basis that the very condition for order and security—namely, the existence of a sovereign—is missing from the international realm.

Realists claim that in anarchy, states compete with other states for power and security. The nature of the competition is viewed in zero-sum terms; in other words, more for one actor means less for another. This competitive logic of power politics makes agreement on universal principles difficult, apart from the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other sovereign states. But even this principle, designed to facilitate coexistence, is suspended by realists who argue that in practice non-intervention does not apply in relations between great powers and their 'near-abroad'. As evidenced by the most recent behaviour of the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq, powerful states are able to overturn the non-intervention principle on the grounds of national security and international order.

Given that the first move of the state is to organize power domestically, and the second is to accumulate power internationally, it is self-evidently important to consider in more depth what realists mean by their ubiquitous fusion of politics with power. It is one thing to say that international politics is a struggle for power, but this merely begs the question of what realists mean by power. Morgenthau offers the following definition of power: 'man's control over the minds and actions of other men'

([1948] 1955: 26). There are two important points that realists make about the elusive concept of power. First, power is a relational concept; one does not exercise power in a vacuum, but in relation to another entity. Second, power is a relative concept; calculations need to be made not only about one's own power capabilities, but about the power that other state actors possess. Yet the task of accurately assessing the power of states is infinitely complex, and often is reduced to counting the number of troops, tanks, aircraft, and naval ships a country possesses in the belief that this translates in the ability to get other actors to do something they would not otherwise do.

There have been a number of criticisms made of how realists define and measure power, many of which are discussed in later chapters. Critics argue that Realism has been purchased at a discount precisely because its currency, power, has remained under-theorized and inconsistently used. Simply by asserting that states seek power provides no answer to crucial questions. Why do states struggle for power? Surely power is a means to an end rather than an end in itself? Is there not a difference between the mere possession of power and the ability to change the behaviour of others?

Structural realists have attempted to bring more conceptual clarity to bear on the meaning of power. Waltz tries to overcome the problem by shifting the focus from power to capabilities. He suggests that capabilities can be ranked according to their strength in the following areas: size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence' (1979: 131). The difficulty here is that resource strength does not always lead to military victory. For example, in the 1967 Six Day War between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, the distribution of resources clearly favoured the Arab coalition and yet the supposedly weaker side annihilated its enemies' forces and seized their territory. The definition of power as capabilities is even less successful at explaining the relative economic success of Japan over China. A more sophisticated understanding of power would focus on the ability of a state to control or influence its environment in situations that are not necessarily conflictual.

An additional weakness with the realist treatment of power concerns its exclusive focus upon state power. For realists, states are the only actors that really 'count'. Transnational corporations, international organizations, and ideologically driven terrorist networks, such as

Al Qaeda, rise and fall but the state is the one permanent feature in the landscape of modern global politics. Yet many today question the adequacy of the state-centric assumption of realism.

Survival

The second principle that unites realists is the assertion that, in international politics, the pre-eminent goal is survival. Although there is an ambiguity in the works of the realists as to whether the accumulation of power is an end in itself, one would think that there is no dissenting from the argument that the ultimate concern of states is for security. Survival is held to be a precondition for attaining all other goals, whether these involve conquest or merely independence. According to Waltz, 'beyond the survival motive, the aims of states may be endlessly varied' (1979: 91). Yet, as we mentioned in the previous section, a recent controversy among structural realists has arisen over the question of whether states are in fact principally security or power maximizers. Defensive realists such as Waltz argue that states have security as their principal interest and therefore only seek the requisite amount of power to ensure their own survival. According to this view, states are profoundly defensive actors and will not seek to gain greater amounts of power if that means jeopardizing their own security. Offensive realists such as Mearsheimer argue that the ultimate goal of all states is to achieve a hegemonic position in the international system. States, according to this view, always desire more power and are willing, if the opportunity arises, to alter the existing distribution of power even if such an action may jeopardize their own security. In terms of survival, defensive realists hold that the existence of status quo powers lessens the competition for power while offensive realists argue that the competition is always keen because revisionist states and aspiring hegemons are always willing to take risks with the aim of improving their position in the international system.

Niccolo Machiavelli tried to make a 'science' out of his reflections on the art of survival. His short and engaging book, *The Prince*, was written with the explicit intention of codifying a set of maxims that will enable leaders to maintain their hold on power. In important respects, we find two related Machiavellian themes recurring in the writings of modern realists, both of which derive from the idea that the realm of international politics requires different moral and political rules from those which apply

in domestic politics. The task of understanding the real nature of international politics, and the need to protect the state at all costs (even if this may mean the sacrifice of one's own citizens) places a heavy burden on the shoulders of state leaders. In the words of Henry Kissinger, the academic realist who became Secretary of State during the Nixon Presidency, 'a nation's survival is its first and ultimate responsibility; it cannot be compromised or put to risk' (1977: 204). Their guide must be an **ethic of responsibility**: the careful weighing up of consequences; the realization that individual acts of an immoral kind might have to be taken for the greater good. By way of an example, think of the ways in which governments frequently suspend the legal and political rights of 'suspected terrorists' in view of the threat they pose to **national security**. An ethic of responsibility is frequently used as a justification for breaking the laws of war, as in the case of the United States decision to drop nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The principal difficulty with the realist formulation of an 'ethics of responsibility' is that, while instructing leaders to consider the consequences of their actions, it does not provide a guide to how state leaders should weigh the consequences (M. J. Smith 1986: 51).

Not only does Realism provide an alternative moral code for state leaders, it suggests a wider objection to the whole enterprise of bringing ethics into international politics. Starting from the assumption that each state has its own particular values and beliefs, realists argue that the state is the supreme good and there can be no community beyond borders. This moral relativism has generated a substantial body of criticism, particularly from liberal theorists who endorse the notion of universal human rights. For a fuller discussion see Ch. 6.

Self-help

Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* (1979) brought to the realist tradition a deeper understanding of the international system within which states coexist. Unlike many other realists, Waltz argued that international politics was not unique because of the regularity of war and conflict, since this was also familiar in domestic politics. The key difference between domestic and international orders lies in their structure. In the domestic polity, citizens do not have to defend themselves. In the international system, there is no higher authority to prevent and counter the use of force. Security can therefore only be realized through self-help. In an anarchic structure,

'self-help is necessarily the principle of action' (Waltz 1979: 111). But in the course of providing for one's own security, the state in question will automatically be fueling the insecurity of other states.

The term given to this spiral of insecurity is the **security dilemma**. According to Wheeler and Booth, security dilemmas exist 'when the military preparations of one state create an unresolvable uncertainty in the mind of another as to whether those preparations are for "defensive" purposes only (to enhance its security in an uncertain world) or whether they are for offensive purposes (to change the status quo to its advantage)' (1992: 30). This scenario suggests that one state's quest for security is often another state's source of insecurity. States find it very difficult to trust one another and often view the intentions of others in a negative light. Thus the military preparations of one state are likely to be matched by neighbouring states. The irony is that at the end of the day, states often feel no more secure than before they undertook measures to enhance their own security.

In a self-help system, structural realists argue that the balance of power will emerge even in the absence of a conscious policy to maintain the balance (i.e. prudent statecraft). Waltz argues that balances of power result irrespective of the intentions of any particular state. In an anarchic system populated by states who seek to perpetuate themselves, alliances will be formed that seek to check and balance the power against threatening states. Classical realists, however, are more likely to emphasize the crucial role state leaders and diplomats play in maintaining the balance of power. In other words, the balance of power is not natural or inevitable, it must be constructed.

There is a lively debate among realists concerning the stability of the balance of power system. This is especially the case today in that many argue that the balance of power has been replaced by an unbalanced **unipolar order**. It is questionable whether other countries will actively attempt to balance against the United States as structural realism would predict. Whether it is the con-trived balance of the Concert of Europe in the early nineteenth century, or the more fortuitous balance of the cold war, balances of power are broken—either through war or peaceful change—and new balances emerge. What the perennial collapsing of the balance of power demonstrates is that states are at best able to mitigate the worst consequences of the security dilemma but are not able to escape it. The reason for this terminal condition is the absence of trust in international relations.

Historically, realists have illustrated the lack of trust among states by reference to the parable of the 'stag hunt'. In *Mans, the State and War*, Kenneth Waltz revisits Rousseau's parable:

Assume that five men who have acquired a rudimentary ability to speak and to understand each other happen to come together at a time when all of them suffer from hunger. The hunger of each will be satisfied by the fifth part of a stag, so they agree to cooperate in a project to trap one. But also the hunger of any one of them will be satisfied by a hare, so, as a hare comes within reach, one of them grabs it. The defector obtains the means of satisfying his hunger but in doing so permits the stag to escape. His immediate interest prevails over consideration for his fellows.

(1959: 167–8)

Waltz argues that the metaphor of the stag hunt provides a basis for understanding the problem of coordinating the interests of the individual versus the interests of the common good, and the pay-off between short-term interests and long-term interests. In the self-help system of international politics, the logic of self-interest mitigates against the provision of collective goods, such as 'security' or 'free trade'. In the case of the latter, according to the theory of comparative advantage, all states would be wealthier in a world that allowed freedom of goods and services across borders. But individual states, or groups of states like the European Union, can increase their wealth by pursuing protectionist policies providing other states do not respond in kind. Of course the logical outcome is for the remaining states to become protectionist,

Conclusion: Realism and the globalization of world politics

The chapter opened by considering the often repeated realist claim that the pattern of international politics—war interrupted for periods characterized by the preparation for future wars—has remained constant over the preceding twenty-five centuries. Realists have consistently held that the continuities in international relations are more important than the changes, but many find this to be increasingly problematic in the present age of globalization. But the importance of Realism has not been diminished by the dynamics of globalization. It is not clear that economic **interdependence** has made war less likely. The state continues to be the dominant

international trade collapses, and a world recession reduces the wealth of each state. Thus the question is not whether all will be better off through **cooperation**, but rather who will likely gain more than another. It is because of this concern with **relative gains** issues that realists argue that cooperation is difficult to achieve in a self-help system (for a fuller discussion see Ch. 7).

Key Points

- Statism is the centrepiece of Realism. This involves two claims. First, for the theorist, the state is the pre-eminent actor and all other actors in world politics are of lesser significance. Second, state 'sovereignty' signifies the existence of an independent political community, one which has juridical authority over its territory.

- **Key criticism:** Statism is flawed both on empirical (challenges to state power from 'above' and 'below') and normative grounds (the inability of sovereign states to respond to collective global problems such as famine, environmental degradation, and human rights abuses).

- **Survival:** The primary objective of all states is survival; this is the supreme national interest to which all political leaders must adhere.

- **Key criticism:** Are there no limits to what actions a state can take in the name of necessity?

- **Self-help:** No other state or institution can be relied upon to guarantee your survival.

- **Key criticism:** Self-help is not an inevitable consequence of the absence of a world government; self-help is a logic that states have selected. Moreover, there are historical and contemporary examples where states have preferred collective security systems, or forms of regional security communities, in preference to self-help.

unit in world politics. And globalization should not be seen as a process that is disconnected from the distribution of power in the international system. In this sense, this current phase of **globalization** is fundamentally tied to Westernization and, to be even more specific, Americanization.

Not surprisingly, leading realist thinkers have been quick to seize on the apparent convergence between our post-9/11 experience and the cycle of violence predicted by the theory. There were, however, some apparent contradictions in the realist account of the conflict. To begin with, the attacks on the US homeland were committed

by a non-state actor. Had one of the significant norms of the Westphalian order become unhinged, namely, that war happens between sovereign states? Not only was the enemy a global network of Al Qaeda operatives, their goal was unconventional in that they did not seek to conquer territory but challenge by force the ideological supremacy of the West. Set against these anomalies, the leading states in the system were quick to identify the network with certain territorial states—the Taliban government of Afghanistan being the most immediate example, but also other pariah states who allegedly harboured terrorists. The United States was quick to link the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's Iraq with its global war on terror. Moreover, rather than identifying the terrorists as transnational criminals and using police enforcement methods to counter their threat, the USA and its allies defined them as enemies of the state who had to be targeted and defeated using conventional military means.

For realists such as John Gray and Kenneth Waltz, 9/11 was not the beginning of a new era in world politics so much as a case of "business as usual" (see their essays in Booth and Dunne 2002). What matters most, argues Waltz, are the continuities in the structural imbalance of power in the system and the distribution of nuclear weapons. Crises are to be expected because the logic of self-help generates periodic crises. Their analysis is a stark rejoinder to the more idealist defenders of globalization who see a new Pacific world order emerging out of the ashes of the previous order. According to realists, 9/11 was never going to trigger a new era in governance: the coalition of the willing that was forged in the immediate aftermath was, in Waltz's terms, 'a mile wide', but only

Box 5.2 Realism against wars: an unlikely alliance?

Realists are often portrayed as being advocates of an aggressive foreign policy. Such a representation has always lacked credibility. Hans Morgenthau opposed the US war against the North Vietnamese on the grounds that it defied a rational understanding of the national interest. He believed that US goals were not attainable 'without unreasonable moral liabilities and military risks' (M. J. Smith 1986: 158). The US-led war against Iraq in 2003 is the most recent example of Realism's counsel against the use of force. As the intense round of negotiations were underway in the Security Council, in the autumn of 2002, 34 leading realist thinkers co-signed an advert in the *New York Times* entitled 'War with Iraq is NOT in America's National Interest' (original emphasis). John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt developed this position further in early 2004. Why, they asked, had the USA given up on the policy of deterrence which proved to

'an inch deep'. How prophetic those words have proven to be. The war against Iraq was executed by the USA with the UK being the only significant diplomatic and military ally. Not only did most states in the world oppose the war, leading American realists were public in their condemnation (see Box 5.2). Iraq, they argued, could have been deterred from threatening both the security of the United States and its neighbours in the Middle East. Furthermore, a costly military intervention followed by a lengthy occupation in the Middle East has weakened the USA's ability to contain the rising threat from China. In short, the Bush Presidency has not exercised power in a responsible and sensible manner.

Behind the rhetoric of universal values, the USA has used the war to justify a wide range of policy positions that strengthen its economic and military power while undermining various multilateral agreements on arms control, the environment, human rights, and trade.

Realists do not have to situate their theory of world politics in opposition to globalization *per se*; rather, what they offer is a very different conceptualization of the process. What is important about a realist view of globalization is the claim that rudimentary transnational governance is possible but at the same time it is entirely dependent on the distribution of power. Given the preponderance of power that the USA holds, it should not be a surprise that it has been one of the foremost proponents of globalization. The core values of globalization—liberalism, capitalism, and consumerism—are exactly those espoused by the United States. At a deeper cultural level, realists argue that modernity is not, as liberals hope, dissolving the boundaries of difference among the peo-

ple successful during the cold war? They end the article with a bold, and some might say prescient, conclusion

'This war would be one the Bush administration chose to fight but did not have to fight. Even if such a war goes well and has positive long-range consequences, it will still have been unnecessary. And if it goes badly—whether in the form of high U.S. casualties, significant civilian deaths, a heightened risk of terrorism, or increased hatred of the United States in the Arab and Islamic world—then its architects will have even more to answer for.'

(Mearsheimer and Walt 2003: 59)

ples of the world. From classical realists such as Rousseau to structural realists such as Waltz, protagonists have argued that interdependence is as likely to breed 'mutual vulnerability' as peace and prosperity. And while questioning the extent to which the world has become any more interdependent in relative terms, realists insist that the state is not going to be eclipsed by global forces operating either below or above the nation-state. Nationalism, realists have continuously reminded us, remains a potent force in world politics.

There are good reasons for thinking that the twenty-first century will be a realist century. Despite efforts of federalists to rekindle the idealist flame, Europe continues to be as divided by different national interests as it is united by a common good. As Jacques Chirac put it in 2000, a 'united

Europe of states' was much more likely than a 'United States of Europe'. Outside Europe and North America, many of the assumptions which underpinned the post-war international order, particularly those associated with human rights, are increasingly being seen as nothing more than a Western idea backed by economic dollars and military 'divisions'. If China continues its rate of economic growth, it will be more economically powerful than the USA by 2020 (Mearsheimer 1990: 398). By then, realism leads us to predict, that Western norms of individual rights and responsibilities will be under threat. Rather than transforming global politics in its own image, as Liberalism has sought to do in the twentieth century, the West may need to become more realist in order for its traditions and values to survive the twenty-first.

Questions

- 1 How does the Melian dialogue represent key concepts such as self-interest, the balance of power, alliances, capabilities, empires, and justice?
- 2 Do you think there is one Realism, or many?
- 3 Do you know more about international relations than an Athenian student during *The Peloponnesian War*?
- 4 Do realists confuse a *description* of war and conflict for an *explanation* of why it occurs?
- 5 Is Realism anything more than the ideology of powerful, satisfied states?
- 6 How would a realist explain the war on terrorism?
- 7 Will the West have to learn to be more realist, and not less, if its civilization is to survive in the twenty-first century?
- 8 What is at stake in the debate between defensive and offensive realism?
- 9 Is structural realism sufficient to account for the variation in the behaviour of states?
- 10 Can realism help us to understand the globalization of world politics?

Guide to further reading

For a general survey of the realist tradition

Grifeco, J. M. (1997), 'Realist International Theory and the Study of World Politics', in M. W. Doyle and G. J. Kenberry (eds), *New Thinking in International Relations Theory* (Westview Press), a comprehensive critical appreciation of realist international theory.

Guzzini, S. (1998), *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy* (London: Routledge). Provides an understanding of the evolution of the realist tradition.

Smith, M. J. (1986), *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press). An excellent discussion of many of the seminal realist thinkers.

Walt, S. M. (2002), 'The Enduring Relevance of the Realist Tradition', in J. Katzenelson and

Chapter 6

Liberalism

TIM DUNNE

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Reader's Guide

The practice of international relations has not been accommodating to Liberalism. Whereas the domestic political realm in many states has witnessed an impressive degree of progress, with institutions providing for order and justice, the international realm in the era of the modern states-system has been characterized by a precarious order and the absence of justice. The introductory section of the chapter will address this dilemma before providing a definition of

Liberalism and its component parts. Section two considers the core concepts of Liberalism, beginning with the visionary internationalism of the Enlightenment, through to the Idealism of the inter-war period, and the institutionalism which became dominant in the second half of the twentieth century. The third and final section considers Liberalism in an era of globalization: in particular, it contrasts a status quo reading of the liberal project with a radicalized version which seeks to promote and extend cosmopolitan values and institutions.

Introduction

Although **Realism** is regarded as the dominant theory of international relations, **Liberalism** has a strong claim to being the historic alternative. In the twentieth century, liberal thinking influenced policy-making elites and public opinion in a number of Western states after the First World War, an era often referred to in academic international relations as **idealism**. There was a brief resurgence of liberal sentiment at the end of the Second World War with the birth of the United Nations, although this beacon of hope was soon extinguished by the return of cold war power politics. In the 1990s, Liberalism appeared resurgent as Western state leaders proclaimed a **New World Order** and intellectuals provided theoretical justifications for the inherent supremacy of their liberal ideas over all other competing ideologies. After 9/11, the pendulum has once again swung towards the realist pole as the USA and its allies have sought to consolidate their power and punish those whom they define as terrorists and the states that provide them with shelter.

How do we explain the divergent fortunes of Liberalism in the domestic and international domains? While liberal values and institutions have become deeply embedded in Europe and North America, the same values and institutions lack legitimacy worldwide. To invoke the famous phrase of Stanley Hoffmann's, 'international affairs have been the nemesis of Liberalism'. 'The essence of Liberalism', Hoffmann continues, 'is self-restraint, moderation, compromise and peace' whereas 'the essence of international politics is exactly the opposite: troubled peace, at best, or the state of war' (Hoffmann 1987: 396). This explanation comes as no surprise to realists, who argue that there can be no progress, no law, and no justice, where there is no common power. Despite the weight of this realist argument, those who believe in the liberal project have not conceded defeat. Liberals argue that power politics itself is the product of ideas, and crucially, ideas can change. Therefore, even if the world has been inhospitable to Liberalism, this does not mean that it cannot be re-made in its image.

While the belief in the possibility of progress is one identifier of a liberal approach to politics (Clark 1989: 49–66), there are other general propositions that define the broad tradition of Liberalism. Perhaps the appropriate way to begin this discussion is with a four-dimensional

definition (Doyle 1997: 207). First, all citizens are juridically equal and possess certain basic rights to education, access to a free press, and religious toleration. Second, the legislative assembly of the state possesses only the authority invested in it by the people, whose basic rights it is not permitted to abuse. Third, a key dimension of the liberty of the individual is the right to own property, including productive forces. Fourth, Liberalism contends that the most effective system of economic exchange is one that is largely market driven and not one that is subordinate to bureaucratic regulation and control, either domestically or internationally. When these propositions are taken together, we see a stark contrast between liberal values of individualism, tolerance, freedom, and constitutionalism, and conservatism, which places a higher value on order and authority and is willing to sacrifice the liberty of the individual for the stability of the community.

Although many writers have tended to view Liberalism as a theory of government, what is becoming increasingly apparent is the explicit connection between Liberalism as a political and economic theory and Liberalism as an international theory. Properly conceived, liberal thought on a global scale embodies a **domestic analogy** operating at multiple levels.¹ Like individuals, states have different characteristics—some are bellicose and war-prone, others are tolerant and peaceful; in short, the identity of the state determines its outward orientation. Liberals see a further parallel between individuals and sovereign states. Although the character of states may differ, all states are accorded certain 'natural' rights, such as the generalized right to non-intervention in their domestic affairs. On another level, the domestic analogy refers to the extension of ideas that originated inside liberal states to the international realm, such as the coordinating role played by institutions and the centrality of the rule of law to the idea of a just order. In a sense, the historical project of Liberalism is the domestication of the international. Liberals concede that we have far to go before this goal has been reached. Historically, liberals have agreed with Realists that war is a recurring feature of the **anarchic states system**. But unlike realists, they do not identify **anarchy** as the cause of war. How, then, do liberals explain war? As Box 6.1 demonstrates, certain strands of Liberalism see the causes of war located in **imperialism**, others in

Box 6.1 Liberalism and the causes of war, determinants of peace

One of the most useful analytical tools for thinking about differences between individual thinkers or particular variations on a broad theme such as Liberalism is to differentiate between levels of analysis. For example, Kenneth Waltz's *Man, the State and War* (1959) examined the causes of conflict operating at the level of the individual, the state, and the international system itself. The table below turns Waltz on his head, as it were, in order to show how different liberal thinkers have provided competing explanations (across the three levels of analysis) for the causes of war and the determinants of peace.

'Images' of Liberalism	Public figure/period	Causes of conflict	Determinants of peace
First image: (Human nature)	Richard Cobden (mid-19th century)	Interventions by governments domestically and internationally, disturbing the natural order.	Individual liberty, free trade, prosperity, interdependence.
Second image (The state)	Woodrow Wilson (early 20th century)	Undemocratic nature of international politics, especially foreign policy and the balance of power.	National self-determination; open governments responsive to public opinion; collective security.
Third image (The structure of the system)	J.A. Hobson (early 20th century)	The balance of power system.	A world government, with powers to mediate and enforce decisions.

the failure of the **balance of power**, and still others in the problem of **undemocratic regimes**. And ought this to be remedied through **collective security**, commerce, or world government? While it can be productive to think about the various strands of liberal thought and their differing prescriptions (Doyle 1997: 205–300), given the limited space permitted to deal with a broad and complex tradition, the emphasis below will be on the core concepts of international Liberalism and the way in which these relate to the goals of order and justice on a global scale.²

At the end of the chapter, the discussion will return to a tension that lies in the heart of the liberal theory of politics. As can be seen from a critical appraisal of the fourfold definition presented above, Liberalism pulls in two directions: its commitment to freedom in the economic and social spheres leans in the direction of a minimalist role for governing institutions, while the democratic polit-

ical culture required for basic freedoms to be safeguarded requires robust and interventionist institutions. This has variously been interpreted as a tension between different liberal goals, or more broadly as a sign of rival and incompatible conceptions of Liberalism. Should a liberal polity—no matter what the size or scale—preserve the right of individuals to retain property and privilege, or should Liberalism elevate equality over liberty so that resources are redistributed from the strong to the weak? When we are looking at politics on a global scale it is clear that inequalities are far greater while at the same time our institutional capacity to do something about them is that much less. As writers on **globalization** remind us, the intensification of global flows in trade, resources, and people has weakened the state's capacity to govern. Closing this gap requires nothing short of a radical reconfiguration of the relationship between **territoriality** and governance.

Key Points

- The liberal tradition in political thought goes back at least as far as the thinking of John Locke in the late seventeenth century. From then on, liberal ideas have profoundly shaped how we think about the relationship between government and citizens.
- Liberalism is a theory of both government within states and good governance between states and peoples worldwide. Unlike Realism, which regards the 'international' as an anarchic realm, Liberals seek to project values of order, liberty, justice, and toleration into international relations.
- The high-water mark of liberal thinking in international relations was reached in the inter-war period in the work of idealists who believed that warfare was an unnecessary and outmoded way of settling disputes between states.
- Domestic and international institutions are required to protect and nurture these values. But note that these values and institutions allow for significant variations which accounts for the fact that there are heated debates within Liberalism.
- Liberals disagree on fundamental issues, such as the causes of war and what kind of institutions are required to deliver liberal values in a decentralized, multicultural international system.
- An important cleavage within Liberalism, which has become more pronounced in our globalized world, is between those operating with a positive conception of liberalism, who advocate interventionist foreign policies and stronger international institutions, and those who incline towards a negative conception, which places a priority on toleration and non-intervention.

Core ideas in liberal thinking on international relations

Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham were two of the leading liberals of the Enlightenment. Both were reacting to the barbarity of international relations, or what Kant graphically described as 'the lawless state of savagery', at a time when domestic politics was at the cusp of a new age of rights, citizenship, and constitutionalism. Their abhorrence of the lawless savagery led them individually to elaborate plans for 'perpetual peace'. Although written over two centuries ago, these manifestos contain the seeds of core liberal ideas, in particular the belief that reason could deliver freedom and justice in international relations. For Kant the imperative to achieve perpetual peace required the transformation of individual consciousness, republican constitutionalism, and a federal contract between states to abolish war (rather than to regulate it as earlier international lawyers had argued). This federation can be likened to a permanent peace treaty, rather than a 'superstate' actor or world government. The three components of Kant's hypothetical treaty for a permanent peace are outlined in Box 6.2.

Kant's claim that liberal states are pacific in their international relations with other liberal states was revived in the 1980s. In a much cited article, Michael Doyle argued that liberal states have created a 'separate

peace' (1986: 1151). According to Doyle, there are two elements to the Kantian legacy: restraint among liberal states and 'international imprudence' in relations with non-liberal states. Although the empirical evidence seems to support the **democratic peace** thesis, it is important to bear in mind the limitations of the argument. In the first instance, for the theory to be compelling, believers in the thesis need to provide an explanation as to why war has become unthinkable between liberal states. Kant had argued that if the decision to use force was taken by the people, rather than by the prince, then the frequency of conflicts would be drastically reduced. But logically, this argument implies a lower frequency of conflicts between liberal and non-liberal states, and this has proven to be contrary to the historical evidence. An alternative explanation for the democratic peace thesis might be that liberal states tend to be wealthy, and therefore have less to gain (and more to lose) by engaging in conflicts with poorer authoritarian states. Perhaps the most convincing explanation of all is the simple fact that liberal states tend to be in relations of amity with other liberal states. War between Canada and the USA is unthinkable, perhaps not because of their liberal democratic constitutions, but because they are friends

Box 6.2 Immanuel Kant's 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch'

First Definitive Article: *The Civil Constitution of Every State shall be Republican*

'It is inevitably the case under this constitution, the consent of the citizens is required to decide whether or not war is to be declared, it is very natural that they will have great hesitation in embarking on so dangerous an enterprise. . . . But under a constitution where the subject is not a citizen, and which is therefore not republican, it is the simplest thing in the world to go to war. For the head of state is not a fellow citizen, but the owner of the state, and a war will not force him to make the slightest sacrifice so far as his banquets, hunts, pleasure palaces and court festivals are concerned.'

(Kant 1991: 99–102)

Second Definitive Article: *The Right of Nations shall be based on a Federation of Free States*

'Each nation, for the sake of its own security, can and ought to demand of the others that they should enter along with it into a constitution, similar to a civil one, within which the rights of each could be secured. . . .

(Wendt 1999: 298–9) with a high degree of convergence in economic and political matters. Indeed, war between states with contrasting political and economic systems may also be unthinkable because they have a history of friendly relations. An example here is Mexico and Cuba, which maintain close bilateral relations despite their history of divergent economic ideologies.

Irrespective of the scholarly search for an answer to the reasons why liberal democratic states are more peaceful, it is important to note the political consequences of this hypothesis. In 1989 Francis Fukuyama wrote an article entitled 'The End of History', which celebrated the triumph of Liberalism over all other ideologies, contending that liberal states were more stable internally and more peaceful in their international relations (Fukuyama 1989: 3–18). Other defenders of the democratic peace thesis were more circumspect. As Doyle recognized, liberal democracies are as aggressive as any other type of state in their relations with authoritarian regimes and stateless peoples (Doyle 1995b: 100). How, then, should states inside the liberal zone of peace conduct their relations with non-liberal regimes? How can the positive Kantian legacy of restraint triumph over the historical legacy of international imprudence on the part of liberal states? These are fascinating and timely questions which will be taken up in the final section of the chapter.

Two centuries after Kant first called for a 'pacific federation', the validity of the idea that democracies are more pacific continues to attract a great deal of scholarly interest. The claim has also found its way into the public discourse of 'Western states' foreign policy, appearing in speeches made by US presidents as diverse as Ronald Reagan, William Jefferson Clinton, and George W. Bush. Less crusading voices within the liberal tradition believe that a legal and institutional framework must be established that includes states with different cultures and traditions. Such a belief in the power of law to solve the problem of war was advocated by Jeremy Bentham at the end of the eighteenth century: 'Establish a common tribunal' and 'the necessity for war no longer follows from a difference of opinion' (Luard 1992: 416). Like many liberal thinkers after him, Bentham showed that federal states such as the German Diet, the American Confederation, and the Swiss League were able to transform their identity from one based on conflicting interests to a more peaceful federation. As Bentham famously argued, 'between the interests of nations there is nowhere any real conflict'.

Cobden's belief that **free trade** would create a more peaceful world order is a core idea of nineteenth-century Liberalism. Trade brings mutual gains to all the players, irrespective of their size or the nature of their economies. It is perhaps not surprising that it was in Britain that this argument found its most vocal supporters. The supposed universal value of free trade brought disproportionate gains to the hegemonic power. There was never an admission that free trade among countries at different stages of development would lead to relations of dominance and subservience.

The idea of a natural **harmony of interests** in international political and economic relations came under challenge in the early part of the twentieth century. The fact that Britain and Germany had highly interdependent economies before the Great War (1914–18) seemed to confirm the fatal flaw in the association of economic interdependence with peace. From the turn of the century, the contradictions within European civilization, of progress and exemplarism on the one hand and the harnessing of industrial power for military purposes on the other, could no longer be contained. Europe stumbled into a horrific war killing 15 million people. The war not only brought an end to three empires but also was a contributing factor to the Russian Revolution of 1917.

The First World War shifted liberal thinking towards a recognition that peace is not a natural condition but is one which must be constructed. In a powerful critique of the idea that peace and prosperity were part of a latent natural order, the publicist and author Leonard Woolf argued that peace and prosperity required 'consciously devised machinery' (Luard 1992: 465). But perhaps the most famous advocate of an international authority for the management of international relations was Woodrow Wilson. According to this US President, peace could only be secured with the creation of an **international organization** to regulate the international anarchy. Security could not be left to secret bilateral diplomatic deals and a blind faith in the balance of power. Just as peace had to be enforced in domestic society, the international domain had to have a system of regulation for coping with disputes and an international force which could be mobilized if non-violent conflict resolution failed. In this sense, more than any other strand of Liberalism, idealism rests on the **domestic analogy** (Suganami 1989: 94–113).

In his famous 'Fourteen Points' speech, addressed to Congress in January 1918, Wilson argued that 'a general

association of nations must be formed' to preserve the coming peace—the League of Nations was to be that general association. For the League to be effective, it had to have the military power to deter aggression and, when necessary, to use a preponderance of power to enforce its will. This was the idea behind the **collective security** system which was central to the League of Nations. Collective security refers to an arrangement where each state in the system accepts that the security of one is the concern of all, and agrees to join in a collective response to aggression' (Roberts and Kingsbury 1993: 30). It can be contrasted with an alliance system of security, where a number of states join together usually as a response to a specific external threat (sometimes known as collective defence). In the case of the League of Nations, Article 16 of the League's Charter noted the obligation that, in the event of war, all member states must cease normal relations with the offending state, impose sanctions, and, if necessary, commit their armed forces to the disposal of the League Council should the use of force be required to restore the status quo.

The League's constitution also called for the **self-determination** of all nations, another founding characteristic of liberal idealist thinking on international relations. Going back to the mid-nineteenth century, self-determination movements in Greece, Hungary, and Italy received support among liberal powers and public opinion. Yet the default support for self-determination masked a host of practical and moral problems that were laid bare after Woodrow Wilson issued his proclamation. What would happen to newly created minorities who felt no allegiance to the self-determining state? Could a democratic process adequately deal with questions of identity—who was to decide what constituency was to participate in a ballot? And what if a newly self-determined state rejected liberal democratic norms?

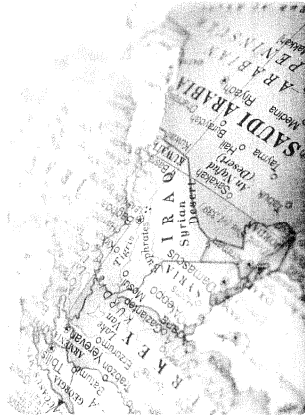
The experience of the League of Nations was a disaster. While the moral rhetoric at the creation of the League was decidedly idealist, in practice states remained imprisoned by self-interest. There is no better example of this than the United States' decision not to join the institution it had created. With the Soviet Union outside the system for ideological reasons, the League of Nations quickly became a talking shop for the 'satisfied' powers. Hitler's decision in March 1936 to reoccupy the Rhineland, a designated demilitarized zone according to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, effectively pulled the plug on the League's life-

support system (it had been put on the 'critical' list following the Manchurian crisis in 1931 and the Ethiopian crisis in 1935).

According to the history of the discipline of International Relations, the collapse of the League of Nations dealt a fatal blow to Idealism. There is no doubt that the language of Liberalism after 1945 was more pragmatic; how could anyone living in the shadow of the Holocaust be optimistic? Yet familiar core ideas of Liberalism remained. Even in the early 1940s, there was recognition of the need to replace the League with another international institution with responsibility for international peace and security. Only this time, in the case of the United Nations there was an awareness among the framers of the Charter of the need for a consensus between the great powers in order for enforcement action to be taken, hence the veto system (Article 27 of the UN Charter), which allowed any of the five permanent members of the Security Council the power of veto. This revision constituted an important modification to the classical model of collective security (Roberts 1996: 315). With the ideological polarity of the cold war, the UN procedures for collective security were still-born (as either of the superpowers and their allies would veto any action proposed by the other).³ It was not until the end of the cold war that a collective security system was put into operation, following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq on 2 August 1990 (see Case Study).

An important argument advanced by liberals in the early post-war period concerned the state's inability to cope with modernization. David Mitrany (1943), a pioneer **integration** theorist, argued that transnational cooperation was required in order to resolve common problems. His core concept was **ramification**, meaning the likelihood that cooperation in one sector would lead governments to extend the range of **collaboration** across other sectors. As states become more embedded in an integration process, the 'cost' of withdrawing from cooperative ventures increases.

This argument about the positive benefits from transnational cooperation is one which informed a new generation of scholars (particularly in the USA) in the 1960s and 1970s. Their argument was not simply about the mutual gains from trade, but that other transnational actors were beginning to challenge the dominance of sovereign states. World politics, according to pluralists (as they are often referred to) was no longer an exclusive arena for states, as it had been for the first three hundred



Iraq had always argued that the sovereign state of Kuwait was an artificial creation of the imperial powers. When this political motive was allied to an economic imperative, caused primarily by the accumulated war debts following the eight-year war with Iran, the annexation of Kuwait seemed to be a solution to Iraq's problems. The Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, also assumed that

years of the Westphalian states-system. In one of the central texts of this genre, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1972) argued that the centrality of other actors, such as interest groups, **transnational corporations**, and **international non-governmental organizations** (INGOs), had to be taken into consideration. Here the overriding image of international relations is one of a cobweb of diverse actors linked through multiple channels of interaction.

Although the phenomenon of **transnationalism** was an important addition to the international relations theorists' vocabulary, it remained underdeveloped as a theoretical concept. Perhaps the most important contribution of Pluralism was its elaboration of **interdependence**. Due to the expansion of **capitalism** and the emergence of a global culture, Pluralists recognized a growing interconnectedness in which 'changes in one part of the system have direct and indirect consequences for the rest of the system' (Little 1996: 77). **Absolute state autonomy**, so keenly entrenched in the minds of state leaders, was being circumscribed by interdependence. Such a development brought with it enhanced potential for cooperation as well as increased levels of vulnerability.

In his 1979 work *Theory of International Politics*, the neo-realist Kenneth Waltz attacked the pluralist argument about the decline of the state. He argued that the degree

the West would not use force to defend Kuwait, a miscalculation which was fuelled by the memory of the support the West had given Iraq during the Iran–Iraq War (the so-called 'fundamentalism of Iran was considered to be a graver threat to international order than the extreme nationalism of the Iraqi regime').

The invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 led to a series of UN resolutions calling for Iraq to withdraw unconditionally. Economic sanctions were applied while the US-led coalition of international forces gathered in Saudi Arabia. Operation 'Desert Storm' crushed the Iraqi resistance in a matter of six weeks (16 January to 28 February 1991). The 1990–1 Gulf War had certainly revived the UN doctrine of collective security, although a number of doubts remained about the underlying motivations for the war and the way in which it was fought (for instance, the coalition of national armies was controlled by the USA rather than by a UN military command as envisaged in the Charter). President George H. Bush declared that the war was about more than one small country, it was about a 'big idea: a **new world order**'. The content of this new world order was 'peaceful settlement of disputes, solidarity against aggression, reduced and controlled arsenals, and just treatment of all peoples'.

of interdependence internationally was far lower than the constituent parts in a national political system. Moreover, the level of economic interdependence—especially between great powers—was less than that which existed in the early part of the twentieth century. Waltz concluded: 'if one is thinking of the international-political world, it is odd in the extreme that "interdependence" has become the word commonly used to describe it' (1979: 144). In the course of their engagement with Waltz and other neo-realists, early Pluralists modified their position. Neo-liberals,⁴ as they came to be known, conceded that the core assumptions of neo-realism were indeed correct: the anarchic international structure, the centrality of states, and a rationalist approach to social scientific inquiry. Where they differed was apparent primarily in the argument that anarchy does not mean durable patterns of cooperation are impossible: the creation of **international regimes** matters here as they facilitate cooperation by sharing information, reinforcing **reciprocity**, and making defection from norms easier to punish (see Ch.17). Moreover, in what was to become the most important difference between neo-realists and neo-liberals (developed further in Ch.7), the latter argued that actors would enter into cooperative agreements if the gains were evenly shared. Neo-realists dispute this hypothesis: what matters is a question not so

much of mutual gains as of **relative gains**: in other words, a neo-realist state has to be sure that it has more to gain than its rivals from a particular bargain or regime.

There are two important arguments that set neo-liberalism apart from democratic peace Liberalism and the liberal idealists of the inter-war period. First, academic inquiry should be guided by a commitment to a scientific approach to theory building. Whatever deeply held personal values scholars maintain, their task must be to observe regularities, formulate hypotheses as to why that relationship holds, and subject these to critical scrutiny. This separation of fact and value puts

Key Points

- Early liberal thought on international relations took the view that the natural order had been corrupted by undemocratic state leaders and outdated policies such as the balance of power. Prescriptively, Enlightenment liberals believed that a latent cosmopolitan morality could be achieved through the exercise of reason and through the creation of constitutional states. In addition, the unfettered movement of people and goods could further facilitate more peaceful international relations.
- Although there are important continuities between Enlightenment liberal thought and twentieth-century ideas, such as the belief in the power of world public opinion to tame the interests of states,

Liberalism and globalization

When applying liberal ideas to international relations today, we find two clusters of responses to the problems and possibilities posed by globalization. Before outlining these, let us briefly return to the definition of Liberalism set out at greater length earlier, the four components being: juridical equality, democracy, liberty, and the free market. As we will see below, these same values can be pursued by very different political strategies.

The first alternative is that of the **Liberalism of privilege** (Richardson 1997: 18). According to this perspective, the problems of globalization need to be addressed by a combination of strong democratic states in the core of the international system, robust regimes, and open markets and institutions. For an example of the working out of such a strategy in practice, we need to look no further than the success of the liberal hegemony of the post-1945 era. The US writer, G. John Ikenberry, is an

neo-liberals on the positivist side of the methodological divide. Second, writers such as Keohane are critical of the naïve assumption of nineteenth-century liberals that commerce breeds peace. A free-trade system, according to Keohane, provides incentives for cooperation but does not guarantee it. Here he is making an important distinction between cooperation and harmony. 'Co-operation is not automatic', Keohane argues, 'but requires planning and negotiation' (1986b: 11). In the following section we see how contemporary liberal thinking maintains that the institutions of world politics after 1945 successfully embedded all states into a cooperative order.

- liberal Idealism was more programmatic. For idealists, the freedom of states is part of the problem of international relations and not part of the solution. Two requirements follow from their diagnosis. The first is the need for explicitly normative thinking: how to promote peace and build a better world. Second, states must be part of an international organization, and be bound by its rules and norms.
- Central to idealism was the formation of an international organization to facilitate peaceful change, disarmament, arbitration, and (where necessary) enforcement. The League of Nations was founded in 1920 but its collective security system failed to prevent the descent into world war in the 1930s.

articulate defender of this liberal order. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the USA took the opportunity to 'embed' certain fundamental liberal principles into the regulatory rules and institutions of international society. Most importantly, and contrary to Realist thinking, the USA chose to forsake short-run gains in return for a durable settlement that benefited all states. According to Ikenberry, the USA signalled the cooperative basis of its power in a number of ways. First, in common with liberal democratic principles, the USA was an example to other members of international society in so far as its political system is open and allows different voices to be heard. Foreign policy, like domestic policy, is closely scrutinized by the media, public opinion, and political committees and opposition parties. Second, the USA advocated a global free-trade regime in accordance with the idea that free trade brings benefits to all participants (it also has

Box 6.3 George W. Bush and Liberalism in American foreign policy

The twentieth century ended with a single surviving model of human progress, based on non-negotiable demands of human dignity, the rules of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women and private property and free speech and equal justice and religious tolerance. America cannot impose this vision—yet we can support and reward governments that make the right choices for their own people. In our development aid, in our diplomatic efforts, in our international broadcasting and in our educational assistance, the United States will promote moderation and tolerance and human rights. And we defend the peace that makes all progress possible.

When it comes to the common rights and needs of men and women, there is no clash of civilizations. The requirements of freedom apply fully to Africa and Latin America and the entire Islamic world. The peoples of the Islamic nations want and deserve the same freedoms and opportunities as people in every nation. And their governments should listen to their hopes.

(Excerpt from President George W. Bush, *Graduation Speech at West Point, US Military Academy, New York, 1 June 2002. Available at: www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases*)

the added advantage, from the hegemon's point of view, of being cheap to manage). Third, the USA appeared to its allies at least as a reluctant hegemon that would not seek to exploit its significant power-political advantage. Fourth, and most importantly, the USA created and participated in a range of important international institutions that constrained its actions. The Bretton Woods system of economic and financial accords and the NATO security alliance are the best examples of the highly institutionalized character of American power in the post-1945 period. Advocates of this liberal hegemonic order note wryly that it was so successful that allies were more worried about abandonment than domination.

The post-1945 system of regulatory regimes and institutions has been successful in part due to the fact that they exist. In other words, once one set of institutional arrangements becomes embedded it is very difficult for alternatives to make inroads. There are two implications that need to be teased out here. One is the narrow historical 'window' that exists for new institutional design; the other is the durability of existing institutions. In terms of American hegemony, this means that, short of a major war or a global economic collapse, it is very difficult to envisage the type of historical breakpoint needed to replace the existing order (Ikenberry 1999: 137).

Let us accept for a moment that the neo-liberal argument is basically correct: the post-1945 international order has been successful and durable because US hegemony has been of a liberal character. The logic of this position is one of institutional conservatism. In order to respond effectively to global economic and security problems, there is no alternative to working within the existing institutional structure. This is a manifesto for managing an international order in which the Western states who paid the start-up costs of the institutions are now expe-

riencing significant returns on their institutional investment. At the other end of the spectrum, the current order is highly unresponsive to the needs of weaker states and peoples. According to the United Nations Development Programme, the resulting global inequality is 'grotesque'. One statistic is particularly graphic: the richest 20 per cent of the world's population holds three-quarters of the income, the poorest 20 per cent receive only 1.5 per cent.³

Given that Liberalism has produced such unequal gains for the West and the rest, it is not surprising that the hegemonic power has become obsessed with the question of preserving and extending its control of institutions, markets, and resources. When this hegemonic liberal order comes under challenge, as it did on 9/11, the response is unpromising. It is noticeable in this respect that President George W. Bush mobilized the language of Liberalism against Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and also Iraq. He referred to the 2003 war against Iraq as 'freedom's war' and the term 'liberation' is frequently used by defenders of 'Operation Iraqi Freedom'.

Given the primacy of the neo-conservative ideology underpinning the Bush presidency, one needs to proceed with caution when advancing the claim that many liberal principles underpin contemporary American foreign policy. Nevertheless, the official discourse of US foreign policy overlaps in interesting ways with a number of liberal values and ideas (Rhodes 2003), as can be seen in Bush's speech at the West Point graduation ceremony in June 2002. A key opening theme in the speech is how force can be used for freedom: 'we fight, as we always fight, for a just peace'. Bush then goes on to locate this argument in historical context. Prior to the twenty-first century, great power competition manifested itself in war. Today, 'the Great Powers share common values' such as 'a deep commitment to human freedom'. In his State

of the Union address of 2004, he even declared that 'our aim is a democratic peace'. Box 6.3 further illustrates the connections between Liberalism, democracy promotion, and the Bush foreign policy.

The potential for Liberalism to embrace imperialism is a tendency that has a long history (Doyle 1986: 1151–69). We find in Machiavelli a number of arguments for the necessity for republics to expand. Liberty increases wealth and the concomitant drive for new markets; soldiers who are at the same time citizens are better fighters than slaves or mercenaries; and expansion is often the best means to promote a state's security. In this sense, contemporary US foreign policy is no different from the great expansionist republican states of the pre-modern period such as Athens and Rome. Few liberals today would openly advocate imperialism although the line between interventionist strategies to defend liberal values and privileges and imperialism is very finely drawn. Michael Doyle advocates a policy mix of forcible and non-forcible instruments that ought to be deployed in seeking regime change in illiberal parts of the world (see Box 6.4).

This strategy of preserving and extending liberal institutions is open to a number of criticisms. For the sake of simplicity, these will be gathered up into an alternative to the Liberalism: of privilege that we will call **radical Liberalism**. An opening objection made by proponents of the latter concerns the understanding of Liberalism embodied in the neo-liberal defence of international institutions. The liberal character of those institutions is assumed rather than subjected to critical scrutiny. As a result, the incoherence of the purposes underpinning these

institutions is often overlooked. The kind of economic liberalization advocated by Western financial institutions, particularly in economically impoverished countries, frequently comes into conflict with the norms of democracy and human rights. Three examples illustrate this dilemma. First, the more the West becomes involved in the organization of developing states' political and economic infrastructure, the less those states are able to be accountable to their domestic constituencies, thereby cutting through the link between the government and the people which is so central to modern liberal forms of representative democracy (Hurrell and Woods 1995: 463). Second, in order to qualify for Western aid and loans, states are often required to meet harsh economic criteria requiring cuts in many welfare programmes; the example of the poorest children in parts of Africa having to pay for primary school education (Booth and Dunne 1999: 310)—which is their right according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—is a stark reminder of the fact that economic liberty and political equality are frequently opposed. Third, the inflexible response of international financial institutions to various crises in the world-economy has contributed to a backlash against Liberalism per se. Richard Falk puts this dilemma starkly: there

is, he argues, a tension between 'the ethical imperatives of the global neighbourhood and the dynamics of economic globalisation' (1995a: 573). Radical liberals argue that the hegemonic institutional order has fallen prey to the neo-liberal consensus which minimizes the role of the public sector in providing for welfare, and elevates the market as the appropriate mechanism

Box 6.4 Defending and extending the liberal zone of peace

As we have seen, advocates of the democratic peace thesis believe that liberal states act peacefully towards one another. Yet this empirical law does not tell liberal states how to behave towards non-liberal states. Should they try to convert them, thereby bringing them into the zone of peace, or should they pursue a more defensive strategy? The former has not been successful in the past, and in a world of many nuclear weapons states, crusading could be suicidal. For this reason, Michael Doyle suggests a dual-track approach.

The first track is preserving the liberal community which means forging strong alliances with other like-minded states and defending itself against illiberal regimes. This may require liberal states to include in their foreign policy strategies like the balance of power in order to contain authoritarian states.

The second track is more expansionist and aims to extend the liberal zone by a variety of economic and diplomatic instruments.

Doyle categorizes these in terms of 'inspiration' (hoping peoples living in non-democratic regimes will struggle for their liberty), 'instigation' (peace building and economic restructuring), and 'intervention' (legitimate if the majority of a polity is demonstrating widespread disaffection with their government and/or their basic rights are being systematically violated).

Doyle concludes with the warning that the march of liberalism will not necessarily continue unabated. It is in our hands, he argues, whether the international system becomes more pacific and stable, or whether antagonisms deepen. We must be willing to pay the price—in institutional costs and development aid—to increase the prospects for a peaceful future. This might be cheap when compared with the alternative of dealing with hostile and unstable authoritarian states.

(Doyle 1999)

for allocating resources, investment, and employment opportunities.

A second line of critique pursued by radical liberals concerns not so much the contradictory outcomes but the illiberal nature of the regimes and institutions. To put the point bluntly, there is a massive **democratic deficit** at the global level. Issues of international peace and security are determined by only 15 members of international society, of whom only five can exercise a power of veto. In other words, it is hypothetically possible for up to 200 states in the world to believe that military action ought to be taken but such an action would contravene the UN Charter if one of the permanent members was to cast a veto. If we take the area of political economy, the power exerted by the West and its international financial institutions perpetuates structural inequality. A good example here is the issue of free trade, which the West has pushed in areas where it gains from an open policy (such as in manufactured goods and financial services) but resisted in areas that it stands to lose (agriculture and textiles). At a deeper level, radical liberals worry that *all* statist models of governance are undemocratic as elites are notoriously self-serving.

These sentiments underpin the approach to globalization taken by writers such as Danielle Archibugi, David Held, Mary Kaldor, and Jan Aart Scholte, among others, who believe that global politics must be democratized (Held and McGrew 2002). Held's argument is illustrative of the analytical and prescriptive character of radical Liberalism in an era of globalization. His diagnosis begins by revealing the inadequacies of the 'Westphalian order' (or the modern states-system which is conventionally dated from the middle of the seventeenth century). During the latter stages of this period, we have witnessed rapid democratization in a number of states, but this has not been accompanied by democratization of the **society of states** (Held 1993). This task is increasingly urgent given the current levels of interconnectedness, since 'national governments are no longer in control of the forces which shape their citizens' lives (for example, the decision by one state to permit deforestation has environmental consequences for all states). After 1945, the UN Charter set limits to the **sovereignty** of states by recognizing the rights of individuals in a whole series of human rights conventions. But even if the UN had lived up to its Charter in the post-1945 period, it would still have left the building blocks of the Westphalian order largely intact, namely: the

hierarchy between great powers and the rest (symbolized by the permanent membership of the Security Council); massive inequalities of wealth between states; and a minimal role for **non-state actors** to influence decision-making in international relations.

In place of the Westphalian and UN models, Held outlines a **cosmopolitan model of democracy**. This requires, in the first instance, the creation of regional parliaments and the extension of the authority of such regional bodies (like the European Union) which are already in existence. Second, human rights conventions must be entrenched in national parliaments and monitored by a new International Court of Human Rights. Third, reform of the UN, or the replacement of it, with a genuinely democratic and accountable global parliament. Without appearing to be too sanguine about the prospects for the realization of the cosmopolitan model of democracy, Held is nevertheless adamant that if democracy is to thrive, it must penetrate the institutions and regimes which manage global politics.

Radical liberals place great importance on the civilizing capacity of global society. While the rule of law and the democratization of international institutions is a core component of the liberal project, it is also vital that citizens' networks are broadened and deepened to monitor and cajole these institutions. These groups form a linkage between individuals, states, and global institutions. It is easy to portray radical liberal thinking as 'utopian' but we should not forget the many achievements of global civil society so far. The evolution of international humanitarian law, and the extent to which these laws are complied with, is largely down to the millions of individuals who are active supporters of human rights groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (Falk 1995b: 164). Similarly, global protest movements have been responsible for the heightened sensitivity to environmental degradation everywhere.

This emphasis on what Richard Falk calls globalization from below is an important antidote to neo-liberalism's somewhat status quo-oriented worldview. But just as imperialism can emerge from a complacent Liberalism of privilege, the danger for radical liberals is naivety. How is it that global institutions can be reformed in such a way that the voices of ordinary people will be heard? And what if the views of 'peoples' rather than 'states' turn out to be similarly indifferent to global injustice? There is a sense in which radical liberal thought wants to turn back the

clock of globalization to an era in which local producers cooperated to produce socially responsible food in the day and wore baskets or watched street theatre in the evening. It is not clear that such an organic lifestyle is preferable to purchasing relatively inexpensive goods from a multinational supermarket outlet or finding entertainment on multi-channel television. Perhaps the

Key Points

- The victor states in the wartime alliance against Nazi Germany pushed for a new international institution to be created: the United Nations Charter was signed in June 1945 by 50 states in San Francisco. It represented a departure from the League in two important respects. Membership was near universal and the great powers were able to prevent any enforcement action from taking place which might be contrary to their interests.
- In the post-1945 period, liberals turned to international institutions to carry out a number of functions the state could not perform. This was the catalyst for integration theory in Europe and Pluralism in the United States. By the early 1970s Pluralism had mounted a

least plausible aspect of the radical liberal project is the injunction to reform global capitalism. Just how much of a civilizing effect is global civil society able to exert upon the juggernaut of capitalism? And can this movement bridge the globalization divide in which democratic institutions are territorially located while forces of production and destruction are global?

- significant challenge to Realism. It focused on new actors (trans-national corporations, non-governmental organizations) and new patterns of interaction (interdependence, integration).
- Neo-liberalism represents a more sophisticated theoretical challenge to contemporary Realism. Neo-liberals explain the durability of institutions despite significant changes in context. In their view, institutions exert a causal force on international relations, shaping state preferences and locking them into cooperative arrangements.
- Democratic peace liberalism and neo-liberalism are the dominant strands in liberal thinking today.

Conclusion

The euphoria with which Liberals greeted the end of the cold war in 1989 has dissipated to a large extent by 9/11 and the war on terror. The pattern of conflict and insecurity that we have seen at the beginning of the twenty-first century suggests that liberal democracy remains at best an incomplete project. Images and narratives from countries in every continent—Afghanistan, Liberia, Chechnya, Columbia, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Myanmar, Zimbabwe, and so on—remind us that in many parts of the world, anti-liberal values of warlordism, torture, intolerance, and injustice are daily occurrences. Moreover, the reasons why these states have failed can to some extent be laid at the door of liberalism, particularly in terms of its promotion of often irreconcilable norms of sovereignty, democracy, national self-determination, and human rights (Hoffmann 1995–6: 169).

A deeper reason for the crisis in Liberalism is that it is bound up with an increasingly discredited Enlightenment view of the world. Contrary to the hopes of Bentham, Hume, Kant, Mill, and Paine, the application of reason and science to politics has not brought communities together.

Indeed, it has arguably shown the fragmented nature of the political community, which is regularly expressed in terms of ethnic, linguistic, or religious differences. Critics of Liberalism argue that the universalizing mission of liberal values, such as democracy, capitalism, and secularism, undermines the traditions and practices of non-Western cultures (Gray 1995: 146). When it comes to doing inter-cultural politics, somehow Liberals just don't seem to take 'no' for an answer. The Marxist writer Immanuel Wallerstein has a nice way of expressing the dilemma over universalism. Liberals view it as a 'gift' of the powerful to the weak which places them in a double bind: 'to refuse the gift is to lose; to accept the gift is to lose' (in Brown 1999).

At the outset, the chapter pointed to a tension within Liberalism. The emphasis on personal liberty, unfettered trade, and the accumulation of property can lend itself to a society riven with inequality, suspicion, and rivalry. Pulling in the opposite direction, Liberalism contains within it a set of values that seek to provide for the conditions of a just society through democratic institutions and

welfare-oriented economies. Projecting this tension on to a global stage leads to two possibilities for Liberalism in an era of globalization. The neo-liberal variant is one where relatively weak institutions try to respond to the challenge of coordinating the behaviour of states in a decentralized international order. In this world economic growth is unevenly distributed. As a consequence, preventive military action remains an ever-present possibility in order to deal with chaos and violence produced by dispossessed

communities and networks. The more progressive model, advocated by radical liberals, seeks to heighten regulation through the strengthening of international institutions. This is to be done by making institutions more democratic and accountable for the negative consequences of globalization. The charge of utopianism is one that is easy to make against this position and hard to refute. In so doing, liberals of a radical persuasion should invoke Kant's axiom that 'ought must imply can'.

Questions

- 1 Do you agree with Stanley Hoffmann that international affairs are 'inhospitable' to Liberalism?
- 2 What arguments might one draw upon to support or refute this proposition?
- 3 Was the language of international morality, used by liberal idealists in the inter-war period, a way of masking the interests of Britain and France in maintaining their dominance of the international system after the First World War?
- 4 Should liberal states promote their values abroad? Is force a legitimate instrument in securing this goal?
- 5 How much progress (if any) has there been in liberal thinking on international relations since Kant?
- 6 Are democratic peace theorists right, but for the wrong reasons?
- 7 Which strategy of dealing with globalization do you find more convincing: those who believe that states and institutions should maintain the current order or those who believe in reform driven by global civil society?
- 8 Is there a fundamental tension at the heart of Liberalism between liberty and democracy? If so, how is this tension played out in the international domain?
- 9 Are liberal values and institutions in the contemporary international system as deeply embedded as neo-liberals claim?
- 10 What liberal ideas, if any, have informed the George W. Bush administration's foreign policy?

Guide to further reading

Liberalism in International Relations

Brown, C., Nardin, T., and Rengger, N. (eds) (2002), *International Relations in Political Thought: Texts from the Ancient Greeks to the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). See especially the readings from classical liberal thought in sections 7, 8, and 9.

Doyle, M. (1997), *Ways of War and Peace* (New York: W.W. Norton). The best textbook on the principal theories of international relations. There are over 100 pages of analysis on Liberalism in the book. See also, in a shorter and modified form, his article: Doyle, M. (1986), 'Liberalism and World Politics', *American Political Science Review*, 80(4): 1151–69.

Hoffmann, S. (1987), *Janus and Minerva* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press): 394–436. An excellent account of Liberalism and its troubled relationships to international relations.

Richardson, J. L. (1997), 'Contending Liberalisms: Past and Present', *European Journal of International Relations*, 3(1): 5–33. A thorough overview of Liberalism in political thought and in international relations. Parts of the argument in this chapter mirror Richardson's article.

Smith, M. J. (1992), 'Liberalism and International Reform', in T. Nardin and D. Mapel (eds), *Traditions of International Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 201–24. A comprehensive

Chapter 7

Contemporary mainstream approaches: neo-realism and neo-liberalism

STEVEN L. LAMY

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Reader's Guide

This chapter reviews the core assumptions of neo-realism and neo-liberalism and explores the debate between these intellectual siblings that has dominated mainstream academic scholarship in international relations in the United States. Realism and neo-realism, and to some extent neo-liberalism, have also had a profound impact on US foreign policy. Neo-realists dominate the world of security studies and neo-liberals focus on political economy and more recently on issues like human rights and the environment. These theories do not offer starkly contrasting images of the world. Neo-realists state that they are concerned with issues of survival. They claim that neo-liberals are too optimistic about the possibilities for cooperation among states. Neo-liberals counter with claims that all states have mutual interests and can gain from cooperation. Both are normative theories of a sort, biased towards the state, the capitalist market, and the status quo. The processes of globalization have forced neo-realists and neo-liberals to consider similar issues and address new challenges to international order. In the introduction, I discuss the various versions of neo-liberalism and neo-realism and ask the reader to consider how theory shapes our image of the world. Each theory represents an attempt by scholars

to offer a better explanation for the behaviour of states and describe the nature of international politics. Similarly, the more policy-relevant versions of these theories prescribe competing policy agendas. The next section reviews three versions of neo-realism: Waltz's structural Realism; Grieco's neo-realism or modern Realism, with its focus on absolute and relative gains; and what security scholars call offensive and defensive Realism or neo-realism. The third section of the chapter reviews the assumptions of neo-liberal and neo-liberal Institutional perspectives. The fourth section focuses on the 'neo-neo-debate'. This is a debate that many US scholars think is the most important intellectual issue in international relations today. Many other scholars see it as not much of a debate at all. It is a debate about refining common assumptions and about the future role and effectiveness of international institutions and the possibilities of cooperation. However, it is not a debate between mainstream and critical perspectives. It is a debate between 'rule-makers' and 'it leaves out the voices on the margins or the 'rule-takers'. In the fifth section of the chapter, I review how neo-realists and neo-liberal thinkers react to the processes of globalization. The chapter concludes with a suggestion that we are only seeing part of the world if we limit our studies to the neo perspectives and the neo-neo debate.

Introduction

The debate between neo-realists and neo-liberals has dominated mainstream international relations scholarship in the United States since the mid-1980s. Two of the major US journals in the field, *International Organization* and *International Security*, are dominated by articles that address the relative merits of each theory and its value in explaining the world of international politics. Neo-realism and neo-liberalism are the progeny of Realism and Liberalism respectively. They are more than theories; they are paradigms or conceptual frameworks that define a field of study, and define an agenda for research and policy-making. As previous chapters on Liberalism and Realism have suggested, there are many versions and interpretations of each paradigm or theory. Some Realists are more 'hard-line' on issues such as defence or participation in international agreements, while other Realists take more accommodating positions on these same issues. The previous chapter on Liberalism provides a useful description of the varieties of this theory, and this chapter will explore those that have the greatest impact on academic discourse in the United States and on the people who develop US foreign policy. This chapter will also show the considerable differences in how the scholarly and policy world define and use the labels neo-realism and neo-liberalism.

For most academics, neo-realism refers to Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* (1979). Waltz's theory emphasizes the importance of the structure of the international system and its role as the primary determinant of state behaviour. Yet, most scholars and policymakers use neo-realism to describe a recent or updated version of Realism. Recently, in the area of security studies, some scholars use the terms *offensive* and *defensive realism* when discussing the current version of Realism; or neo-realism.

In the academic world, neo-liberal generally refers to neo-liberal Institutionalism or what is now called Institutional theory by those writing in this theoretical domain. However, in the policy world, neo-liberalism means something different. A neo-liberal foreign policy promotes free trade or open markets and Western democratic values and institutions. Most of the leading Western states have joined the US-led chorus, calling for the 'enlargement' of the community of democratic and

capitalist nation-states. There is no other game in town, the financial and political institutions created after the Second World War have survived and these provide the foundation for current political and economic power arrangements.

In reality, neo-liberal foreign policies tend not to be as wedded to the ideals of democratic peace, free trade, and open borders. National interests take precedence over morality and universal ideals and, much to the dismay of traditional Realists, economic interests are given priority over geopolitical ones.

For students beginning their study of International Relations, these labels and contending definitions can be confusing and frustrating. Yet, as you have learned in your reading of previous chapters in this volume, understanding these perspectives and theories is the only way you can hope to understand and explain how leaders and citizens alike see the world and respond to issues and events. This understanding may be more important when discussing neo-realism and neo-liberalism because they represent dominant perspectives in the policy world and in the US academic community.

There are clear differences between neo-realism and neo-liberalism; however, these differences should not be exaggerated. Robert Keohane (in Baldwin 1993), a neo-liberal institutionalist, has stated that neo-liberal Institutionalism borrows equally from Realism and Liberalism. Both theories represent status-quo perspectives and are what Robert Cox calls problem-solving theories (see Ch.10). This means that both neo-realism and neo-liberalism address issues and problems that could disrupt the status quo, namely, the issues of security, conflict, and cooperation.

Neither theory advances prescriptions for major reform or radical transformation of the international system. Rather, they are *system maintainer* theories, meaning that adherents are generally satisfied with the current international system and its actors, values, and power arrangements. These theories address different sets of issues. In general, neo-realist theory focuses on issues of military security and war. Neo-liberal theorists focus on issues of cooperation, international political economy, and, most recently, the environment. For neo-liberal

Institutionalists, the core question for research is how to promote and support cooperation in an anarchic and competitive international system. For neo-realists, the core research question is how to survive in this system.

Key Points

- The neo-neo debate has been the dominant focus in international relations theory scholarship in the USA for the last 10–15 years.
- More than just theories, neo-realism and neo-liberalism represent paradigms or conceptual frameworks that shape individuals' images of the world and influence research priorities and policy debates and choices.
- There are several versions of neo-realism or neo-liberalism.
- Neo-liberalism in the academic world refers most often to neo-liberal Institutionalism. In the policy world, neo-liberalism is identified with the promotion of capitalism and Western democratic values and institutions.

Neo-realism

Kenneth Waltz's theory of structural realism is only one version of neo-realism. A second group of neo-realists, represented by the scholarly contributions of Joseph Grieco (1988a and 1988b), have integrated Waltz's ideas with the ideas of more traditional Realists, such as Hans Morgenthau, Raymond Aron, Stanley Hoffmann, and Robert Gilpin, to construct a contemporary or modern realist profile. A third version of neo-realism is found in security studies. Here scholars talk about offensive and defensive realists. These versions of neo-realism are briefly reviewed in the next few pages.

Structural realism

Waltz's neo-realism is distinctive from traditional or classical Realism in a number of ways. First, Realism is primarily an inductive theory. For example, Hans Morgenthau would explain international politics by looking at the actions and interactions of the states in the system. Thus, the decision by Pakistan and India to test nuclear weapons would be explained by looking at the influence of military leaders in both states and the long-standing differences compounded by their geographic proximity. All of these explanations are uni- or bottom-up explanations.

A review of the assumptions of each theory and an analysis of the contending positions in the so-called neo-debate and a discussion of how neo-liberals and neo-realists react to the processes of globalization follows.

- Rational choice approaches and game theory have been integrated into neo-realist and neo-liberal theory to explain policy choices and the behaviour of states in conflict and cooperative situations.
- Neo-realist and neo-liberal theories are status quo-oriented problem-solving theories. They share many assumptions about actors, values, issues, and power arrangements in the international system. Neo-realists and neo-liberals study different worlds. Neo-realists study security issues and are concerned with issues of power and survival. Neo-liberals study political economy and focus on cooperation and institutions.

Neo-realists, such as Waltz, do not deny the importance of unit-level explanations; however, they believe that the effects of structure must be considered. According to Waltz, structure is defined by the ordering principle of the international system, which is *anarchy*, and the distribution of *capabilities* across units, which are states. Waltz also assumes that there is no differentiation of function between different units.

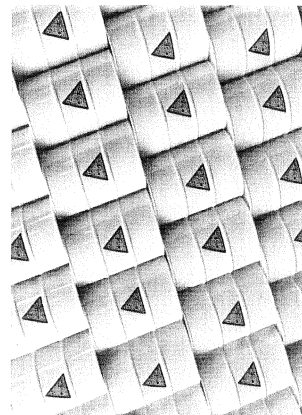
The structure of the international system shapes all foreign policy choices. For a neo-realist, a better explanation for India and Pakistan's nuclear testing would be anarchy or the lack of a common power or central authority to enforce rules and maintain order in the system. In a competitive system, this condition creates a need for weapons to survive. Additionally, in an anarchic system, states with greater power tend to have greater influence.

A second difference between traditional Realists and Waltz's neo-realism is found in their view of power. To Realists, power is an end in itself. States use power to gain more power and thus increase their influence and ability to secure their national interests. Although traditional Realists recognize different elements of power (for example, economic resources and technology), military power is considered the most obvious element of a state's power. Waltz would not agree with those who say that military

force is not as essential as it once was as a tool of statecraft. As recent conflicts in Russia, Iraq, Sudan, Lebanon, and Sri Lanka suggest, many leaders still believe that they can resolve their differences with force.

For neo-realists, power is more than the accumulation of military resources and the ability to use this power to coerce and control other states in the system. Waltz and other neo-realists see power as the combined capabilities of a state. States are differentiated in the system by their power and not by their function. Power gives a state a place or position in the international system and that shapes the state's behaviour. During the cold war, the USA and the USSR were positioned as the only two superpowers. Neo-realists would say that such positioning explains the similarities in their behaviour. The distribution of power and any dramatic changes in that distribution of power help to explain the structure of

the international system. Specifically, states will seek to maintain their position or placement in the system. The end of the cold war and the disintegration of the Soviet empire upset the balance of power and, in the eyes of many neo-realists, increased uncertainty and instability in the international system. Waltz concurs with traditional Realists when he states that the central mechanism for order in the system is balance of power. The renewed emphasis on the importance of the United Nations and NATO and their interventions in crisis areas around the world may be indicative of the major powers' current search for order in the international system. Waltz would challenge neo-liberal Institutionalists who believe that we can manage the processes of globalization merely by building effective international institutions (see Case Study). He would argue that their effectiveness depends on the support of major powers.



Families in several villages near Abidjan, Ivory Coast awoke one summer morning to a horrible smell of rotten eggs and many were suffering with burning eyes and nosebleeds. Eventually, ten people died, thousands sought medical care and children developed sores and blisters. The number of people seeking medical care overwhelmed the health care system in this region and demonstrations against the government led to arrests and the resignation of key political officials. This is the kind of political and human security problem that we will see more of as the industrialized North dumps its waste and worn out computers and cell phones on the poor South. What was the cause of this problem and are there not laws or treaties aimed at addressing these kinds of issues?

The source of this environmental and medical crisis was a 'striking slick of black sludge' that had been illegally dumped in eighteen areas around Abidjan by tanker trucks hired by a local company with no experience in properly disposing of toxic materials. A Swiss oil and metals trading corporation that also leased the ship hired this local company. The *Prabo Koala* had brought this

deadly mix to the Ivory Coast from Amsterdam. Trafigura, the global trading firm, planned on properly disposing the petrochemical wastes in Amsterdam. But once fumes overcame workers cleaning the ship in Amsterdam, the Dutch disposal company stopped the process, ordered an analysis of the wastes and alerted Dutch government authorities. An early analysis of the toxic waste showed concentrations of chemicals that could paralyze a person's nervous system and could kill. When the Amsterdam waste disposal company raised its price because of this danger, the *Prabo Koala* was allowed to take back its waste and sailed for Estonia to pick up Russian oil products and then on to Western Africa.

Officials from Trafigura notified Ivorian officials that the ship was carrying toxic wastes but they were still allowed to land in Abidjan. Both company officials and the government of the Ivory Coast were well aware that there were no facilities in Abidjan for properly disposing of this waste. The Ivorian company, Tommy, hired tanker trucks that were loaded with the toxic wastes from the *Prabo Koala*. During the night, the tankers dumped their loads in eighteen areas around the city of Abidjan.

The disposal and dumping of toxic wastes is a global problem. As environmental regulations in the North become more stringent, corporations move to the South for dumping. Wastes follow the path of least resistance—global corporations look for countries with weak laws and without the capacity or will to enforce any national or international laws aimed at regulating the waste disposal market. Who is responsible for this problem? How should it be managed? *Neoliberal institutionalists* believe that we can establish regimes or governing arrangements to manage trade in toxic wastes and prevent illegal dumping. In fact, a previous dumping incident in Koko, Nigeria, was a catalyst for a conference and treaty to govern the transnational movement of toxic wastes. At the Basel convention in 1989, the global South wanted an absolute ban on all toxic waste trade and the global North

lobbied for a much weaker treaty. The first version of this treaty was ratified in 1992 and revisions in 1994 and 1998 have essentially banned the export of hazardous waste from North to South. Yet, enforcement depends on the cooperation of citizens, global corporations, and governments at all levels. At the time this was considered a victory for the poor and advocates for environmental

A third difference between Realism and Waltz's neo-realism is each one's view on how states react to the condition of anarchy. To Realists, anarchy is a condition of the system, and states react to it according to their size, location, domestic politics, and leadership qualities. In contrast, neo-realists suggest that anarchy defines the system. Further, all states are functionally similar units, meaning that they all experience the same constraints presented by anarchy and strive to maintain their position in the system. Neo-realists explain any differences in policy by differences in power or capabilities. Both Belgium and China recognize that one of the constraints of anarchy is the need for security to protect their national interests. Leaders in these countries may select different policy paths to achieve that security. A small country such as Belgium, with limited resources, responds to anarchy and the resulting **security dilemma** by joining alliances and taking an activist role in regional and international organizations, seeking to control the arms race. China, a major power and a large country, would most likely pursue a unilateral strategy of increasing military strength to protect and secure its interests.

Relative and absolute gains

Joseph Grieco (1988a) is one of several Realist/neo-realist scholars who focuses on the concepts of **relative and absolute gains**. Grieco claims that states are interested in increasing their power and influence (absolute gains) and, thus, will cooperate with other states or actors in the system to increase their capabilities. However, Grieco claims that states are also concerned with how much power and influence other states might achieve (relative gains) in any cooperative endeavour. This situation can be used to show a key difference between neo-liberals and neo-realists. Neo-liberals claim that cooperation does not work when states fail to follow the rules and 'cheat'

justice and human security for all. Unfortunately, the Ivory Coast case shows how difficult it is to manage the processes of globalization and to control those individuals who place profits over the well-being of people.

(for more information: Basel Action Network, <www.ban.org>)

to secure their national interests. Neo-realists claim that there are two barriers to international cooperation: cheating and the relative gains of other actors. Further, when states fail to comply with rules that encourage cooperation, other states may abandon multilateral activity and act unilaterally.

The likelihood of states abandoning international cooperative efforts is increased if participants see other states gaining more from the arrangement. If states agree to a ban on the production and use of landmines, all of the signatories to the treaty will be concerned about compliance. Institutions will be established to enforce the treaty. Neo-realists argue that leaders must be vigilant for cheating and must focus on those states that could gain a military advantage when this weapon system is removed. In some security situations, landmines may be the only effective deterrent against a neighbouring state with superior land forces. In this situation, the relative gains issue is one of survival. In a world of uncertainty and competition, the fundamental question, according to Grieco and others who share his view of neo-realism, is not whether all parties gain from the cooperation, but who will gain more if we cooperate?

Security studies and neo-realism

Recently, security studies scholars, primarily in the USA, have suggested a more nuanced version of a Realism that reflects their interests in understanding the nature of the security threats presented by the international system and the strategy options states must pursue to survive and prosper in the system. These two versions of neo-realism, offensive and defensive realism (many scholars in this area prefer to be called modern realists and not neo-realists), are more policy relevant than Waltz and Grieco's version of neo-realism and, thus, may be seen as more prescriptive than the other versions (Jervis 1999).

Box 7.1 Core assumptions of neo-realists

- States and other actors interact in an anarchic environment. This means that there is no central authority to enforce rules and norms or protect the interests of the larger global community.
- The structure of the system is a major determinant of actor behaviour.
- States are self-interest oriented, and an anarchic and competitive system pushes them to favour self-help over cooperative behaviour.

Offensive neo-realists appear to accept most of Waltz's ideas and a good portion of the assumptions of traditional Realism. Defensive neo-realists suggest that our assumptions of relations with other states depend on whether they are friends or enemies. When dealing with friends such as the European Union, the assumptions governing US leaders are more akin to those promoted by neo-liberals. However, there is little difference between defensive and offensive neo-realists when they are dealing with expansionary or pariah states, or traditional enemies.

John Mearsheimer (1990, 1994/5), an offensive realist in security studies, suggests that relative power and not absolute power is most important to states. He would suggest that leaders of countries should pursue security policies that weaken their potential enemies and increase their power relative to all others. In this era of globalization, the incompatibility of states' goals and interests enhances the competitive nature of an anarchic system and makes conflict as inevitable as cooperation. Thus, talk of reducing military budgets at the end of the cold war was considered by offensive neo-realists to be pure folly. Leaders must always be prepared for an expansionary state that will challenge the global order. Moreover, if the major powers begin a campaign of disarmament and reduce their power relative to other states, they are simply inviting these expansionary states to attack.

John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt (2003) were critical of the decision by George W. Bush to go to war in Iraq. They argue that the Bush administration 'inflated the threat by misleading the world about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and its links to terrorists who might attack the USA in the future.'

More importantly for security neo-realists, this war was unnecessary because the containment of Iraq was working effectively and there was no 'compelling strategic rationale' for this war. The war with Iraq will cost the USA billions of dollars and it has already required

simply a preventive policy aimed at protecting their security. Third, defensive realists challenge the neo-liberal view that it is relatively easy to find areas where national interests might converge and become the basis for cooperation

Key Points

- Kenneth Waltz's structural realism has had a major impact on scholars in International Relations. Waltz claims that the structure of the international system is the key factor in shaping the behaviour of states. Waltz's neo-realism also expands our view of power and capabilities. However, he agrees with traditional Realists when he states that major powers still determine the nature of the international system.
- Structural realists minimize the importance of national attributes as determinants of a state's foreign policy behaviour. To these neo-realists, all states are functionally similar units, experiencing the same constraints presented by anarchy.
- Structural realists accept many assumptions of traditional Realism. They believe that force remains an important and effective tool of statecraft and balance of power is still the central mechanism for order in the system.
- Joseph Grieco represents a group of neo-realists or modern realists who are critical of neo-liberal Institutionalists who claim states are

and institution building. Although they recognize that areas of common or mutual interests exist, defensive neo-realists are concerned about non-compliance or cheating by states, especially in security policy areas.

mainly interested in absolute gains. Grieco claims that all states are interested in both absolute and relative gains. How gains are distributed is an important issue. Thus, there are two barriers to international cooperation: fear of those who might not follow the rules and the relative gains of others.

- Scholars in security studies present two versions of neo-realism or modern realism. Offensive neo-realists emphasize the importance of relative power. Like traditional Realists, they believe that conflict is inevitable in the international system and leaders must always be wary of expansionary powers. Defensive realists are often confused with neo-liberal Institutionalists. They recognize the costs of war and assume that it usually results from irrational forces in a society. However, they admit that expansionary states willing to use military force make it impossible to live in a world without weapons. Cooperation is possible, but it is more likely to succeed in relations with friendly states.

Neo-liberalism

As the previous chapter on Liberalism indicates, there are a number of versions of the theory and all have their progeny in contemporary neo-liberal debates. David Baldwin (1993) identified four varieties of Liberalism that influence contemporary international relations: commercial, republican, sociological, and Liberal Institutionalism.

The first, **commercial Liberalism**, advocates free trade and a market or capitalist economy as the way towards peace and prosperity. Today, this view is promoted by global financial institutions, most of the major trading states, and multinational corporations. The **Neoliberal orthodoxy** is championed by popular authors like Thomas Friedman (2005), and argues that free trade, private property rights and free markets will lead to a richer, more innovative, and more tolerant world. **Republican Liberalism** states that democratic states are more inclined to respect the rights of their citizens and are less likely to go to war with their democratic neighbours. In current scholarship, this view is presented as democratic peace theory. These two forms of Liberalism, commercial and

republican, have been combined to form the core foreign policy goals of many of the world's major powers.

In **sociological Liberalism**, the notion of community and the process of interdependence are important elements. As transnational activities increase, people in distant lands are linked and their governments become more interdependent. As a result, it becomes more difficult and more costly for states to act unilaterally and to avoid cooperation with neighbours. The cost of war or other deviant behaviour increases for all states and, eventually, a peaceful international community is built. Many of the assumptions of sociological Liberalism are represented in the current globalization literature dealing with popular culture and civil society.

Liberal Institutionalism or **neo-liberal Institutionalism** is considered by many scholars to present the most convincing challenge to Realist and neo-realist thinking. The roots of this version of neo-liberalism are found in the functional integration scholarship of the 1940s and the 1950s and regional integration studies of the 1960s. These

studies suggest that the way towards peace and prosperity is to have independent states pool their resources and even surrender some of their sovereignty to create integrated communities to promote economic growth or respond to regional problems (see Ch.25). The European Union is one such institution that began as regional community for encouraging multilateral cooperation in the production of coal and steel. Proponents of integration and community building were motivated to challenge dominant Realist thinking because of the experiences of the two world wars. Rooted in liberal thinking, integration theories promoted after the Second World War were less idealistic and more pragmatic than the Liberal Internationalism that dominated policy debates after the First World War.

The third generation of liberal Institutional scholarship was the transnationalism and complex interdependence of the 1970s (Keohane and Nye 1972, 1977). Theorists in these camps presented arguments that suggested that the world had become more pluralistic in terms of actors involved in international interactions and that these actors had become more dependent on each other. Complex interdependence presented a world with four characteristics: (1) increasing linkages among states and non-state actors; (2) a new agenda of international issues with no distinction between low and high politics; (3) a recognition of multiple channels for interaction among actors across national boundaries; and (4) the decline of the efficacy of military force as a tool of statecraft. Complex interdependence scholars would suggest that globalization represents an increase in linkages and channels for interaction, as well as in the number of interconnections.

Neo-liberal Institutionalism or Institutional theory shares many of the assumptions of neo-realism. However, its adherents claim that neo-realists focus excessively on conflict and competition, and minimize the chances for cooperation even in an anarchic international system. Neo-liberal Institutionalists see 'institutions' as the mediator and the means to achieve cooperation among actors in the system. Currently, neo-liberal Institutionalists are focusing their research on issues of **global governance** and the creation and maintenance of institutions associated with managing the processes of globalization.

For neo-liberal Institutionalists, the focus on mutual interests extends beyond trade and development issues. With the end of the cold war, states were forced to address new security concerns like the threat of terrorism, the

proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and an increasing number of internal conflicts that threatened regional and global security. Graham Allison (2000) states that one of the consequences of the globalization of security concerns like terrorism, drug trafficking, and pandemics like HIV/AIDS is the realization that threats to any country's security cannot be addressed unilaterally. Successful responses to security threats require the creation of regional and global regimes that promote cooperation among states and the coordination of policy responses to these new security threats.

Robert Keohane (2002b) suggests that one result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the USA was the creation of a very broad coalition against terrorism, involving a large number of states and key global and regional institutions. Neo-liberals support cooperative multilateralism and are generally critical of the pre-emptive and unilateral use of force as is condoned in the 2002 Bush Doctrine. Most neo-liberals would believe that the US-led war with Iraq did more to undermine the legitimacy and influence of global and regional security institutions that operated so successfully in the first Gulf War (1990-1) and continue to work effectively in Afghanistan.

The core assumptions of neo-liberal Institutionalists include:

- States are key actors in international relations, but not the only significant actors. States are rational or instrumental actors, always seeking to maximize their interests in all issue-areas.
- In this competitive environment, states seek to maximize absolute gains through cooperation. Rational behaviour leads states to see value in cooperative behaviour. States are less concerned with gains or advantages achieved by other states in cooperative arrangements.
- The greatest obstacle to successful cooperation is non-compliance or cheating by states.
- Cooperation is never without problems, but states will shift loyalty and resources to institutions if these are seen as mutually beneficial and if they provide states with increasing opportunities to secure their international interests.

The neo-liberal institutional perspective is more relevant in issue-areas where states have mutual interests. For example, most world leaders believe that we will all benefit from an open trade system, and many support trade rules that protect the environment. Institutions have been

created to manage international behaviour in both areas. The neo-liberal view may have less relevance in areas in which states have no mutual interests. Thus, cooperation

in military or national security areas, where someone's gain is perceived as someone else's loss (a **zero-sum perspective**), may be more difficult to achieve.

Key Points

- Contemporary neo-liberalism has been shaped by the assumptions of commercial, republican, sociological, and institutional Liberalism.
- Commercial and republican Liberalism provide the foundation for current neo-liberal thinking in Western governments. These countries promote free trade and democracy in their foreign policy programmes.
- Neo-liberal Institutionalism, the other side of the neo-neo debate, is rooted in the functional integration theoretical work of the 1950s and 1960s, and the complex interdependence and transnational studies literature of the 1970s and 1980s.
- Neo-liberal Institutionalists see institutions as the mediator and the means to achieve cooperation in the international system.

The neo-neo debate

By now it should be clear that the neo-neo debate is not particularly contentious, nor is the intellectual difference between the two theories significant. As was suggested earlier in the chapter, neo-realists and neo-liberals share an epistemology; they focus on similar questions and agree on a number of assumptions about man, the state,

and the international system. A summary of the major points of contention is presented in Box 7.2.

If anything, the current neo-liberal Institutionalist literature appears to try hard to prove that they are a part of the neo-realist/Realist family. As Robert Jervis (1999: 43) states, there is not much of a gap between the two theories.

Box 7.2 The main features of the neo-realist/neo-liberal debate

- 1 Both agree that the international system is anarchic. Neo-realists say that anarchy puts more constraints on foreign policy and that neo-liberals minimize the importance of survival as the goal of each state. Neo-liberals claim that neo-realists minimize the importance of international interdependence, globalization, and the regimes created to manage these interactions.
- 2 Neo-realists believe that international cooperation will not happen unless states make it happen. They feel that it is hard to achieve, difficult to maintain, and dependent on state power. Neo-liberals believe that cooperation is easy to achieve in areas where states have mutual interests.
- 3 Neo-liberals think that actors with common interests try to maximize absolute gains. Neo-realists claim that neo-liberals overlook the importance of relative gains. Neo-liberals want to maximize the total amount of gains for all parties involved whereas the neo-realists believe that the fundamental goal of states in cooperative relationships is to prevent others from gaining more.
- 4 Neo-realists state that anarchy requires states to be preoccupied with relative power, security, and survival in a competitive international system. Neo-liberals are more concerned with economic welfare or international political economy issues and other non-military issue-areas such as international environmental concerns.
- 5 Neo-realists emphasize the capabilities (power) of state over the intentions and interests of states. Capabilities are essential for security and independence. Neo-realists claim that uncertainty about the intentions of other states forces states to focus on their capabilities. Neo-liberals emphasize intentions and preferences.
- 5 Neo-liberals see institutions and regimes as significant forces in international relations. Neo-realists state that neo-liberals exaggerate the impact of regimes and institutions on state behaviour. Neo-liberals claim that they facilitate cooperation, and neo-realists say that they do not mitigate the constraining effects of anarchy on cooperation.

(Adapted from Baldwin 1993: 4-6)

As evidence of this, he quotes Robert Keohane and Lisa Martin (1999: 3): 'for better or worse institutional theory is a half-sibling of neo-realism.'

The following reviews key aspects of this debate. With regard to anarchy, both theories share several assumptions. First, they agree that anarchy means that there is no common authority to enforce any rules or laws constraining the behaviour of states or other actors. Neo-liberal Institutionalists and neo-realists agree that anarchy encourages states to act unilaterally and to promote self-help behaviour. The condition of anarchy also makes cooperation more difficult to achieve. However, neo-realists tend to be more pessimistic and to see the world as much more competitive and conflictive. To most neo-realists, international relations is a struggle for survival, and in every interaction, there is a chance of a loss of power to a future competitor or enemy. For neo-liberal Institutionalists, international relations is competitive. However, the opportunities for cooperation in areas of mutual interest may mitigate the effects of anarchy.

Some scholars suggest that the real difference between the neo is that they study different worlds. The neo-liberal Institutionalists focus their scholarship on political economy, the environment, and human rights issues. Neo-liberals work in what we once called the low politics arena, issues related to human security and the good life. Their assumptions work better in these issue-areas.

Neo-realists tend to dominate the security studies area. They study issues of international security or what was once called the high politics issues. Many neo-realists assume that what distinguishes the study of international relations from political science is the emphasis on issues of survival. For neo-liberal Institutionalists, foreign policy is now about managing complex interdependence and the various processes of globalization. It is also about responding to problems that threaten the economic well-being, if not the survival, of people around the world. Foreign policy leaders must find ways to manage financial markets so that the gap between rich and poor does not become insurmountable. These same leaders must find ways to deal with toxic waste dumping that threaten clean water supplies in developing states. The anodyne for neo-liberal Institutionalists is to create institutions to manage issue-areas where states have mutual interests. Creating, maintaining, and further empowering these institutions is the future of foreign policy for neo-liberal Institutionalists.

Neo-realists take a more state-centric view of foreign policy. They recognize international relations as a world of cooperation and conflict. However, close to their traditional Realist roots, neo-realists see foreign policy as dominated by issues of national security and survival. The most effective tool of statecraft is still force or the threat of force and, even in these times of globalization, states must continue to look after their own interests. All states, in the language of the neo-realists, are **egoistic value maximizers**.

Neo-realists accept the existence of institutions and regimes and recognize their role as tools or instruments of statecraft. From a neo-realist view, states work to establish these regimes and institutions if they serve their interests (absolute gain), and they continue to support these same regimes and institutions if the cooperative activities promoted by the institution do not unfairly advantage other states (relative gains). Neo-realists also would agree that institutions can shape the content and direction of foreign policy in certain issue-areas and when the issue at hand is not central to the security interests of a given state.

Neo-liberals agree that, once established, institutions can do more than shape or influence the foreign policy of states. Institutions can promote a foreign policy agenda by providing critical information and expertise. Institutions also may facilitate policy-making and encourage more cooperation at local, national, and international levels. They often serve as a catalyst for coalition building among state and non-state actors. Recent work on environmental institutions suggests that they can promote changes in national policies and actually encourage both national and international policies that address environmental problems (Haas, Keohane, and Levy 1993).

A major issue of contention in the debate is the notion that institutions have become significant in international relations. Further, they can make a difference by helping to resolve global and regional problems and encourage cooperation rather than conflict. Neo-liberal Institutionalists expect an increase in the number of institutions and an increase in cooperative behaviour. They predict that these institutions will have a greater role in managing the processes of globalization and that states will come to the point where they realize that acting unilaterally or limiting cooperative behaviour will not lead to the resolution or management of critical global problems. Ultimately, neo-liberal Institutionalists claim that the significance of these institutions as players in the game of international politics will increase substantially.

Neo-realists recognize that these institutions are likely to become more significant in areas of mutual interest, where national security interests are not at stake. However, the emphasis that states place on relative gains will limit the growth of institutions and will always make cooperation difficult. For neo-realists, the important question is not will we all gain from this cooperation, but who will gain more?

What is left out of the debate?

One could argue that the neo-neo debate leaves out a great number of issues. Perhaps with a purpose, it narrows the agenda of international relations. It is not a debate about some of the most critical questions like 'Why war?' or 'Why inequality in the international system?' Remember this is a debate that occurs within the mainstream of International Relations scholarship. Neo-realists and neo-liberal Institutionalists agree on the questions; they simply offer different responses. Some important issues are left out and assumptions about international politics may be overlooked. As a student of international relations, you should be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a theory. Let us consider three possible areas for discussion: the role of domestic politics, learning, and political globalization.

Both theories assume that states are value maximizers and that anarchy constrains the behaviour of states. But, what about domestic forces that might promote a more cooperative strategy to address moral or ethical issues? Neo-realist assumptions suggest a sameness in foreign policy that may not be true. How do we account for the

Key Points

- The neo-neo debate is not a debate between two polar opposite worldviews. They share an epistemology, focus on similar questions, and agree on a number of assumptions about international politics. This is an intra-paradigm debate.
- Neo-liberal Institutionalists and neo-realists study different worlds of international politics. Neo-realists focus on security and military issues. Neo-liberal Institutionalists focus on political economy, environmental issues, and, lately, human rights issues.
- Neo-realists explain that all states must be concerned with the absolute and relative gains that result from international agreements and cooperative efforts. Neo-liberal Institutionalists are less concerned about relative gains and consider that all will benefit from absolute gains.
- Neo-realists are more cautious about cooperation and remind us that the world is still a competitive place where self-interest rules.

moral dimensions of foreign policy such as development assistance given to poor states which have no strategic or economic value to the donor? Or how do we explain domestic interests that promote isolationist policies in the USA at a time when system changes would suggest international activism might result in both absolute and relative gains? We may need to challenge Waltz and ask if the internal make-up of a state matters. All politics is now global (global and local) and neo-realists especially, but also neo-liberals, must pay attention to what goes on inside a state. Issues of political culture, identity, and domestic political games must be considered.

We must assume that leaders and citizens alike learn something from their experiences. The lessons of two world wars prompted Europeans to set aside issues of sovereignty and nationalism and build an economic community. Although some neo-liberal Institutionalists recognize the importance of learning, in general neither theory explores the possibility that states will learn and may shift from a traditional self-interest perspective to an emphasis on common interests. There may be a momentum to cooperation and institution building that both theories underestimate. Can we assume that institutions and cooperation have had some impact on conditions of anarchy?

Both neo-realists and neo-liberals neglect the fact the political activities may be shifting away from the state. A number of scholars have suggested that one of the most significant outcomes of globalization is the emergence of global or transnational political advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Institutions promoted primarily by these advocacy networks have had a major impact on human rights issues such as child labour and security.

- Neo-liberal Institutionalists believe that states and other actors can be persuaded to cooperate if they are convinced that all states will comply with rules and cooperation will result in absolute gains.
- This debate does not discuss many important issues that challenge some of the core assumptions of each theory. For example, neo-realism cannot explain foreign policy behaviour that challenges the norm of national interest over human interests.
- Globalization has contributed to a shift in political activity away from the state. Transnational social movements have forced states to address critical international issues and in several situations that have supported the establishment of institutions that promote further cooperation, and fundamentally challenge the power of states.

Neo-liberals and neo-realists on globalization

As I suggested earlier in this chapter, most neo-realists do not think that globalization changes the game of international politics much at all. States might require more resources and expertise to maintain their sovereignty, but neo-realists think most evidence suggests that states are increasing their expenditures and their jurisdictions over a wide variety of areas. Ultimately, we still all look to the state to solve the problems we face, and the state still has a monopoly over the legal use of coercive power. Most neo-realists assume that conditions of anarchy and competition accentuate the concerns for absolute and relative gains. As Waltz suggested in a recent article on the topic, '[t]he terms of political, economic and military competition are set by the larger units of the international political system' (Waltz 2000: 53). Waltz recognizes that globalization presents new policy challenges for nation-states but he denies that the state is being pushed aside by new global actors. The state remains the primary force in international relations and has expanded its power to effectively manage the processes of globalization.

What neo-realists are most concerned with is the new security challenges presented by globalization. Two examples follow.

Neo-realists are concerned with the uneven nature of economic globalization. Inequality in the international sys-

Box 7.3 Neo-liberalism and its current critics

Critical voices

'Free trade theorists claimed that the rising tide will lift all boats, providing broad, economic benefits to all levels of society. The evidence so far clearly shows that it lifts only yachts.'

(Barker and Mander 1999: 4)

After twenty years of carefully following international economic rules such as free trade, price deregulation, and privatization as promoted by the Neoliberal Washington Consensus, several Latin American countries have elected new governments that are more concerned about uneven economic growth and greater inequalities within their countries. Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador have new leaders who are hostile to privatization schemes and who are not afraid of nationalizing foreign corporations to address much needed social programmes in their countries. Many of these 'socialist' governments are supported by native peoples or indigenous groups who are concerned with the foreign ownership of natural resources like coal, oil, and gas. Dani Rodrik (1997) argues that globalization raises the mobility of capital, making it very difficult for governments to tax profit. Thus profits from

economic system. Fourth and finally, if trade barriers are minimal and government takes a minor role in trying to manage their economy, the chances for government corruption and political interference are greatly reduced. Most neo-liberals have incredible faith in the market and believe that globalization will encourage further economic integration among public and private actors in the economy. Private forms of economic integration are increasing across the world. Banks,

Most of the discussion of globalization among neo-liberals falls into two categories: (1) a free market commercial neo-liberalism that dominates policy circles throughout the world; and (2) academic neo-liberal Institutionalism that promotes regimes and institutions as the most effective means of managing the globalization process.

The end of the cold war was the end of the Soviet experiment in command economics and it left capitalism and free market ideas with few challengers in international economic institutions and national governments. Free market neo-liberals believe that governments should not fight globalization or attempt to slow it down. These neo-liberals want minimal government interference in the national or global market. From this perspective, institutions should promote rules and norms that keep the market open and discourage states that attempt to interfere with market forces. Other more social democratic

Key Points

- Neo-realists think that states are still the principal actors in international politics. Globalization challenges some areas of state authority and control, but politics is still international.
- Neo-realists are concerned about new security challenges resulting from uneven globalization, namely, inequality and conflict.
- Globalization provides opportunities and resources for transnational social movements that challenge the authority of states in various policy areas. Neo-realists are not supportive of any movement that seeks to open critical security issues to public debate.
- Free market neo-liberals believe globalization is a positive force. Eventually, all states will benefit from the economic growth pro-

investment firms, and industries are merging, linking Europe with the USA, China with Africa, and Russia with Colorado. Neo-liberals predict that the globalization momentum will increase due to the declining costs of transportation, technology, and communications. Distance is disappearing.

(Adapted from Burtless et al. 1998)

neo-liberals support institutions and regimes that manage the economic processes of globalization as a means to prevent the uneven flow of capital and other resources that might widen the gap between rich and poor states.

Recent demonstrations against global economic institutions in the USA and Europe suggest that there are many who feel that the market is anything but fair. People marching in the streets of London and Seattle called for global institutions that provide economic well-being for all and for reformed institutions that promote social justice, ecological balance, and human rights (see Box 7.3). The critics of economic globalization state that governments will have to extend their jurisdictions and intervene more extensively in the market to address these concerns, as well as open the market and all of its opportunities to those people now left out. Given the current neo-liberal thinking, this kind of radical change is unlikely.

motivated by the forces of globalization. They believe that states should not fight globalization or attempt to control it with unwanted political interventions.

- Some neo-liberals believe that states should intervene to promote capitalism with a human face or a market that is more sensitive to the needs and interests of all the people. New institutions can be created and older ones reformed to prevent the uneven flow of capital, promote environmental sustainability, and protect the rights of citizens.

Conclusion: narrowing the agenda of international relations

Neo-realism and neo-liberal Institutionalism are status quo rationalist theories. They are theories firmly embraced by mainstream scholars and by key decision-makers in many countries. There are some differences

between these theories, although these differences are minor compared to the issues that divide reflectivist and rationalist theories and critical and problem-solving theories (see Ch.10).

In scholarly communities, neo-realism generally represents an attempt to make Realism more theoretically rigorous. Waltz's emphasis on system structure and its impact on the behaviour of states leads one to conclude that international relations is not explained by looking inside the state. Neo-realists who reduce international politics to microeconomic rational choice or instrumental thinking also minimize the idiosyncratic attributes of individual decision-makers and the different cultural and historical factors that shape politics within a state. These more scientific and parsimonious versions of neo-realism offer researchers some powerful explanations of state behaviour. However, do these explanations offer a complete picture of a given event or a policy choice? Does neo-realist scholarship narrow the research agenda? Recently, neo-realist scholars were criticized for their inability to explain the end of the cold war and other major transformations in the international system. Neo-realists minimize the importance of culture, traditions, and identity—all factors that shaped the emergence of new communities that helped to transform the Soviet empire.

Contributions by neo-realists in security studies have had a significant impact on the policy community. Both defensive and offensive neo-realists claim that the world remains competitive and uncertain and the structure of the international system makes power politics the dominant policy paradigm. This fits with the interests and belief systems of most military strategists and foreign policy decision-makers in positions of power in the world today. This continues the Realist tradition that has dominated international politics for centuries and it suggests that the criticisms of the Realist/neo-realist tradition may be limited to the academic world. However, critical perspectives, inside and outside the academic world, are causing some Realists/neo-realists to re-examine their assumptions about how this world works. Certainly, defensive neo-realists represent a group of scholars and potential policy advisers who understand the importance of multilateralism and the need to build effective institutions to prevent arms races that might lead to war. There is some change, but the agenda remains state-centric and focused on military security issues.

Neo-liberalism, whether the policy variety or the academic neo-liberal Institutionalism, is a rejection of the more utopian or cosmopolitan versions of Liberalism. US foreign policy since the end of the cold war has involved a careful use of power to spread an American version of

liberal democracy: peace through trade, investment, and commerce. In the last few years, US foreign policy has promoted business and markets over human rights, the environment, and social justice. Washington's brand of neo-liberalism has been endorsed by many of the world's major powers and smaller trading states. The dominant philosophy of statecraft has become a form of pragmatic meliorism with markets and Western democratic institutions as the chosen means for improving our lives. Again, we see a narrowing of choices and a narrowing of the issues and ideas that define our study of international politics.

Neo-liberal Institutionalism, with its focus on cooperation, institutions, and regimes, may offer the broadest agenda of issues and ideas for scholars and policymakers. Neo-liberal Institutionalists are now asking if institutions matter in a variety of issue-areas. Scholars are asking important questions about the impact of international regimes and institutions on domestic politics and the ability of institutions to promote rules and norms that encourage environmental sustainability, human rights, and economic development. It is interesting that many neo-liberal Institutionalists in the USA find it necessary to emphasize their intellectual relationship with neo-realists and ignore their connections with the English School and more cosmopolitan versions of Liberalism (see Ch.6). The emphasis on the shared assumptions with neo-realism presents a further narrowing of the agenda of international politics. A neo-liberal institutional perspective that focuses on the nature of international society or community and the importance of institutions as promoters of norms and values may be more appropriate for understanding and explaining contemporary international politics.

Every theory leaves something out. No theories can claim to offer a picture of the world that is complete. No theory has exclusive claims to the truth. Theories in international politics offer insights into the behaviour of states. Realists and neo-realists give great insights into power, conflict, and the politics of survival. However, neo-realism does not help us understand the impact of economic interdependence on state behaviour or the potential effects of institutions and regimes on domestic politics. Here is where neo-liberal Institutionalism helps us construct a picture of international politics. Theories empower some actors and policy strategies and dismiss others. Neo-realism and neo-liberal Institutionalism are theories that address status quo issues and consider

questions about how to keep the system operating. These theories do not raise questions about the dominant belief system or the distribution of power, and how these may be connected to conditions of poverty and violence. As you continue your studies in international politics, be

critical of the theories being presented. Which theories explain the most? Which theory helps you make sense of this world? What does your theory leave out? Who or what perspective does the theory empower? Who or what view of the world is left out?

Questions

- 1 What are the similarities between traditional Realism and neo-realism?
- 2 What are the intellectual foundations of neo-liberal Institutionalism?
- 3 What assumptions about international politics are shared by neo-liberals and neo-realists? What are the significant differences between these two theories?
- 4 How do you react to those who say that the neo-neo debate is not much of a debate at all? Is this merely an academic debate or has this discussion had any influence on foreign policy?
- 5 Do you think globalization will have any impact on neo-realist and neo-liberal thinking? Is either theory useful in trying to explain and understand the globalization process?
- 6 What do defensive and offensive neo-realists believe? How important are their theories to military strategists?
- 7 What is the difference between relative and absolute gains? What role do these concepts play in neo-realist thinking? In neo-liberal thinking?
- 8 How might the proliferation of institutions in various policy areas influence the foreign policy process in major, middle-ranking, and small states? Do you think these institutions will mitigate the effects of anarchy as neo-liberals claim?
- 9 Why do you think neo-realism and neo-liberalism maintain such dominance in US International Relations scholarship?
- 10 If we study international politics as defined by neo-realists and neo-liberal Institutionalists, what are the issues and controversies we would focus on? What is left out of our study of international politics?

Guide to further reading

General surveys with excellent coverage of the neo-realist and neo-liberal perspectives
 Doyle, Michael (1997). *Ways of War and Peace* (New York: W. Norton). Discusses the antecedents to neo-realism and neo-liberalism. Excellent sections on Hobbes and structural Realism and varieties of Liberalism.
 Halliday, F. (1994). *Rethinking International Relations* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press). Lively and honest analysis of the current theoretical debates.
 Mandelbaum, M. (2002). *The Ideas that Conquered the World* (New York: Public Affairs). An excellent review of the core ideas of peace, democracy, and free market capitalism. Liberalism is discussed as the sole surviving ideology as the cold war ended.

For the more advanced student of International Relations
 Smith, S., Booth, K., and Zalewski, M. (eds) (1996). *International Relations Theory and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Excellent on critical theory and challenges to realist approaches.

Chapter 8

Marxist theories of international relations

STEPHEN HOBDEN • RICHARD WYN JONES

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Reader's Guide

This chapter will introduce, outline, and assess the Marxist contribution to the study of International Relations. Having identified a number of core features common to Marxist approaches, the chapter discusses four strands within contemporary Marxism which make particularly significant contributions to our understanding of world politics: world-system

theory; Gramscianism; critical theory; and New Marxism. The chapter argues that no analysis of globalization is complete without an input from Marxist theory. Indeed, Marx was arguably the *first* theorist of globalization, and from the perspective of Marxism, the features often pointed to as evidence of globalization are hardly novel, but are rather the modern manifestations of long-term tendencies within the development of capitalism.

Introduction: the continuing relevance of Marxism

With the end of the cold war and the global triumph of 'free market' capitalism, it became commonplace to assume that the ideas of Marx, and his numerous disciples, could be safely consigned to the dustbin of history. The 'great experiment' had failed. While Communist parties retained power in China, Vietnam, and Cuba, they did not now constitute a threat to the hegemony of the global capitalist system. Rather, in order to try to retain power, these parties were themselves being forced to submit to the apparently unassailable logic of 'the market' by sping many of the central features of contemporary capitalist societies. One of the key lessons of the twentieth century, therefore, would appear to be that Marxist thought leads only to a historical dead end. The future is liberal and capitalist.

Yet despite this, Marx and Marxist thought more generally refuse to go away. The end of the Soviet experiment and the apparent lack of a credible alternative to capitalism may have led to a crisis in Marxism, but two decades later there appears to be something of a renaissance. There are probably two reasons why this renaissance is occurring, and why Marxists walk with a renewed spring in their step.

First, for many Marxists the communist experiment in the Soviet Union had become a major embarrassment. In the decades immediately after the October Revolution, 'Workers' State'. Subsequently, however, this loyalty had been stretched beyond breaking point by the depravities of Stalinism, and by Soviet behaviour in its post-Second World War satellites in Eastern Europe. What was sometimes termed 'actually existing socialism' was plainly not the communist utopia that many dreamed of and that Marx had apparently promised. Some Marxists were openly critical of the Soviet Union. Others just kept quiet and hoped that the situation, and the human rights record, would improve.

The break-up of the Soviet bloc has, in a sense, wiped the slate clean. This event reopened the possibility of being able to argue in favour of Marx's ideas without having to defend the actions of governments that justify their behaviour with reference to them. Moreover, the disappearance of the Soviet Union has encouraged an appreciation of

argue that the effects of global capitalism are to ensure that the powerful and wealthy continue to prosper at the expense of the powerless and the poor. We are all aware that there is gross inequality in the world. Statistics concerning the human costs of poverty are truly numbing in their awfulness (the issue of global poverty is further discussed in Ch.27). Marxist theorists argue that the relative prosperity of the few is dependent on the destitution of the many. In Marx's own words, 'Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality at the opposite pole'.

In the next section we will outline some of the central features of the Marxist approach—or historical materialism as it is often known. Following on from this, subsequent sections will explore some of the most important strands in contemporary Marx-inspired thinking about world politics. We should note, however, that given the

richness and variety of Marxist thinking about world politics, the account that follows is inevitably destined to be partial and to some extent arbitrary. Our aim in the following is to provide a route map that we hope will encourage readers themselves to explore further the work of Marx and of those who have built on the foundations he laid.

Key Points

- Marx's work retains its relevance despite the collapse of Communist Party rule in the former Soviet Union.
- Of particular importance is Marx's analysis of capitalism, which has yet to be bettered.
- Marxist analyses of international relations aim to reveal the hidden workings of global capitalism. These hidden workings provide the context in which international events occur.

The essential elements of Marxist theories of world politics

In his inaugural address to the Working Men's International Association in London in 1864, Karl Marx told his audience that history had 'taught the working classes the duty to master [for] themselves the mysteries of international politics'. However, despite the fact that Marx himself wrote copiously about international affairs, most of this writing was journalistic in character. He did not incorporate the international dimension into his theoretical mapping of the contours of capitalism. This omission should perhaps not surprise us. The sheer scale of the theoretical enterprise in which he was engaged, as well as the nature of his own methodology, inevitably meant that Marx's work would be contingent and unfinished.

Marx was an enormously prolific writer and his ideas developed and changed over time. Hence, it is not surprising that his legacy has been open to numerous interpretations. In addition, real-world developments have also led to the revision of his ideas in the light of experience. A variety of schools of thought have emerged, which claim Marx as a direct inspiration, or whose work can be linked to Marx's legacy. This chapter will focus on four strands of contemporary Marxist thought that have all made major contributions to thinking about world politics. Before we

discuss what is distinctive about these approaches, it is important that we examine the essential elements of commonality that lie between them.

First, all the theorists discussed in this chapter share with Marx the view that the social world should be analyzed as a **totality**. The academic division of the social world into different areas of inquiry—history, philosophy, economics, political science, sociology, international relations, etc.—is both arbitrary and unhelpful. None can be understood without knowledge of the others: the social world had to be studied as a whole. Given the scale and complexity of the social world, this entreaty clearly makes great demands of the analyst. Nonetheless, for Marxist theorists, the disciplinary boundaries that characterize the contemporary social sciences need to be transcended if we are to generate a proper understanding of the dynamics of world politics.

Another key element of Marxist thought, which serves further to underline this concern with interconnection and context, is the **materialist conception of history**. The central contention here is that processes of historical change are ultimately a reflection of the economic development of society. That is, economic development

is effectively the motor of history. The central dynamic that Marx identifies is tension between the means of production and relations of production that together form the economic base of a given society. As the means of production develop, for example through technological advancement, previous relations of production become outmoded, and indeed become fetters restricting the most effective utilization of the new productive capacity. This in turn leads to a process of social change whereby relations of production are transformed in order to better accommodate the new configuration of means. Developments in the economic base act as a catalyst for the broader transformation of society as a whole. This is because, as Marx argues in the Preface to his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 'the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general'. Thus the legal, political, and cultural institutions and practices of a given society reflect and reinforce—in a more or less mediated form—the pattern of power and control in the economy. It follows logically, therefore, that change in the economic base ultimately leads to change in the 'legal and political superstructure'. (For a diagrammatical representation of the base–superstructure model, see Fig. 8.1.)

Class plays a key role in Marxist analysis. In contrast to Liberals, who believe that there is an essential harmony of interest between various social groups, Marxists hold that society is systematically prone to class conflict. Indeed, in the *Communist Manifesto*, which Marx co-authored with Engels, it is argued that 'the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle' (Marx and Engels 1967). In capitalist society, the main axis of conflict is between the bourgeoisie (the capitalist) and the proletariat (the workers).

Despite his commitment to rigorous scholarship, Marx did not think it either possible or desirable for the analyst to remain a detached or neutral observer of this

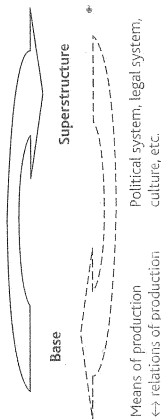


Figure 8.1 The base–superstructure model

need of radical overhaul. Moreover, there are substantial differences between them in terms of their attitudes to the legacy of Marx's ideas. The work of the New Marxists draws far more directly on Marx's original ideas than does the work of the critical theorists. Indeed, the latter would probably be more comfortable being viewed as post-Marxists than as straightforward Marxists. But even for them, as the very term post-Marxism suggests, the ideas of Marx remain a basic point of departure.

World-system theory

The origins of world-system theory

The origins of world-system theory can be traced back to the first systematic attempt to apply the ideas of Marx to the international sphere, that is, to the critique of imperialism advanced by a number of thinkers at the start of the twentieth century (see Brewer 1990). The most well-known and influential work to emerge from this debate is the pamphlet written by Lenin, and published in 1917, called *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Lenin accepted much of Marx's basic thesis, but argued that the character of capitalism had changed since Marx published the first volume of *Capital* in 1867 (Marx 1992).

Capitalism had entered a new stage—its highest and final stage—with the development of **monopoly capitalism**. Under monopoly capitalism, a two-tier structure had developed within the world-economy with a dominant core exploiting a less-developed periphery. With the development of a core and periphery, there was no longer an automatic harmony of interests between all workers. The bourgeoisie in the core countries could use profits derived from exploiting the periphery to improve the lot of their own proletariat. In other words, the capitalists of the core could pacify their own working class through the further exploitation of the periphery.

Lenin's views were developed by the Latin American Dependency School, the writers of which developed the notion of core and periphery in greater depth. In particular, Raúl Prebisch argued that countries in the periphery were suffering as a result of what he called 'the declining terms of trade'. He suggested that the price of manufactured goods increased more rapidly than that of raw

Key Points

- Marx himself provided little in terms of a theoretical analysis of international relations.
- His ideas have been interpreted and appropriated in a number of different and contradictory ways, resulting in a number of competing schools of Marxism.
- Underlying these different schools are several common elements that can be traced back to Marx's writings.

materials. So, for example, year by year it requires more tons of coffee to pay for a refrigerator. As a result of their reliance on primary goods, countries of the periphery become poorer relative to the core. These arguments were developed further by writers such as André Gunder Frank and Henrique Fernando Cardoso. It is from the framework developed by such writers that contemporary world-system theory emerged.

The key features of Wallerstein's world-system theory

In order to outline the key features of world-system theory, we shall concentrate on the work of perhaps its most prominent protagonist, Immanuel Wallerstein. For Wallerstein, history has been marked by the rise and demise of a series of world-systems. The modern world-system emerged in Europe at around the turn of the sixteenth century. It subsequently expanded to encompass the entire globe. The driving force behind this seemingly relentless process of expansion and incorporation has been capitalism, defined by Wallerstein as 'a system of production for sale in a market for profit and appropriation of this profit on the basis of individual or collective ownership' (1979: 66). Within the context of this system, all the institutions of the social world are continually being created and re-created. Furthermore, and crucially, it is not only the elements within the system which change. The system itself is historically bounded. It had a beginning, has a middle, and will have an end.

In terms of the geography of the modern world-system, in addition to a core–periphery distinction, Wallerstein

added an intermediate **semi-periphery**. According to Wallerstein, the semi-peripheral zone has an intermediate role within the world-system displaying certain features characteristic of the core and others characteristic of the periphery. Although dominated by core economic interests, the semi-periphery has its own relatively vibrant indigenously owned industrial base (see Fig. 8.2). Because of this hybrid nature, the semi-periphery plays important economic and political roles within the modern world-system. In particular, it provides a source of labour that counteracts any upward pressure on wages in the core and also provides a new home for those industries that can no longer function profitably in the core (for example, car assembly and textiles). The semi-periphery also plays a vital role in stabilizing the political structure of the world-system.

According to world-system theorists, the three zones of the world-economy are linked together in an exploitative relationship in which wealth is drained away from the periphery to the centre. As a consequence, the relative positions of the zones become ever more deeply entrenched: the rich get richer while the poor become poorer.

Together, the **core**, **semi-periphery**, and **periphery** make up the geographic dimension of the world-economy. However, described in isolation they provide a rather static portrayal of the world-system. In order to understand

the dynamics of their interaction over time we must turn our attention to the **temporal** dimensions of Wallerstein's description of the world-economy. These are cyclical rhythms, secular trends, contradictions, and crisis. It is these, when combined with the spatial dimensions, which determine the historical trajectory of the system.

The first temporal dimension, **cyclical rhythms**, is concerned with the tendency of the capitalist world-economy to go through recurrent periods of expansion and subsequent contraction, or more colloquially, boom and bust. Whatever the underlying processes responsible for these waves of growth and depression, it is important to note that each cycle does not simply return the system to the point from which it started. Rather, if we plot the end point of each wave we discover the **secular trends** within the system. Secular trends refer to the long-term growth or contraction of the world-economy. The third temporal feature of the world-system is **contradictions**. These arise because of constraints imposed by systemic structures which make one set of behavior optimal for actors in the short run and a different, even opposite, set of behavior optimal for the same actors in the middle run' (Wallerstein 1991a: 261). For Wallerstein, one of the central contradictions is 'under-consumption'. This refers to the situation where it is in the interests of capitalists to have well-paid workers so that they can consume the items that they produce. It is also in their interest to reduce wage levels in order to increase profitability. In practice it is not possible to fulfil both of these aims. The pressure of the capitalist system means that, to remain profitable, capitalist seek to reduce wages—though this also reduces consumption. Contradictions in the world-economy arise from the fact that the structure of the system can mean that apparently sensible actions by individuals can, in combination or over time, result in very different—and possibly unwelcome—outcomes from the ones originally intended.

In the context of the world-system, Wallerstein reserves the term 'crisis' to refer to a very specific temporal occurrence. Crisis constitutes a unique set of circumstances that can only be manifested once in the lifetime of a world-system. It occurs when the contradictions, secular trends, and cyclical rhythms combine in such a way as to mean that the system cannot continue to reproduce itself. Thus, a crisis within a particular world-system heralds its end and replacement by another system.

Controversially, Wallerstein argues that the end of the cold war, rather than marking a triumph for Liberalism,

indicates its imminent demise (Wallerstein 1995). This has sparked a crisis in the current world-system that will involve its demise and replacement by another system. Such a period of crisis is also a time of opportunity. When a system is operating smoothly, behaviour is very much determined by its structure. In a time of crisis, however, actors have far greater agency to determine the character of the replacement structure. Much of Wallerstein's recent work has been an attempt to develop a political programme to promote a new world-system that is more equitable and just than the current one (Wallerstein 1998, 1999, 2006). Even more contentious, particularly in the light of recent discussion of an 'imperial United States', is his claim that the American power is in rapid decline, and that its recent military adventures are a confirmation of such a decline (Wallerstein 2003, 2004). From this perspective, to focus on globalization is to miss out on what is truly novel about the contemporary era. Indeed, for Wallerstein, current globalization discourse represents a 'gigantic misreading of current reality' (Wallerstein 2003: 45). Those phenomena evoked by 'globalization' are manifestations of a world-system that emerged in Europe during the sixteenth century to incorporate the entire globe; a world-system now in terminal decline.

Recent developments in world-system theory

Various writers have built on the framework established by Wallerstein (Denemark *et al.* 2000). Christopher Chase-Dunn, for example, lays much more emphasis on the role of the inter-state system than Wallerstein. He argues that the capitalist mode of production has a single logic in which both politico-military and exploitative economic relations play key roles. In a sense he attempts to bridge

the gap between Wallerstein's work and that of the New Marxists (discussed below), by placing much more of an emphasis on production in the world-economy and how this influences its development and future trajectory (see Chase-Dunn 1998).

André Gunder Frank (one of the most significant Dependency School writers) has launched a significant critique of Wallerstein's work, and of Western social theory in general. He argues not only that the world-system is far older than suggested by Wallerstein (Frank and Gills 1996), it is also an offshoot of a system that originated in Asia (Frank 1998). His work builds on that of Janet Abu-Lughod. She has challenged Wallerstein's account of the emergence of the modern world-system in the sixteenth century, arguing that, during the medieval period, Europe was a peripheral area to a world-economy centred on the Middle East (Abu-Lughod 1989). Frank argues that the source of the capitalist world-economy was not in Europe; rather, the rise of Europe occurred within the context of an existing world-system. Hence social theory, including Marxism, which tries to examine 'Western exceptionalism', is making the mistake of looking for the causes of that rise to dominance in the wrong place, Europe, rather than within the wider, global context in which it occurred.

Key Points

- World-system theory can be seen as a direct development of Lenin's work on imperialism and the Latin American Dependency School.
- Immanuel Wallerstein and his work on the modern world-system makes a key contribution to this school.
- Wallerstein's work has been developed by a number of other writers who have built on his initial foundational work.

Gramscianism

In this section we discuss the strand of Marxist theory that has emerged from the work of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci's work has become particularly influential in the study of International Political Economy, where a neo-Gramscian or 'Italian' school is flourishing. Here we will discuss Gramsci's legacy, and

the work of Robert W. Cox, a contemporary theorist who has been instrumental in introducing his work to an International Relations audience.

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) was a Sardinian and one of the founding members of the Italian Communist Party. He was jailed in 1926 for his political activities, and

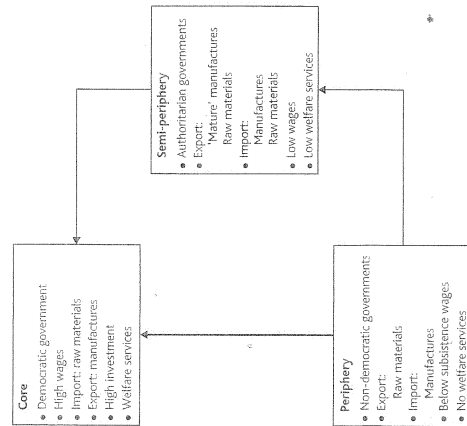


Figure 8.2 Interrelationships in the world-economy

spent the remainder of his life in prison. Although he is regarded by many as the most creative Marxist thinker of the twentieth century, he produced no single, integrated theoretical treatise. Rather, his intellectual legacy has been transmitted primarily through his remarkable *Prison Notebooks* (Gramsci 1971). The key question which animated Gramsci's theoretical work was why had it proven to be so difficult to promote revolution in Western Europe? Marx, after all, had predicted that revolution, and the transition to socialism, would occur first in the most advanced capitalist societies. But, in the event, it was the Bolsheviks of comparatively backward Russia that had made the first 'breakthrough', while all the subsequent efforts by putative revolutionaries in Western and Central Europe to emulate their success had ended in failure. The history of the early twentieth century seemed to suggest, therefore, that there was a flaw in classic Marxist analysis. But where had they gone wrong?

Gramsci's answer revolves around his use of the concept of **hegemony**. For Gramsci, hegemony reflects his conceptualization of power. He develops Machiavelli's view of power as a centaur, half/beast, half/man: a mixture of coercion and consent. In understanding how the prevailing order was maintained, Marxists had concentrated almost exclusively on the coercive practices and capabilities of the state. On this understanding, it was simply coercion, or the fear of coercion, that kept the exploited and alienated majority in society from rising up and overthrowing the system that was the cause of their suffering. Gramsci recognized that while this characterization may have held true in less developed societies, such as pre-revolutionary Russia, it was not the case in the more developed countries of the West. Here the system was also maintained through consent.

Consent, on Gramsci's reading, is created and re-created by the hegemony of the ruling class in society. It is this hegemony that allows the moral, political, and cultural values of the dominant group to become widely dispersed throughout society and to be accepted by subordinate groups and classes as their own. This takes place through the institutions of **civil society**: the network of institutions and practices that enjoy some autonomy from the state, and through which groups and individuals organize, represent, and express themselves to each other and to the state (for example, the media, the education system, churches, voluntary organizations, etc.).

'Social Forces, States, and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory'. The sentence, which has become one of the most often-quoted lines in all of contemporary International Relations theory, reads as follows: 'Theory is always *for* some one, and *for* some purpose' (1981: 128). It expresses a worldview that follows logically from the Gramscian, and broader Marxist position, that has been explored in this chapter. If ideas and values are (ultimately) a reflection of a particular set of social relations, and are transformed as those relations are themselves transformed, then this suggests that all knowledge (of the social world at least) must reflect a certain context, a certain time, a certain space. Knowledge, in other words, cannot be objective and timeless in the sense that some contemporary Realists, for example, would like to claim.

One key implication of this is that there can be no simple separation between facts and values. Whether consciously or not, all theorists inevitably bring their values to bear on their analysis. This leads Cox to suggest that we need to look closely at those theories, those ideas, those analyses that claim to be objective or value-free, and ask who or what is it for, and what purpose does it serve? He subjects Realism, and in particular its contemporary variant **neo-realism**, to thoroughgoing critique in these grounds. According to Cox, these theories are for—or serve the interests of—those who prosper under the prevailing order, that is the inhabitants of the developed states, and in particular the ruling elites. Their purpose, whether consciously or not, is to reinforce and legitimate the status quo. They do this by making the current configuration of International Relations appear natural and immutable. When Realists (falsely) claim to be describing the world as it is, as it has been, and as it always will be, what they are in fact doing is reinforcing the ruling hegemony in the current world order.

Cox contrasts **problem-solving theory**, that is theory which accepts the parameters of the present order, and thus helps legitimate an unjust and deeply iniquitous system, with **critical theory**. Critical theory attempts to challenge the prevailing order by seeking out, analyzing, and, where possible, assisting social processes that can potentially lead to emancipatory change.

One way in which theory can contribute to these emancipatory goals is by developing a theoretical understanding of world orders that grasps both the sources of stability

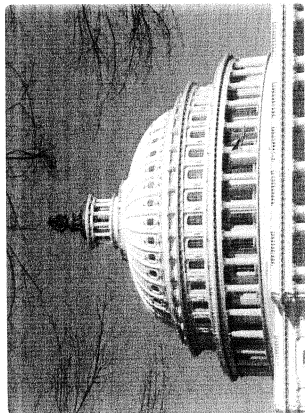
in a given system, and also the dynamics of processes of transformation. In this context, Cox draws upon Gramsci's notion of hegemony and transposes it to the international realm, arguing that hegemony is as important for maintaining stability and continuity here as it is at the domestic level. According to Cox, successive dominant powers in the international system have shaped a world order that suits their interests, and have done so not only as a result of their coercive capabilities, but also because they have managed to generate broad consent for that order even among those who are disadvantaged by it.

For the two hegemons that Cox analyzes (the United Kingdom and the United States) the ruling, hegemonic idea has been 'free trade'. The claim that this system benefits everybody has been so widely accepted that it has attained 'commonsense' status. Yet the reality is that while 'free trade' is very much in the interests of the hegemon (which, as the most efficient producer in the global economy, can produce goods which are competitive in all markets, so long as they have access to them), its benefits for peripheral states and regions are far less apparent. Indeed, many would argue that 'free trade' is a hindrance to their economic and social development. The degree to which a state can successfully produce and reproduce its hegemony is an indication of the extent of its power. The success of the United States in gaining worldwide acceptance for neo-liberalism suggests just how dominant the current hegemon has become (see Case Study).

But despite the dominance of the present world order, Cox does not expect it to remain unchallenged. Rather, he maintains Marx's view that capitalism is an inherently unstable system, riven by inescapable contradictions. Inevitable economic crises will act as a catalyst for the emergence of counter-hegemonic movements. The success of such movements is, however, far from assured. In this sense, thinkers like Cox face the future on the basis of a dictum popularized by Gramsci, that is, combining 'pessimism of the intellect' with 'optimism of the will'.

Recent Gramscian writing

More recent Gramscian writing, including notable contributions by Mark Rupert (1995, 2006; Rupert and Solomon, 2005) and W.I. Robinson (1996, 2004), continue



A very good example of the hegemonic power of the United States, many Marxists would argue, is the success that it has had in getting neo-liberal policies accepted as the norm throughout the world. The set of policies most closely associated with the neo-liberal project (in particular reduction of state spending, currency devaluation, privatization, and the promotion of free markets) are, revealingly, known as the **Washington Consensus**. Many would argue that these are 'commonsense' policies and that those Third World countries that have adopted them have merely realized that such economic policies best reflect their interests. However, Marxists would argue that an analysis of the self-interest of the hegemon, and the use of coercive power, provide a more convincing explanation of why such policies have been adopted.

The adoption of neo-liberal policies by Third World countries has had a number of implications. Spending on health and education has been reduced; they have been forced to rely more on the export of raw materials, and their markets have been saturated with manufactured goods from the industrialized world. It does not take a conspiracy theorist to suggest that these neo-liberal policies are in the interests of capitalists in the developed world. There are three main areas where the adoption of neo-liberal policies in the Third World is in the direct interest of the developed world. First there is the area of free trade. We need not enter into arguments about the benefits of free trade, but it is clear that it will always be in the interest of the hegemon to promote free trade—this is because, assuming it is the most efficient producer, its goods will be the cheapest anywhere in the world. It is only if countries put up barriers to trade, to protect their own production,

to display this characteristically Gramscian combination of pessimism and optimism—in their case, a search for plausible alternative futures within a capitalist system that both regard as increasingly globalized—as well as a central focus on the question of hegemony. Robinson's most recent work (2004) posits the formation of a transnational capitalist class and traces the emergence of a

that the hegemon's products will be more expensive than theirs. Second, there is the area of raw materials. If Third World countries are going to compete in a free trade situation the usual result is that they become more reliant on the export of raw materials (because their industrial products cannot compete in a free trade situation with those of the developed world). Again this is in the interest of the hegemon, as increases in the supply of raw material exports mean that the price falls. Additionally where Third World countries have devalued their currency as part of a neo-liberal package the price of their exported raw materials goes down. Finally, when Third World governments have privatized industries, investors from North America and Europe have frequently been able to snap up airlines, telecommunications companies, and oil industries at bargain prices. Duncan Green (1995) gives an eloquent description of the impacts of neo-liberalism on Latin American countries.

If neo-liberal policies appear to have such negative results for Third World countries why have they been so widely adopted? This is where the coercive element comes in. Through the 1970s and 1980s, and continuing to today, there has been a major debt crisis between the Third World and the West. This debt crisis came about primarily as a result of excessive and unwise lending by Western banks. Third World countries were unable to pay off the interest on these debts, let alone the debt itself. They turned to the major global financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund for assistance. Although the IMF is a part of the United Nations it is heavily controlled by Western countries, in particular the United States. For example, the United States has 18 per cent of the votes, while Mozambique has only 0.07 per cent. In total the 10 most industrialized countries have over 50 per cent of the votes. For Third World countries, the price of getting assistance was that they would implement neo-liberal policies. Only once these were implemented, and only on condition that the policies were maintained, would the IMF agree to provide aid to continue with debt repayment.

Hence Marxists would argue that a deeper analysis of the adoption of neo-liberal policies is required. Such an analysis would suggest that the global acceptance of neo-liberalism is very much in the interests of the developed world and has involved a large degree of coercion. That such policies seem 'natural' and 'commonsense' is an indication of the hegemonic power of the United States.

'transnational state', existing alongside more traditional 'nation-states', a state-form that the author considers increasingly anachronistic. Indeed, on Robinson's reading, and in contrast with Cox's analysis of earlier periods, in the twenty-first century it is increasingly this transnational capitalist class, rather than any particular nation-state, that wields hegemonic power.

Key Points

- Drawing upon the work of Antonio Gramsci for inspiration, writers within an 'Italian' school of International Relations have made a considerable contribution to thinking about world politics.
- Gramsci shifted the focus of Marxist analysis more towards super-structural phenomena. In particular, he explored the processes by which consent for a particular social and political system was produced and reproduced and through the operation of hegemony.

Critical theory

There are, without doubt, many overlaps between critical theory and Gramscian approaches to the study of world politics. As we saw in the previous section, Robert W. Cox refers to his own Gramsci-influenced approach as critical theory. Moreover, both Gramscianism and critical theory have their roots in Western Europe of the 1920s and 1930s—a place and a time in which Marxism was forced to come to terms not only with the failure of a series of attempted revolutionary uprisings, but also with the rise of fascism. Nevertheless, there are differences between them.

Contemporary critical theory and Gramscian thoughts about International Relations draw upon the ideas of different thinkers, with differing intellectual concerns. In addition, there is a clear difference in focus between the two strands, with those influenced by Gramsci tending to be much more concerned with issues relating to the sub-field of international political economy than critical theorists. Critical theorists, on the other hand, have involved themselves with questions concerning **international society**, international ethics, and **security**. In this section we introduce critical theory and the thought of one of its main proponents in the field of International Relations, Andrew Linklater. In addition, we will briefly introduce Critical Security Studies, an approach to the study of security that draws on both critical theory and Gramscian influences.

Critical theory developed out of the work of the **Frankfurt School**. This was an extraordinarily talented group of thinkers who began to work with each other in the 1920s and 1930s. As left-wing German Jews, the members of the school were forced into exile by the Nazis' rise to power in the early 1930s, and much of their most creative work was produced in the United States. The leading lights

Hegemony allows the ideas and ideologies of the ruling stratum to become widely dispersed, and widely accepted, throughout society.

- Thinkers such as Robert W. Cox have attempted to 'internationalize' Gramsci's thought by transposing several of his key concepts, most notably hegemony, to the global context.

of the first generation of the Frankfurt School included **Max Horkheimer**, **Theodor Adorno**, and **Herbert Marcuse**. A subsequent generation has taken up the legacy of these thinkers and developed it in important and innovative ways. The best known is **Jürgen Habermas**, who is regarded by many as the most influential of all contemporary social theorists. Given the vast scope of critical theory writing, we can do no more here than introduce some of the key features.

The first point to note is that their intellectual concerns are rather different from those of most other Marxists in that they have not been much interested in the further development of analysis of the economic base of society. They have instead concentrated on questions relating to culture, bureaucracy, the social basis and nature of authoritarianism, the structure of the family, and on exploring such concepts as reason and **rationality** as well as theories of knowledge. Frankfurt School theorists have been particularly innovative in terms of their analysis of the role of the media, and what they have famously termed the 'culture industry'. In other words, in classical Marxist terms, the focus of critical theory is almost entirely superstructural.

Another key feature is that critical theorists have been highly dubious as to whether the proletariat in contemporary society does in fact embody the potential for emancipatory transformation in the way that Marx had believed. Rather, with the rise of mass culture and the increasing commodification of every element of social life, Frankfurt School thinkers have argued that the working class has simply been absorbed by the system and no longer represents a threat to it. This, to use Marcuse's famous phrase, is a **one-dimensional** society to which the vast majority simply cannot begin to conceive an alternative.

Finally, critical theorists have made some of their most important contributions through their explorations of the meaning of **emancipation**. Emancipation, as we have seen, is a key concern of Marxist thinkers, but the meaning that they give to the term is often very unclear and deeply ambiguous. Moreover, the historical record is unfortunately replete with examples of unspeakably barbaric behaviour being justified in the name of emancipation, of which imperialism and Stalinism are but two. Traditionally, Marxists have equated emancipation with the process of humanity gaining ever greater mastery over nature through the development of ever more sophisticated technology, and its use for the benefit of all. But early critical theorists argued that humanity's increased domination over nature had been bought at too high a price, claiming that the kind of mind-set that is required for conquering nature slips all too easily into the domination of other human beings. In contrast, they argued that emancipation had to be conceived in terms of a **reconciliation with nature**—an evocative if admittedly vague vision. By contrast, Habermas's understanding of emancipation, is more concerned with communication than with our relationship with the natural world. Setting aside the various twists and turns of his argument, Habermas's central political point is that the route to emancipation lies through **radical democracy**. That is, it is through a system in which the widest possible participation is encouraged not only in word (as is the case in many Western democracies) but also in deed, by actively identifying barriers to participation—be they social, economic, or cultural—and overcoming them. For Habermas and his many followers, participation is not to be confined within the borders of a particular sovereign state. Rights and obligations extend beyond state frontiers. This, of course, leads him directly to the concerns of International Relations, and it is striking that Habermas's recent writings have begun to focus on the international realm. However, thus far, the most systematic attempt to think through some of the key issues in world politics from a recognizably Habermasian perspective has been made by **Andrew Linklater**.

Andrew Linklater has used some of the key **principles** and precepts developed in Habermas's work in order to argue that emancipation in the realm of international relations should be understood in terms of the expansion of the moral boundaries of a **political community** (see Ch.31). In other words, he equates emancipation with a

process in which the borders of the sovereign state lose their ethical and moral significance. At present, state borders denote the furthest extent of our sense of duty and obligation, or at best, the point where our sense of duty and obligation is radically transformed, only proceeding further in a very attenuated form. For critical theorists, this situation is simply indefensible. The goal is therefore to move towards a situation in which citizens share the same duties and obligations towards non-citizens as they do towards their fellow citizens.

To arrive at such a situation would, of course, entail a wholesale transformation of the present institutions of governance. But an important element of the critical theory method is to identify—and, if possible, nurture—tendencies that exist within the present conjuncture that point in the direction of emancipation. On this basis, Linklater identifies the development of the European Union as representing a progressive or emancipatory tendency in contemporary world politics. If true, this suggests that an important part of the international system is entering an era in which the sovereign state, which has for so long claimed an exclusive hold on its citizens, is beginning to lose some of its pre-eminence. Given the notorious pessimism of the thinkers of the Frankfurt School, the guarded optimism of Linklater in this context is indeed striking.

Critical Security Studies

Critical Security Studies (CSS) is the name given to a trend in the study of security issues that has gained prominence in recent years (in particular through the work of Keith Krause and Mike Williams (1997), Ken Booth (1991, 2004) and Richard Wyn Jones (1995, 1999). CSS combines influences from Gramscianism and critical theory with aspects of peace research and the so-called alternative defence thinking.⁷ In contrast to much mainstream security thinking (in the West at least), CSS refuses to accept the state as the 'natural' object of analysis, arguing that, for much of the world's population, states are part of the security problem rather than a provider of security. Instead, proponents of CSS tend to argue that it is beholden on security analysts to place individual human beings at the centre of their analysis. Like Linklater, they regard their work as supporting and nurturing emancipatory tendencies, for it is only through emancipation that security can ultimately be assured.

Key Points

- Critical theory has its roots in the work of the Frankfurt School.
- Habermas has argued that emancipatory potential lies in the realm of communication and that radical democracy is the way in which that potential can be unlocked.

- Andrew Linklater has developed on critical theory themes to argue in favour of the expansion of the moral boundaries of the political community and has pointed to the European Union as an example of a post-Westphalian institution of governance.

New Marxism

In this section we examine the work of writers who derive their ideas more directly from Marx's own writings. These New Marxists have returned to the fundamental tenets of Marxist thought and sought to reappropriate ideas that they regard as having been neglected or somehow misinterpreted by subsequent generations. On this basis they have sought both to criticize other developments within Marxism, and to make their own original theoretical contributions to the understanding of contemporary trends.

In this section we will introduce the work of two writers associated with this strand of Marxist thought: Justin Rosenberg and Benno Teschke, who have used key elements of Marx's writings to critique other theoretical approaches to International Relations and globalization theory.

Justin Rosenberg—capitalism and global social relations

The focus of Rosenberg's analysis is the character of the international system and its relationship to the changing character of social relations. His starting point is a critique of Realist International Relations theory. In particular, Rosenberg challenges Realism's claim to provide an ahistorical, essentially timeless account of international relations by analyses of the differences in the character of international relations between the Greek and Italian city-states. A touchstone of Realist theory is the similarity between these two historical cases. Rosenberg, however, describes the alleged resemblances between these two eras as a 'gigantic optical illusion'. Instead, his analysis suggests that the character of the international system in each period was completely different. In addition, he charges that attempts to provide an explanation

of historical outcomes during these periods, working purely from the inter-state level, is not feasible (as, for example, in Realist accounts of the Peloponnesian War). Finally, Rosenberg argues that Realist attempts to portray international systems as autonomous, entirely political realms founder because in the Greek and Italian examples this external autonomy was based on the character of internal—and in each case different—sets of social relations.

As an alternative, Rosenberg argues for the development of a theory of international relations that is sensitive to the changing character of world politics. This theory must also recognize that international relations are part of a broader pattern of social relations. His starting point is Marx's observation (Rosenberg 1994: 51) that:

It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers . . . which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of the state.

In other words, the character of the relations of production permeate the whole of society—right up to, and including, relations between states. The form of the state will be different under different modes of production, and as a result the characteristics of inter-state relations will also vary. Hence if we want to understand the way that international relations operate in any particular era, our starting point has to be an examination of the mode of production, and in particular the relations of production.

In his more recent work Rosenberg has turned his critical attention to 'globalization theory' (Rosenberg 2000, 2006). He argues that globalization is a descriptive

category denoting 'the geographical extension of social processes'. That such social processes have become a global phenomenon is beyond dispute, and a 'theory of globalization' is needed to explain what and why this is happening. Such a theory, for Rosenberg, should be rooted in classical social theory. But instead of this, a body of 'globalization theory' has emerged premised on the claim that the supposed compression of time and space that typifies globalization requires a whole new social theory in order to explain contemporary developments. But on Rosenberg's reading, this body of theory has produced little in terms of explaining the processes. Moreover, the events of the early-twenty-first century were not those predicted by globalization theory. As a result, Globalization theory is best understood as a product of changes that occurred in the last years of the twentieth century, and in particular the political and economic vacuum created by the collapse of the Soviet Union, rather than an adequate explanation of them. A proper explanation, rooted in classical social theory, would examine the underlying social relations which have led to the capitalist system becoming dominant throughout the globe.

Benno Teschke—social property relations

In a major contribution to the Marxist literature on international relations, Benno Teschke (2003) provides not only a critique of existing international relations theory, but also, through the concept of social property relations, a means of analyzing changes in the constitution and practices of actors in the international system. Teschke's work can be seen as building on Rosenberg's observation that social relations provide the starting point for an analysis of international relations, in particular through

presenting an analysis of how system transformation occurs, and describing the major transitions of the past millennium.

A social property approach examines the way in which class relations, forms of exploitation, and control of the means of production have changed in different historical epochs. Teschke argues that such an approach is applicable to all geopolitical orders' (2003: 47). A major claim of his analysis is that rather than one major change between the feudal and modern international system, there have been two major transformations—between feudal and early modern (dominated by absolutist monarchies) and between early modern and modern (capitalist states). Both these periods of change were gradual periods of transformation during which the international system comprised more than one type of actor: during the former transition a mixture of feudal and absolutist states; during the latter absolutist and capitalist states.

The practice of international relations was different during each of these three periods, reflecting the character of social property relations dominant in each epoch. Such an analysis leads to the claim that the significance of the Treaty of Westphalia, seen by most international relations theorists as the major transition to modernity, has been overstated. Instead, Westphalia constitutes the point at which absolutist rather than capitalist states became the key actors of the international system. The modern international system only started to emerge with the appearance of the first capitalist state (Britain). This capitalist state form reflected the development of capitalist property relations. Since the seventeenth century, the capitalist state has become the prominent state form. As a result, the practices of international relations have changed, reflecting, Teschke argues, developments in the character of social property relations.

Key Points

- New Marxism is characterized by a direct (re)appropriation of the concepts and categories developed by Marx.
- Rosenberg uses Marx's ideas to criticize Realist theories of international relations, and globalization theory. He seeks to develop an alternative approach which understands historical change in world

politics as a reflection of transformations in the prevailing relations of production.

- For Benno Teschke, the study of social property relations provides the means for analyzing the key elements of international relations, and the transitions between one international system and another.

Conclusion: Marxist theories of international relations and globalization

As outlined in the first chapter of this book, globalization is the name given to the process whereby social transactions of all kinds increasingly take place without account for national or state boundaries, with the result that the world has become 'one relatively borderless social sphere'. The particular trends pointed to as typifying globalization include: the growing integration of national economies; a growing awareness of ecological interdependence; the proliferation of companies, social movements, and inter-governmental agencies operating on a global scale; and a communications revolution which has aided the development of a global consciousness.

Marxist theorists would certainly not seek to deny that these developments are taking place, nor would they deny their importance, but they would reject any notion that they are somehow novel. Rather, in the words of Chase-Dunn, they are 'continuations of trends that have long accompanied the expansion of capitalism' (1994: 97). Marx and Engels were clearly aware not only of the global scope of capitalism, but also of its potential for social transformation. In a particularly prescient section of the *Communist Manifesto* (Marx and Engels 1967: 83–4), for example, they argue that:

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. . . . All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. . . .

According to Marxist theorists, the globe has long been dominated by a single integrated economic and political entity—a global capitalist system—which has gradually incorporated all of humanity within its grasp. Within this system, all elements have always been interrelated and interdependent. 'National economies' have long

been integrated to such an extent that their very nature has been dependent on their position within a capitalist world-economy. The only thing new' is an increased awareness of these linkages. Similarly, ecological processes have always ignored state boundaries, even if it is only recently that growing environmental degradation has finally allowed this fact to permeate into public consciousness.

The growth of multinational corporations certainly does not signify any major change in the structure of the modern capitalist system. Rather, they form part of a long-term trend towards the further integration of the global economy. Neither is international contact between those movements which oppose the prevailing political and economic order a new development. In fact, as even the most cursory examination of the historical record will amply attest, such movements, be they socialist, nationalist, or ecological in character, have always drawn inspiration from, and forged links with, similar groups in other countries. Finally, the much-vaunted communications revolution is the latest manifestation of a long-term trend.

While the intensity of cross-border flows may be increasing, this does not necessarily signify the fundamental change in the nature of world politics proclaimed by so many of those who argue that we have entered an era of globalization. Marxist theorists insist that the only way to discover how significant contemporary developments really are is to view them in the context of deeper structural processes at work. When this is done, we may well discover indications that important changes are afoot. Many Marxists, for example, regard the delegitimation of the sovereign state as a very important contemporary development. However, the essential first step in generating any understanding of those trends regarded as evidence of globalization must be to map out the contours of global capitalism itself. If we fail to do so, we will inevitably fail to gauge the real significance of the changes that are occurring.

Another danger of adopting an ahistoric and uncritical attitude to globalization is that it can blind us to the way in which reference to globalization is increasingly becoming part of the ideological armoury of elites within the contemporary world. 'Globalization' is now regularly cited as a reason to promote measures to reduce workers' rights and lessen other constraints on business. Such ideological justifications for policies which favour the interests of business can only be countered through a broader

understanding of the relationship between the political and economic structures of capitalism. As we have seen, the understanding proffered by the Marxist theorists suggests that there is nothing natural or inevitable about a world order based on a global market. Rather than accept the inevitability of the present order, the task facing us is to lay the foundations for a new way of organizing society—a global society which is more just and more humane than our own.

Questions

- 1 How would you account for the continuing vitality of Marxist thought?
- 2 How did Lenin's approach to international relations differ from that of Marx?
- 3 How useful is Wallerstein's notion of a semi-periphery?
- 4 Assess Warren's criticisms of world-system theory.
- 5 Evaluate Rosenberg's critique of globalization theory.
- 6 In what ways does Gramsci's notion of hegemony differ from that employed by Realist International Relations writers?
- 7 How has Linklater developed critical theory for an International Relations audience?
- 8 How do Marxist theorists view the notion of globalization?
- 9 What do you regard as the main contribution of Marxist theory to our understanding of world politics?
- 10 How useful is the notion of emancipation used by critical theorists?
- 11 Do you agree with Cox's distinction between 'problem-solving theory' and 'critical theory'?
- 12 Assess Wallerstein's claim that the power of the United States is in decline.

Guide to further reading

- Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1848). *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Bookmarks). An ideal introduction to Marx's thinking.
- Morlock, A. (2007). *Unravelling Gramsci: Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Political Economy* (London: Pluto Press). A discussion of the contemporary relevance of Gramsci.
- Teichgraber, B. (2003). *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics and the Making of Modern International Relations* (London: Verso). A powerful alternative reading of the development of International Relations.
- Wallerstein, I. (1974, 1980, 1989). *The Modern World-System* (San Diego, Cal.: Academic Press). The most complete account of the world-system approach to the study of International Relations.
- Wyn Jones, R. (1999). *Security: Strategy and Critical Theory* (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner). The first three chapters provide an introduction to some of the key intellectual concerns of the Frankfurt School while the remainder outline Critical Security Studies.

Chapter 9

Social Constructivism

MICHAEL BARNETT

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Reader's Guide

This chapter provides an overview of Constructivist approaches to international relations theory. Constructivism's antecedents are located in the 1980s and in a series of critical reactions to mainstream international relations theory in the United States, namely neo-realism and neo-liberal institutionalism. These theories emphasized the distribution of power and the unwavering pursuit by states of power and wealth, and minimized the power of ideas. Constructivism countered by highlighting how ideas define and can

transform the organization of world politics, shape the identities and interests of states, and determine what counts as legitimate action. Although initially given a cold reception, Constructivism quickly gained credibility and popularity in the 1990s due to the end of the cold war, the enduring insights of sociological and critical theory, and the ability to generate novel accounts of world politics. Although there are important differences among Constructivists, they share several commitments that generate a distinctive approach for understanding how the world is made and re-made through human action.

Introduction

Constructivism rose very quickly from rather humble beginnings to become one of the leading schools in International Relations. Now Constructivism is widely recognized for its ability to capture important features of global politics and is viewed as an important theory of international relations. Although there are various versions of Constructivism, they share a common concern with how ideas define the international structure; how this structure shapes the identities, interests, and foreign policies of states; and how state and non-state actors reproduce that structure—and at times transform it. The concern with the making and re-making of world

that we take seriously the role of ideas in world politics. The world is defined by material and ideational forces. But these ideas are not akin to beliefs or psychological states that reside inside our heads. Instead, these ideas are social. Our mental maps are shaped by collectively held ideas such as knowledge, symbols, language, and rules. Idealism does not reject material reality but instead observes that the meaning and construction of that material reality is dependent on ideas and interpretation. The balance of power does not objectively exist out there waiting to be discovered; instead states debate what is the balance of power, what is its meaning, and how they should respond. Constructivism also accepts some form of holism or structuralism. The world is irreducibly social and cannot be decomposed to the properties of already existing actors. The emphasis on holism does not deny agency but instead recognizes that agents have some autonomy and their interactions help to construct, reproduce, and transform those structures. Although the structure of the cold war seemingly locked the United States and the Soviet Union into a fight to the death, leaders on both sides creatively transformed their relations and, with it, the very structure of global politics.

This constructed reality frequently appears to us an objective reality, which relates to the concept of social facts. There are those things whose existence is dependent on human agreement and those things whose existence is not. Brute facts, such as rocks, flowers, gravity, and oceans, exist independent of human agreement and will continue to exist even if humans disappear or deny their existence. Social facts are dependent on human agreement and are taken for granted. Money, refugees, terrorism, human rights, and sovereignty are social facts. Their existence depends on human agreement, they will only exist so long as that agreement exists, and their existence shapes how we categorize the world and what we do.

The social construction of reality also shapes what is viewed as legitimate action. Do we only choose the most efficient action? Do the ends justify the means? Or, is certain action just unacceptable? The earlier distinction between constitutive and regulative rules parallels the conceptual distinction between the logic of consequences and the logic of appropriateness. The logic of consequences attributes action to the anticipated costs and benefits, mindful that other actors are doing just the same. The logic of appropriateness, however, highlights how actors are rule-following, worrying about whether their actions are legitimate. The two logics are not necessarily distinct or competing. What is viewed as appropriate and legitimate can affect the possible costs of different actions; the more illegitimate a possible course of action appears to be, the higher the potential cost for those who proceed on their own. The United States' decision to go into Iraq without the blessing of the Security Council meant that other states viewed the USA's actions as illegitimate, were less willing to support it, and thus raised the costs to the United States when it went ahead.

By emphasizing the social construction of reality we also are questioning what is frequently taken for granted. This points to several issues. One is a concern with the origins of those social constructs that now appear to us as natural and are now part of our social vocabulary. Sovereignty did not always exist; it was a product of historical forces and human interactions that generated new distinctions regarding where political authority resided. The category of weapons of mass destruction is a modern invention. Although individuals have been forced to flee their homes ever since Adam and Eve were exiled from Eden, the political and legal category of 'refugees' is only a century old (see Case Study). To understand the

politics underscores Constructivism's strong interest in global change. Although Constructivism has investigated various features of global change, in this chapter I will focus on two: the convergence by states around similar ways for organizing their domestic and international life; and how norms become internationalized and institutionalized, that is, globally accepted to the point that they constrain what states and non-state actors do and influence their ideas of what is legitimate behaviour. Constructivist arguments thus help us understand some elementary features of the globalization of world politics.

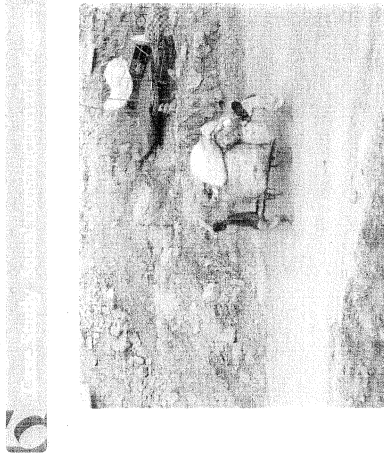
The main Constructivist tenets

Before proceeding to identify Constructivism's tenets, two caveats are in order. Constructivism is a social theory and not a substantive theory of international politics. Social theory is broadly concerned with how to conceptualize the relationship between agents and structures; for instance, how should we think about relationship between states and the structure of international politics? Substantive theory offers specific claims and hypotheses about patterns in world politics; for instance, how do we explain why democratic states tend not to wage war on one another? In this way Constructivism is best compared to rational choice. Rational choice is social theory that offers a framework for understanding how actors operate with fixed preferences which they attempt to maximize under a set of constraints. It makes no claims about the content of those preferences; they could be wealth or religious salvation. Nor does it assume anything about the content of these constraints; they could be guns or ideas. Rational choice offers no claims about the actual patterns of world politics. For instance, neo-realism and neo-liberalism subscribe to rational choice, but they arrive at rival claims about patterns of conflict and cooperation in world politics because they make different assumptions about the effects of anarchy. Like rational choice, Constructivism is a social theory that is broadly concerned with the relationship

between agents and structures, but it is not a substantive theory. Constructivists, for instance, have different arguments regarding the rise of sovereignty and the impact of human rights norms on states. In order to generate substantive claims, scholars must delineate who are the principal actors, what are their interests and capacities, and what is the content of the normative structures.

Also, there are many different types of Constructivism. Some draw from the insights of James March, John Meyer, and organizational theory, and others from Michel Foucault and discourse analysis. Some prioritize agents and others structures. Some focus on inter-state politics and others transnationalism. There are differences over the possibility of social science. Different empirical puzzles drive different approaches. These fault-lines have spawned a proliferating number of labels. Neoclassical. Modernist. Post-modern. Naturalistic. Thick. Thin. Linguistic. Narrative. Weak. Strong. Systemic. Holistic. This development should not be surprising. All schools have internal rivalries.

Still, there is unity within such diversity. 'Constructivism is about human consciousness and its role in international life' (Ruggie 1998: 856). This focus on human consciousness suggests a commitment to Idealism and holism, which, according to Wendt (1999), represent the core of Constructivism. Idealism demands



Who is a refugee, why does this category matter, and how has it changed? There are many ways to categorize people who leave their homes, including migrants, temporary workers, displaced peoples, and refugees. Prior to the twentieth century refugee as a legal category did not exist, and it was not until the First World War that states recognized peoples as refugees and gave them rights. Who was a refugee? Although many were displaced by the First World War, Western states limited their compassion to Russians who were fleeing the Bolsheviks (it was easier to entice a rival state of persecuting its people): only they were entitled to assistance from states and the new refugee agency the High Commissioner for Refugees. However, the High Commissioner took his mandate and the category and began to apply it to others in Europe who also had fled their country and needed assistance. Although states frequently permitted him to expand into other regions and provide more assistance, states also pushed back and refused to give international recognition or assistance to many

origins of these concepts, requires attention to the interplay between existing ideas and institutions, the political calculations by leaders who had ulterior motives, and morally minded actors who were attempting to improve humanity. Also of concern are alternative pathways. Although history is path-dependent, there are contingencies, historical accidents, the conjunction of material and ideational forces, and human intervention that can force history to change course. The events of 11 September 2001 and the response by the Bush administration arguably transformed the direction of world politics. This interest in possible and counter-factual worlds works against historical determinism. Alexander Wendt's (1992) claim that 'anarchy is what states make of it' calls attention to how different beliefs and practices will generate divergent patterns and organization of world politics (see Box 9.1). A world of Mahatma Gandhis will be very different from a world of Osama bin Laidens.

in need—most notably when Jews were fleeing Nazi Germany after the Second World War and as a consequence of mass displacement, states re-examined who could be called a refugee and what assistance they could receive. Because Western states were worried about having obligations to millions of people around the world, they defined a refugee as an individual 'outside the country of his origin owing to a well-founded fear of persecution' as a consequence of events that occurred in Europe before 1951. In other words, their definition excluded those outside Europe who were displaced because of war or natural disasters because of events after 1951. Objecting to this arbitrary definition that excluded so many the new refugee agency, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, working with aid agencies and permissive states, seized on events outside Europe and argued that there was no principled reason to deny to them what was given to Europeans. Over time the political meaning of refugee came to include anyone who was forced to flee their home and crossed an international border, and eventually states changed the international legal meaning to reflect the new political realities. Now, in the contemporary era, we are likely to call someone a refugee if he is forced to flee his home because of man-made circumstances and do not worry if he has crossed an international border. To capture the idea of those who flee but are still in their homeland, we use the term 'internally displaced peoples'.

One reason why states wanted to differentiate 'statutory' refugees from internally-displaced peoples is because they have little interest in extending their international legal obligations to millions of people and do not want to become too involved in the domestic affairs of states. Still, the concept of refugees has expanded impressively over the last 100 years, and the result is that there are millions of peoples who are now entitled to forms of assistance that are a matter of life and death.

Constructivists also examine how actors make their activities meaningful. Following Max Weber's (1949: 81) insight that 'we are cultural beings with the capacity and the will to take a deliberate attitude toward the world and to lend it *significance*'; Constructivists attempt to recover the **meanings** that actors give to their practices and the objects that they construct. These derive not from private beliefs but rather from culture. In contrast to the Rationalist presumption that culture, at most, constrains action, Constructivists argue that culture informs the meanings that people give to their action. Sometimes Constructivists have presumed that such meanings derive from a hardened culture. But because culture is fractured and because society is comprised of different interpretations of what is meaningful activity, scholars need to consider these cultural fault-lines and treat the fixing of meanings as an accomplishment that is at the essence of politics. Some of the most important debates

Box 9.1 Alexander Wendt on the three cultures of anarchy

'[T]he deep structure of anarchy [is] cultural or ideational rather than material. . . . [O]nce understood this way, we can see that the logic of anarchy can vary. . . . [D]ifferent cultures of anarchy are based on different kinds of roles in terms of which states represent Self and Other. [T]here are three roles, enemy, rival, and friend . . . that are constituted by, and constitute, three distinct macro-level cultures of international politics. Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian, respectively. These cultures have different rules of engagement, interaction logics, and systemic tendencies. . . . The logic of the Hobbesian anarchy is well known: "the war of all against all. . . ." This is the true self-help system. . . . where actors cannot count on each other for help of even to observe basic-self-restraint. . . . Survival depends solely on military power. . . . Security is deeply competitive, a zero-sum affair. . . . Even if what states really want is security rather than power their collective beliefs force them to act as if they are power-seeking. . . . The

in world politics are about how to define particular activities. **Development, human rights, security, humanitarian intervention, sovereignty** are all important orienting concepts that can have any number of meanings. States and non-state actors have rival interpretations of the meanings of these concepts and will fight to try to have collectively accepted their preferred meaning.

The very fact that these meanings are fixed through politics and that once these meanings are fixed they have consequences for the ability of people to determine their fates suggests an alternative way of thinking about power. Most international relations theorists treat power as the ability of one state to compel another state to do what it otherwise would not and tend to focus on the material technologies, such as military firepower and economic statecraft, which have this persuasive effect. Constructivists have offered two important additions to this view of power. The forces of power go beyond material, they also can be ideational. Consider the issue of **legitimacy**. States, including great powers, crave legitimacy, the belief that they are acting according to and pursuing the values of the broader international community. There is a direct relationship between their legitimacy and the costs with a course of action: the greater the legitimacy the easier time they will have convincing others to cooperate with their policies, the lesser the legitimacy the more costly the action. This means, then, that even great powers will frequently feel the need to alter their policies in order to be viewed as legitimate—or bear the consequences. Further evidence of the constraining

Lockean culture has a different logic. . . . because it is based on a different role structure, rivalry rather than enmity. . . . Like enemies, rivals are constituted by representations about Self and Other with respect to Violence, but these representations are less threatening; unlike enemies, rivals expect each other to act as if they recognize their sovereignty, their "life and liberty", as a right, and therefore not to try to conquer or dominate them. . . . Unlike friends, however, the recognition among rivals does not extend to the right to be free from violence in disputes. The Kantian culture is based on a role structure of friendship. . . . within which states expect each other to observe two simple rules: (1) disputes will be settled without war or the threat of war (the rule of non-violence); and (2) they will fight as a team if the security of any one is threatened by a third party.

(Wendt, 1999: 43, 279, 251, 298-9)

power of legitimacy is offered by the tactic of 'naming and shaming' by human rights activists. If states did not care about the reputation and the perception that they were acting in a manner that was consistent with prevailing international standards, then such a tactic would have little visible impact; it is only because law-breaking governments want to be perceived as acting in a manner that is consistent with international norms that they can be taunted into changing their conduct.

Moreover, the effects of power go beyond the ability to change behaviour. Power also includes how knowledge, the fixing of meanings, and the construction of identities allocate differential rewards and capacities. If development is defined as *per capita* income, then some actors, namely states, and some activities, namely industrialization, are privileged. However, if development is defined as basic needs, then other actors, namely peasants and women, gain voice, and other activities, namely small-scale agricultural initiatives and cottage industries, are visible. International humanitarian law tends to assume that 'combatants' are men and 'civilians' are women, children, and the elderly. Consequently, as Box 9.2 relates, men and women might be differentially protected by the laws of war.

Although there is tremendous debate among Constructivists over whether and how they are committed to social science, there is some common ground. To begin, they reject the unity of science thesis, that is, that the methods of the natural sciences are appropriate for understanding the social world. Instead, they argue that

Box 9.2 Charli Carpenter on the effects of gender on the lives of individuals in war-torn societies

"International agencies mandated with the protection of war-affected civilians generally aim to provide protection in a neutral manner, but when necessary they prioritize the protection of the "especially vulnerable." According to professional standards recently articulated by the International Committee for the Red Cross, "special attention by organizations for specific groups should be determined on the basis of an assessment of their needs and vulnerability as well as the risks to which they are exposed". If adult men are most likely to lose their lives directly as a result of the fall of a besieged town, one would expect that, given these standards, such agencies would emphasize protection of civilian men in areas under siege by armed forces. Nonetheless, in places where civilians have been evacuated from besieged areas in an effort to save lives, it is typically women, children, and the elderly who have composed the

evacuee population. ... While in principle all civilians are to be protected on the basis of their actions and social roles, in practice only certain categories of population (women, elderly, sick, and disabled) are presumed to be civilians regardless of context. ... Thus, ... gender is encoded within the parameters of the immunity norm: while in principle the "innocent civilian" may include other groups, such as adult men, the presumption that women and children are innocents, whereas adult men may not be means that "women and children" signifies "civilian" in a way that "unarmed adult male" does not. ... Similarly, gender beliefs are embedded in ... the concept of "especially vulnerable populations." ... In this context it never would have occurred to protection agencies to evacuate men and boys first, even if they had had the chance.

(Carpenter 2003: 662, 671, 673-4)

the objects of the natural world and the social world are different in one crucial respect: in the social world the subject knows herself through reflection upon her actions as a subject not simply of experience but of intentional action as well. Humans reflect on their experiences and use these experiences to inform their reasons for their behaviour. Atoms do not. What necessitates a human science, therefore, is the need to understand how individuals give significance and meaning to their actions. Only then will we be able to explain human action. Consequently, the human sciences require methods that can capture the interpretations that actors bring to their activities. Max Weber, a founding figure of this approach, advocated that scholars employ *verstehen* to recreate how people understand and interpret the world. To do so, scholars need to exhibit empathy, to locate the practice within the collectivity so that one knows how this experience into objectively, though time-bound, explanations (Ruggie 1998: 860).

Most Constructivists remain committed to causality and explanation, but insist on a definition of causality and explanation that is slightly different from conventional usage. A highly popular view of causality is that independent and dependent variables are unrelated and that a cause exists when the movement of one variable precedes and is responsible for the movement of another variable. Constructivists, though, add that structures can have a causal impact because they make possible certain kinds of behaviour and thus generate certain tendencies in the international system. Sovereignty does not cause

categories of world politics that are subsequently taken for granted. They utilize structured, focused comparisons in order better to understand the conditions under which norms diffuse from one context to another. They even use computer simulations to model the emergent properties of world politics.

Throughout, though, Constructivists have attempted to interpret evidence as it relates to alternative explanations. Although they have largely positioned their claims against neo-realism and neo-liberal Institutionalism, they have clarified the differences by contrasting Constructivism with rational choice. The presumption, then, is that these are rival social theories. In many ways, they are. Rational choice treats actors as pre-social; Constructivism as social. Rational choice treats interests as fixed; Constructivism as constructed by the environment and interactions. Rational choice holds that the only effect of the environment is to constrain and regulate the actions of already constituted actors; Constructivism adds that it also can construct the actors' identities and interests. Rational choice uses the logic of consequences to understand behaviour; Constructivism adds the logic of appropriateness.

Given that rationalists and constructivists adopt such different frameworks for thinking about world politics, some scholars argue that these social theories are incommensurable, that is, they cannot be combined or reconciled because they contain opposing assumptions and capture different features of reality. Consequently, the only kind of possible relationship is some form of pluralism and any attempt at a grand synthesis, the mother of all social theories, will produce either a theoretic mutant or theoretical imperialism. For much the same reason, other scholars ridicule a gladiatorial, winner-take-all, competition.

Other scholars look for points of connection and evaluate the relative strengths of each approach in order to see when they might be combined to enrich our understanding of the world. One possibility is strategic social construction (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). Actors attempt to change the norms that subsequently guide and constitute state identities and interests. Human rights activists, for instance, try to encourage compliance with human rights norms not only by naming and

shaming those who violate these norms, but also by encouraging states to identify with these norms because it is the right thing to do. Another possibility is to consider the relationship between the normative structure and strategic behaviour. Some use Constructivism to identify how identity shapes the state's interests and then turn to rational choice for understanding strategic behaviour. In this view, the American identity shapes national interests, and then the structure of the international system informs its strategies for pursuing those interests. Yet some scholars go further and argue that the cultural context shapes not only identities and interests of actors but also the very strategies they can use as they pursue their interests. In other words, while 'game' metaphors are most closely associated with game theory and rational choice, some Constructivists also argue that the normative structure shapes important features of the game, including the identity of the players and the strategies that are appropriate. Not all is fair in love, war, or any other social endeavour. For decades Arab nationalism shaped the identities and interests of Arab states, contained norms that guided how Arab leaders could play the game of Arab politics, and encouraged Arab leaders to draw from the symbols of Arab politics to try to manoeuvre around their Arab rivals and further their own interests. How Arab leaders played out their regional games was structured by the norms of Arab politics. They had very intense rivalries, and as they vied for prestige and status they frequently accused each other of being a traitor to the Arab nation or harming the cause of Arabism. But rarely did they use military force. Until the late 1970s the idea of relations with Israel was a virtual 'taboo', violated by Egyptian Anwar Sadat's trip to Jerusalem in 1977 and separate peace treaty in 1979. Arab states did not respond through military action but rather by evicting Egypt from the Arab League, and then Sadat paid the ultimate price for his heresy when he was assassinated in 1981.

In general, these examples of the connections between Constructivism and rational choice remind us that we should be open to and utilize as many approaches as possible as we try to enrich our understanding of how the world works.

Key Points

- Constructivists are concerned with human consciousness, treat ideas as structural factors, consider the dynamic relationship between ideas and material forces as a consequence of how actors interpret their material reality, and are interested in how agents produce structures and how structures produce agents.
- Knowledge shapes how actors interpret and construct their social reality.
- The normative structures shape the identity and interests of actors such as states.
- Social facts such as sovereignty and human rights exist because of human agreement, while brute facts such as mountains are independent of such agreements.
- Social rules are regulative, regulating already existing activities, and constitutive, making possible and defining those very activities.

Constructivism and global change

Constructivism's focus on how the world hangs together, how normative structures construct the identities and interests of actors, and how actors are rule-following, might seem ideal for explaining why things stay the same but useless for explaining why things change. This is hardly true. Constructivism claims that what exists need not have and need not—inviting us to think of alternative worlds and the conditions that make them more or less possible. Indeed, Constructivism scolded neo-realism and neo-liberal Institutionalism for their failure to explain contemporary global transformations. The Peace of Westphalia helped to establish sovereignty and the norm of non-interference, but in recent decades various processes have worked against the principle of non-interference and suggested how state sovereignty is conditional on how states treat their populations. **World orders** are created and sustained not only by great power preferences but also by changing understandings of what constitutes a legitimate **international order**. Until the Second World War the idea of a world organized around **empires** was hardly illegitimate; now it is. One of the today's most pressing and impressive issues concerning **global change** is the **end of history** and the apparent homogenization of world politics—that is, the tendency of states to organize their domestic and international lives in similar ways and the growing acceptance of certain international norms for defining the good life and how to get there. Below I

decided to turn democratic and run elections not because they were persuaded that it would be more efficient but rather because they wanted to be viewed as part of the 'modern world' and receive the benefits associated with being a legitimate state.

How do things diffuse? Why are they accepted in new places? One factor is coercion. Colonialism and great power imposition figured centrally in the spread of capitalism. Another factor is strategic competition. Heated rivalries are likely to adopt similar weapons systems in order to try to stay even on the military battlefield. States will also adopt similar ideas and organizations for at least four other reasons. Formal and informal pressures can cause states to adopt similar ideas because doing so will bring them needed resources. States want resources and in order to attract these resources they will adopt and reform their institutions in order to signal to various communities that they are part of the club and are utilizing 'modern' techniques. In other words, they value these new institutions not because they truly believe that they are superior, but rather because they are symbols that will attract resources. Eastern European countries seeking entry into the European Union adopted various reforms not only because they believe that they are superior but also because they are the price of admission.

Also, during periods of uncertainty when states are unsure of how to address existing challenges, they are likely to adopt those models that are perceived as successful or legitimate. Political candidates in newly democratizing countries reorganize their party and campaign organizations in order to increase their prospects of electoral victory. Towards that end, they draw from those models of success, largely from the American context, not necessarily because they have evidence that the American campaign model is truly better, but rather because it appears modern, sophisticated, and superior. Furthermore, frequently states adopt particular models because of their symbolic standing. Many Third World governments have acquired very expensive weapons systems that have very little military value because they convey to others that they are sophisticated and are a part of the club; Iran's nuclear ambitions might owe to its desire for regional dominance, but it also could be that it wants to own this ultimate status symbol. Finally, professional associations and expert communities also diffuse organizational models. Most associations have established techniques, codes of conduct, and methodologies for

determining how to confront challenges in their area of expertise. They learn these techniques through informal interactions and in formal settings such as in universities. Once these standards are established, they become the 'industry standard' and the accepted way of addressing problems in an area. Part of the job of professional associations and expert **networks** is to communicate these standards to others; doing so makes them agents of diffusion. Economists, lawyers, military officials, arms control experts, and others diffuse practices, standards, and models through networks and associations. If the American way of campaigning is becoming increasingly accepted around the world it is in part due to a new class of professional campaign consultants that have converged around a set of accepted techniques and are ready to peddle their wares to willing customers.

Discussions of diffusion also draw attention to the internationalization of norms. Norms are standards of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity. Norms of humanitarianism, **citizenship**, military intervention, human rights, trade, arms control, and the environment not only regulate what states do, they also can be connected to their identities and thus expressive of how they define themselves and their interests. Norms not only constrain behaviour because actors are worried about the costs of doing so; they also constrain behaviour because they are connected to a sense of self. 'Civilized' states are expected to avoid settling their difference through violence not because war might not pay but rather because it violates how 'civilized' states are expected to act. Human rights activists aspire to reduce human rights are violations not only by 'naming and shaming' those who violate these rights, but also by persuading potential violators that human rights are tied to their identity as a modern, responsible state. The domestic debates on the USA's treatment of 'enemy combatants' concerned not only whether torture worked, but also whether it is a legitimate practice for civilized states.

These expectations of what constitutes proper behaviour can diffuse across the population to the point that they are taken for granted. Norms, therefore, do not simply erupt but rather evolve through a political process. A central issue, therefore, is the internationalization and institutionalization of norms, or what is now called the **life cycle of norms** (see Box 9.3). Although many international norms have a taken-for-granted quality, they have to come from somewhere and their path to acceptance is

Box 9.3 Finnemore and Sikkink on the three stages of the life-cycle of norms

Norm emergence

This stage is typified by persuasion by norm entrepreneurs [who] attempt to convince a critical mass of states . . . to embrace new norms. Norm entrepreneurs call attention to issues or even "create" issues by using language that names, interprets, and dramatizes them. Norm entrepreneurs attempt to establish 'frames' . . . that resonate with broader public understandings and are adopted as new ways of talking about and understanding issues'. Norm entrepreneurs need a launching pad to promote their norms, and will frequently work from non-governmental organizations and with international organizations and states. In most cases for an emergent norm to reach a threshold and move toward the second stage, it must become institutionalized in specific sets of international rules and organizations. . . . After norm entrepreneurs have persuaded a critical mass of states to become norm leaders and adopt new norms . . . the norm reaches a critical threshold or tipping point.

Norm cascade

The second stage is characterized more by a dynamic of imitation as the norm leaders attempt to socialize other states to become norm

nearly always rough and rocky. Although most states now recognize that prisoners of war have certain rights and cannot be subjected to summary executions on the battlefield, this was not always the case. These rights originated with the emergence of international humanitarian law in the late nineteenth century, and then slowly spread and became increasingly accepted over the next several decades in response to considerable debate regarding how to minimize the horrors of war. Now most states accept that prisoners of war have rights, even if those rights are not fully observed. Several decades ago many scholars and jurists objected to the very idea of humanitarian intervention because it violated sovereignty's principle of interference and allowed great powers to try to become sheep in wolf's clothing. Over the last fifteen years, though, there is a growing acceptance of humanitarian intervention and a responsibility to protect—when states are unable or unwilling to protect their citizens, then the international community inherits that responsibility. This revolutionary concept emerged through fits and starts and in response to tragedies such as Rwanda, and was propelled by various states and humanitarian organizations.

Among the various consequences of institutional isomorphism and the internationalization of norms, three are noteworthy. There used to be a myriad of ways to

followers. The exact motivation for this second stage, where the norm "cascades" through the rest of the population (in this case, states), may vary, but . . . a combination of pressure for conformity, desire to enhance international legitimacy, and the desire of state leaders to enhance their self-esteem facilitate norm cascades. These processes can be likened to socialization. To the degree that states and state elites fashion a political self or identity in relationship to the international community the concept of socialization suggests that the cumulative effect of many countries in a region adopting new norms is akin to peer pressure.

Norm internalization

The third stage is norm internalization. . . . Norms acquire a taken-for-granted quality and are no longer a matter of . . . debate' and thus are automatically honoured. For example, few people today discuss whether women should be allowed to vote, whether slavery is useful, or whether medical personnel should be granted immunity during war.

(Adapted from Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 894–905)

organize human activities, but that diversity has slowly but impressively yielded to conformity. Yet just because states look alike does not mean that they act alike. After all, many states gravitate towards particular models not because they really think that the model is better but in order to improve their legitimacy. These states, then, can be expected to act in ways that are inconsistent with the expectations of the model. For instance, if governments are adopting democratic forms of governance and elections solely for symbolic reasons, then we should expect the presence of democratic institutions to exist alongside authoritarian and illiberal practices. There also is a deepening sense of an 'international community'. The internationalization of norms suggests that actors are increasingly accepting standards of behaviour because they are connected to a sense of self that is tied to the international community. These norms, in other words, are bound up with the values of the international community. To the extent that these values are shared, then it becomes possible to speak of an international community. A third consequence is **socialization**, the process by which states and their societies take on the identities and interests of the dominant peer group in international society. Diffusion rarely goes from the Third World to the West; instead, it travels from the West to the Third World.

an international community should not be mistaken for a world without power and hierarchy. In general, the Constructivist concern with international diffusion and the internationalization of norms touches centrally on global change because of the interest in a world in motion and transformation.

Key Points

- The recognition that the world is socially constructed means that Constructivists can investigate global change and transformation.
- A key issue in any study of global change is diffusion, captured by the concern with institutional isomorphism and the life-cycle of norms.
- Although diffusion sometimes occurs because of the view that the model is superior, frequently actors adopt a model either because

of external pressures or its symbolic legitimacy.

- institutional isomorphism and the internationalization of norms raise issues of growing homogeneity in world politics, a deepening international community, and socialization processes.

Conclusion

This chapter surveyed the global-historical, intellectual, and disciplinary forces that made Constructivism a particularly attractive way for thinking about international politics. It invites students to imagine the continuities and transformations of international politics. It explores why the world is organized in the way it is, considers the different factors that shape the durable forms of world politics, and seeks alternative worlds. In doing so, it challenges received wisdoms and opens up new lines of inquiry. Although many in the discipline treated as strange the claim that ideas can shape how the world works, in fact what is strange is a view of a world devoid of ideas. After all, is it even possible to imagine such a world? What would it look like? Is it even possible to imagine a world driven only by materialist forces? What would it look like?

Constructivism challenged the discipline's mainstream on its own terms and on issues that were at the heart of its research agenda. Its success has sometimes led to the false impression that Constructivism is a substitute theory and not the social theory that it is. As such, it is much more and much less than meets the eye. It is much less because it is not properly a theory that can be viewed as a rival to many of the theories in this volume. It offers no predictions about enduring regularities or tendencies

in world politics. Instead, it suggests how to investigate them. Consequently, it is much more than meets the eye because it offers alternative ways of thinking about a range of concepts and issues, including power, alliance formation, war termination and military intervention, the liberal peace, and international organizations.

What of the future of Constructivism? It depends on which version of Constructivism we are discussing. Constructivists generally accept certain commitments, including Idealism, holism, and an interest in the relationship between agents and structures. They also accept certain basic claims, such as the social construction of reality, the existence and importance of social facts, the constitution of actors' identities, interests, and subjectivities, and the importance of recovering the meaning actors give to their activities. But they also exhibit tremendous differences. Although sometimes these disagreements can appear to derive from academic posturing, the search for status, and the narcissism of minor differences, in fact there also can be much at stake, as suggested in Ch.10. These differences will exist as long as Constructivism exists. This is healthy because it will guard against complacency and enrich our understanding of the world.

Questions

- 1 What were the silences of neo-realism and neo-liberal Institutionalism?
- 2 How did International Relations scholars use critical and sociological theory to address important issues overlooked by neo-realism and neo-liberal Institutionalism?
- 3 What is the core of Constructivism?
- 4 Do you find Constructivism a useful approach for thinking about world politics?
- 5 Do you agree that we should try to understand how actors make meaningful their behaviour in world politics? Or is it enough to examine behaviour?
- 6 How are meanings fixed in world politics?
- 7 Do you think that Constructivism adds richness and complexity at the expense of our desire to understand patterns in world politics?
- 8 What sort of relationship can exist between rational choice and Constructivism?
- 9 What do you think are the core issues for the study of global change and how does Constructivism help you address those issues? Alternatively, how does a Constructivist framework help you identify new issues that you had not previously considered?
- 10 What sorts of question are opened up by thinking about socialization in world politics?
- 11 How does the concept of diffusion help you understand why and how the world has changed?

Guide to further reading

- Adler, E. (2003). 'Constructivism', in W. Carlsnaas, B. Simmons, and T. Risse (eds), *Handbook of International Relations* (Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Sage). A terrific overview of the origins and fundamentals of Constructivism and its relationship to existing theories of international politics.
- Barnett, M. (1998). *Dialogues in Arab Politics: Negotiations in Regional Order* (New York: Columbia University Press). Examines how Arab leaders played the game of Arab politics and, in doing so, transformed the very nature of Arab politics. An example of how Constructivists might think about how strategic action is shaped by a normative structure.
- Carpenter, C. (2003). 'Women and Children First': Gender, Norms, and Humanitarian Evacuation in the Balkans 1991–1995', *International Organization*, 57(4) (Fall): 661–94.
- Fearon, J., and Wendt, A. (2003). 'Rationalism vs. Constructivism', in W. Carlsnaas, B. Simmons, and T. Risse (eds), *Handbook of International Relations* (Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Sage). A very useful exposition of how rational choice and Constructivism overlap, written by two of the leading proponents of each approach in international relations.
- Finnemore, M., and Sikkink, K. (1999). 'International Norms and Political Change', in P. Katzenstein et al. (eds), *Explorations and Controversies in World Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press).
- (2001). 'Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 4: 391–416. A highly insightful account of Constructivism's insights and future directions of research.
- Holsti, M., and Smith, S. (1990). *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press). Explains in an exceptionally clear fashion the contrast between a conception of world politics driven by self-interested action and a conception informed by rules and interpretative methods.

Chapter 10

Alternative approaches to international theory

STEVE SMITH · PATRICIA OWENS

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Reader's Guide

Following from the preceding five chapters, which very broadly might be described as the new 'mainstream' theories of international relations, this chapter outlines other important contributions to thinking about world politics. The main theories dealt with are: historical sociology, feminist theory, post-modernism, and post-colonialism. The chapter begins by establishing some important preliminary distinctions between theories that are explanatory and foundationalist (like Realism, Liberalism, and most of all Marxism) and those that are

constitutive and non-foundationalist. Explanatory/foundationalist theories are termed rationalist. Constitutive/non-foundationalist theories have developed in two broad versions, one is known as Social Constructivism (dealt with in Ch. 9) and the other group is termed for convenience here 'alternative' approaches. The latter theories are the main concern of this chapter. Although both Social Constructivism and these alternative approaches reject the main assumptions of rationalist theories and see theories as constituting the social world, the alternative approaches are more critical of the mainstream and move beyond it in more far-reaching ways.

Introduction

The previous five chapters have given you overviews of the four most dominant theories of international relations (Realism, Liberalism, Marxism, and Constructivism) and the contemporary debate between the two leading mainstream theories, **neo-realism** and **neo-liberalism**. With the exception of Social Constructivism, which is relatively new, these approaches have governed the discipline for the last fifty years, and the debate between their adherents has defined the areas of disagreement in international theory. The **inter-paradigm debate** between Realism, Liberalism, and Marxism has been extremely influential, with generations of students told that the debate between the variations elements effectively exhausts the kinds of questions that can be asked about international relations. However, the inter-paradigm debate by no means covers the range of issues that any contemporary theory of world politics needs to deal with. Instead, this 'debate' ends up being a rather conservative political move because it gives the impression of open-mindedness and intellectual pluralism whereas, in fact, Realism has tended to dominate. Indeed, one factor supporting the dominance of Realism has been that it seems to portray the world as commonsensically understood. Thus alternative views can be dismissed as **value-laden**, to be negatively compared with the so-called **objectivity** of Realism.

In the last decade or so this picture has changed dramatically in two ways. First, there has been a major debate between neo-realism and neo-liberalism (see Ch.7), known as the **neo-neo** debate. The second change has been the appearance of a range of new approaches developed to understand world politics. In part this reflects a changing world. The end of the **cold war** system signif-

cantly reduced the creditability of Realism, especially in its neo-realist guise where the stability of the bipolar system was seen as a continuing feature of world politics. As that **bipolarity** dramatically disappeared, so too did the explanatory power of the theory that most relied on it. But this was not by any means the only reason for the rise of new approaches. There are three other obvious reasons. First, Realism's dominance was called into question by a resurgence of its historical main competitor, Liberalism, in the form of neo-liberal Institutionalism, as discussed in Ch. 7, with this debate now comprising the mainstream of the discipline. Second, there were other changes under way in world politics that made the **development** of new approaches important, such as the kinds of features discussed under the heading **globalization**. Whatever the explanatory power of Realism, it did not seem very good at dealing with issues such as the rise of **non-state actors**, identity politics, transnational **social movements**, and information technology. In short, new approaches were needed to explain these features of world politics, even if Realism still claimed to be good at dealing with power politics. Third, there were major developments under way in other academic disciplines in the social sciences, but also in the philosophy of social science, that attacked the underlying methodological (i.e. how to undertake study) assumption of Realism, a position known as **positivism** (discussed below). In its place a whole host of alternative ways of thinking about the social sciences were being proposed, and International Relations simply caught up. Since then, a series of alternative approaches have been proposed as more relevant to world politics in the twenty-first century.

Explanatory/constitutive theories and foundational/anti-foundational theories

In order to understand the current situation with regard to international theory it is important to introduce two distinctions. The terms can be a little unsettling, but they are merely convenient words for discussing fairly

that think our theories actually help construct the world. This is actually a distinction adopted in both scientific and non-scientific disciplines. But a moments thought should make you realize why it is more appealing in the non-scientific world. In a very obvious way our theories about the world shape how we act, and thereby make those theories become self-confirming. For example, if we think that individuals are naturally aggressive, then we are likely to adopt a different posture towards them than if we think they are naturally peaceful. However, you should not regard this claim as self-evidently true, since it assumes that our ability to think and reason makes us able to determine our choices (i.e. that we have free will rather than having our 'choices' determined behind our backs). What if our human nature is such that we desire certain things 'naturally', and that our language and seemingly 'free choices' are simply our rationalizations for our needs? This is only the opening stage of a very complex but fascinating debate about what it is to be human (Hollis and Smith 1990). However, the upshot, whichever position you eventually adopt, is that there is a genuine debate between those theories that think of the social world as like the natural world, and those theories that see our language and concepts as helping create that reality. Theories claiming the natural and the social worlds are the same are known as **naturalist**.

In International Relations, the more structural Realist and Structuralist theories dealt with in Ch. 5 and Ch. 7 tend to be explanatory theories, which see the task of theory as being to report on a world that is external to our theories. Their concern is to uncover **regularities** in human behaviour and thereby explain the social world in much the same way as a natural scientist might explain the physical world. By contrast, nearly all the approaches developed in the last fifteen years or so tend to be constitutive theories, and interestingly the same is true of some Liberal thought. Here theory is not external to the things it is trying to explain, and instead may construct how we think about the world. Or, to put it another way, our theories define what we see as the external world. Thus the very concepts we use to think about the world help to make that world what it is. (Think about the concepts that matter in your own life, such as love, happiness, wealth, status, etc.).

The **foundational/anti-foundational** distinction refers to the simple-sounding issue of whether our beliefs about the world can be tested or evaluated against any neutral or objective procedures. This is a distinction central to the

branch of the philosophy of social science known as **epistemology** (the study of how we can claim to know something). A foundationalist position is one that thinks that all truth claims (about some feature of the world) can be judged true or false. An anti-foundationalist thinks that truth claims cannot be so judged since there are never neutral grounds for so doing. Instead, each theory will define what counts as the facts and so there will be no neutral position available to determine between rival claims. Think, for example, of a Marxist and a Liberal arguing about the 'true' state of the economy, or a feminist and an Islamic Fundamentalist discussing the 'true' status of women. Foundationalists look for what are termed **meta-theoretical** (or above any particular theory) grounds for choosing between truth claims. In contrast, anti-foundationalists think that there are no such positions available, and that believing there to be some is itself simply a reflection of an adherence to a particular view of epistemology.

In many senses most of the new approaches to international theory discussed later are much less wedded to foundationalism than were the traditional theories that comprised the inter-paradigm debate. Thus, **post-modernism**, **post-colonialism**, and some **feminist theory** would tend towards anti-foundationalism. However, the **neo-neo** debate, some **historical sociology**, and some **critical theory** would tend towards foundationalism. Interestingly, **Social Constructivism** wishes to portray itself as occupying the middle ground (see Ch.9). On the whole, and as a rough guide, explanatory theories tend to be foundational while constitutive theories tend to be anti-foundational. The point at this stage is not to construct some checklist, nor to get you thinking yet about the differences. Rather, we want to draw your attention to the role that these assumptions about the nature of knowledge have on the theories that we are going to discuss. The central point at this stage is that the two distinctions mentioned in this section were never really discussed in the literature of International Relations until very recently. The last fifteen years has seen these underlying assumptions brought more into the open and the most important effect of this has been to undermine Realism's claim to be delivering *the* truth.

The distinctions between explanatory and constitutive theories and between foundational and anti-foundational theories have been brought into the open because of a massively important reversal in the way in which social scientists have thought about their ways of constructing

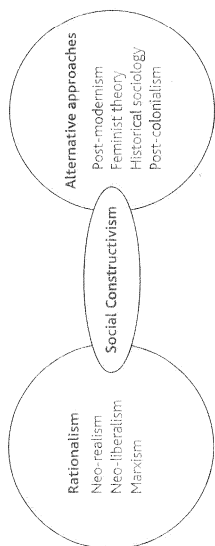


Figure 10.1 International theory at the beginning of the twenty-first century

knowledge. Until the late 1980s, most social scientists in International Relations tended to be **positivists**. But since then positivism has been under attack. Positivism is best defined as a view of how to create knowledge that relies on four main assumptions. The first is a belief in the unity of science, that is that roughly the same methodologies apply in both the scientific and non-scientific worlds. Second, there is a distinction between facts and values, with facts being neutral between theories. Third, that the social world, like the natural one, has regularities, and that these can be 'discovered' by our theories in much the same way as a scientist does in looking for the regularities in nature. Finally, that the way to determine the truth of statements is by appeal to these neutral facts, this is known as an empiricist epistemology.

It is the rejection of these assumptions that has characterized the debate in international theory in the last twenty years or so. Yosef Lapid (1989) has termed this a 'post-positivist era'. In simple terms, traditional international theory was dominated by the four kinds of positivistic assumptions noted above. Since the late 1980s, the new approaches that have emerged have tended to question these same assumptions. The resulting map of international theory at the beginning of the twenty-first century has three main features. First, the continuing dominance of the three theories that together made up the inter-paradigm debate. This can be termed the **rationalist** position, and is epitomized by the neo-neo debate. Second, the emergence of non-positivistic theories, which together can be termed alternative approaches, and epitomized by much critical theory (discussed in Ch.8), historical sociology, much feminist work, post-modernism, and post-colonialism, to be discussed below. And third, the development of an approach that tries to speak to both rationalist and alternative approaches known as Social Constructivism. Figure 10.1 illustrates the resulting configuration of the theories today.

Note that this is a very rough representation of how the various theories can be categorized. It is misleading in some respects since, as the previous five chapters have shown, there are quite different versions of the main theories, and some of these are less rationalistic than others. Moreover, critical theory can seem like quite a radical departure from the mainstream. Similarly, some of the approaches classified as 'alternative' in this chapter are markedly less so than others. For example, work in historical sociology often adopts similar theoretical methods to rationalist approaches, though this is not always the case. Because historical sociology tends to reject the central unit of rationalism in IR, the state, and is compatible with much post-positivism we discuss it in this chapter. In other words, the classifications are broadly illustrative of the theoretical landscape, and are best illustrated a useful starting point for thinking about the differences between theories. As you learn more about them you will see how rough and ready a picture this is, but it is as good a categorization as any other.

Key Points

- Theories can be distinguished according to whether they are explanatory or constitutive and whether they are foundational or anti-foundational. As a rough guide, explanatory theories tend to be foundational and constitutive theories tend to be anti-foundational.
- The three main theories comprising the inter-paradigm debate were based on a set of positivist assumptions.
- Since the late 1980s there has been a rejection of positivism.
- The current theoretical situation is one in which there are three main positions: first, rationalist theories that are essentially the latest versions of the Realist and liberal theories; second, alternative theories that are post-positivist; and third, Social Constructivist theories that try to bridge the gap.
- Alternative approaches at once differ considerably from one another, and at the same time overlap in some important ways. One thing that they do share is a rejection of the core assumptions of rationalist theories.

Historical sociology

Just as critical theory (see Ch.8) questions the state and refuses to see it as some kind of given in world politics, so does historical sociology. Indeed, the main theme of this field is the way in which societies develop through history. It is concerned with the underlying **structures** that shape the **institutions** and organizations into which human society is arranged, including violence, economy, and **gender** (Hall 1992; Skocpol 1992). Historical sociology has a long history. The first wave, which was a response to the great events of the eighteenth century—the American and French revolutions, the processes of industrialization, and **nation** building—ran until the 1920s (D. Smith 1991). The second wave has been of particular interest to international theory, because the key writers, Michael Mann (1986, 1993), Theda Skocpol (1979, 1984), Immanuel Wallerstein (1974, 1984), Charles Tilly (1981, 1990), John Hall (1985, 1994), and Martin Shaw (1984, 2003) have all to various degrees focused their sociological analyses on the relationship between the domestic and the international (Hobden 1998). Tilly has neatly summarized this interest with the statement that 'states made war but war made the state'. In short, the central feature of historical sociology has been an interest in how the structures that we take for granted (as 'natural') are the products of a set of complex social processes.

Thus, whereas neo-realism takes the state as a given, historical sociology asks how specific kinds of states have been produced by the various forces at work in domestic and international societies. Historical sociologists show just how complex the state is as an organization, thereby undermining the rather simple view of the state found in neo-realism. They also fundamentally undermine the notion that a state is a state through time and across the world. States differ—they are not functionally similar as neo-realism portrays them. Furthermore, historical sociologists show that there can be no simple distinction between international and domestic societies. They are inevitably interlinked. There is no such thing as an **international system**, as suggested by Waltz, which is self-contained and thereby able to exert decisive influence on the behaviour of states. Finally, historical sociology shows that international and domestic forces create the state, and that the international is itself a determinant of

the nature of the state (Shaw 2000; Hobden and Hobson 2002). This claim, of course, looks particularly relevant to the debate on globalization, since one of its dominant themes is that the international economic system places demands on states such that only certain kinds of states can prosper.

Charles Tilly's work is particularly interesting because it is a clear example of the complexity of the state as an entity. In his 1990 book, *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 900–1990*, Tilly poses the following question: 'What accounts for the great variation over time and space in the kinds of states that have prevailed in Europe since AD 990, and why did European states eventually converge on different variants of the national state? (1990: 5). The answer he gives is that the national state eventually dominated because of its role in fighting wars. Distinguishing between capital-intensive and coercion-intensive **regimes** (or economic power-based and military power-based systems), Tilly notes that three types of state resulted from the combinations of these forms of power: tribute-making **empires**, systems of fragmented **sovereignty** (city-states), and national states. These states were the result of the different class structures that resulted from the concentrations of capital and coercion. Broadly speaking, coercion-intensive regimes had fewer cities and more agricultural class systems than did capital-intensive systems, which led to the development of classes representing commercial and trading interests. Where capital accumulation was high relative to the ability of the state to coerce its citizens, city-states developed. On the other hand, where there was coercion but not capital accumulation, then tribute-making empires developed. As Dennis Smith notes (1991: 83), each of these is a form of indirect rule, requiring the ruler to rely on the **cooperation** of relatively autonomous local powers. But with the rise in the scale of war, the result was that national states started to acquire a decisive advantage over the other kinds of state organizations. This was because national states could afford large armies and could respond to the demands of the classes representing both agricultural and commercial interests.

Through about a 350-year period starting around 1500, national states became the norm, as they were the

only states that could afford the military means to fight the kind of large-scale wars that were occurring. States, in other words, became transformed by war. Tilly notes that the three types of state noted above all converged on one version of the state, so now that is seen as the norm. Yet, in contrast to neo-realism, Tilly notes that the state has not been of one form throughout its history. His work shows how different types of state have existed, all with different combinations of class structures and modes of operating. And, crucially, it is war that explains the convergence of these types of state into the national state form. War plays this central role because it is through preparing for war that states gain their powers as they have to build up an infrastructure of taxation, supply, and administration (McNeill 1982). The national state thus acquires more and more power over its population by its involvement in war, and therefore could dominate other state forms because they were more efficient than either tribute-gathering empires or city-states in this process.

The second example of historical sociology is the work of Michael Mann. Mann is involved in a four-volume study of the sources of social power dealing with the whole of human history. The first two volumes appeared in 1986 and 1993 and deal with the period up to 1914. This is an enormously ambitious project, aimed at show-

ing just how states have taken the forms that they have. In other words, Mann studies the ways in which the various forms of power have combined in specific historical circumstances. He makes a major contribution to our thinking of how states have come into existence and about how they have related to the international political system. In this sense, his work is similar to that of Tilly, but the major innovation of Mann's work is that he has developed a sophisticated account of the forms of power that combine to form certain types of state. This is his IEMP model (Ideological, Economic, Military, and Political forms of power). This argument is summarized in Box 10.1 to give you an idea of its potential to shed light on how the state has taken the form that it has throughout history. It should make you think that the version of the state presented by neo-realism is very simple, but note also that there is some overlap between the focus of neo-realism on war and the focus of historical sociology on how states, classes, and war interact.

Historical sociology is a method and focus of research. It is possible, therefore, to be both a historical sociologist and a realist, and a critical theorist, and a feminist concerned with how gender and patriarchy have shaped states and societies (Miller 1998). It is also possible to be a post-modern historical sociologist; for example, Foucault's

method of genealogy (see Box 10.3) has much in common with the concerns of the field (Dean 1994; Kendall and Wickham 1999; for a similar discussion of Hannah Arendt, see Owens 2007). Though Foucault is most famously a

'post-modern' theorist, there is no contradiction between drawing on his understanding of power and knowledge (discussed later) and approaching questions such as the organization of violence historically (Drake 2001).

Key Points

- Historical sociology has a long history. Its central focus is with how societies develop the forms that they do. It is basically a study of the interactions between states, classes, capitalism, and war.
- Charles Tilly looks at how the three main kinds of state forms that existed at the end of the Middle Ages eventually converged on one form, namely the national state. He argues that the decisive reason was the ability of the national state to fight wars.

- Michael Mann has developed a powerful model of the sources of state power, known as the IEMP model.
- The concerns of historical sociology are compatible with a number of the other approaches surveyed in this chapter including feminism and post-modernism.

Feminist theory

Chapter 15 details some of the main varieties of gender issues in world politics. Here we offer an overview of five main types of feminist theory, which have become common since the mid-1980s. These are liberal, socialist/Marxist, standpoint, post-modern, and post-colonial. Although this section is titled 'feminist theory', it is both a deliberate and misleading heading. It is deliberate in that it focuses on the socially constructed roles that 'women' occupy in world politics. It is misleading because this question has to be understood in the context of the construction of differences between women and men and contingent understandings of masculinity and femininity. In other words, the focus could more accurately be on 'gender' rather than on 'women' because the very categories of 'women' and 'men', and the concepts of masculinity and femininity, are highly contested in much feminist research. Similarly, the distinctions of liberal/socialist, etc., are slightly misleading for as you will discover below these categories do not exactly correspond to the diverse work of feminist scholars, especially in contemporary work in which elements from each 'type' are often integrated.

The term 'gender' usually refers to the social construction of difference between 'men' and 'women'. Some of the theories covered in this section assume natural and biological (e.g. sex) differences between men and women. Some of the approaches do not. What all of the most interesting work in this field does, however, is analyze

how gender both affects world politics and is an effect of world politics; in other words, how different concepts (such as the state or sovereignty) are gendered and, in turn, how this gendering of concepts can have differential consequences for 'men' and 'women' (Stearns 1998). It is important to note that feminists have always been interested in how understandings of gender affect men's lives as well as women. Indeed, there is also a field of research known as **men's studies** that models itself after, and was made possible by the emergence of, 'women's studies' (see Brittan 1989; Seidler 1989; Connell 1995; Carver 1996; for a feminist discussion see Zalewski and Parpart 1998).

Feminist theory in international relations originally developed in work on the politics of development and in peace research. But by the late 1980s a first wave of feminism, **liberal feminism**, was more forcefully posing the question of 'where are the women in world politics?' The meaning of 'liberal' in this context is decidedly NOT the same as the meaning of the term in Ch.6. In the context of feminism, the term starts from the notion that the key units of society are individuals, that these individuals are biologically determined as either men or women, and that these individuals possess specific rights and are equal. Thus, one strong argument of liberal feminism is that all rights should be granted to women equally with men. Here we can see how the **state** is gendered in that rights, such as voting rights, right to possess property, etc., were

Box 10.1 Mann's IEMP model of power organization

Mann differentiates between three aspects of power:

- 1 Between distributive power and collective power, where distributive power is the power of *a* over *b* (for *a* to acquire more distributive power, *b* must lose some), and collective power is the joint power of actors (where *a* and *b* can cooperate to exploit nature or another actor, *c*).
- 2 Power may be extensive or intensive. Extensive power can organize large numbers of people over far-flung territories. Intensive power mobilizes a high level of commitment from participants.
- 3 Power may be authoritative or diffused. Authoritative power comprises willed commands by an actor and conscious obedience by subordinates. It is found most typically in military and political power organizations. Diffused power is not directly commanded; it spreads in a relatively spontaneous, unconscious, and decentralized way. People are constrained to act in different ways but not by command of any particular person or organization. Diffused power is found most typically in ideological and economic power organizations.

Mann argues that the most effective exercise of power combines all three elements. He argues that there are four sources of social power, which together may determine the overall structure of societies. The four are:

- 1 Ideological power derives from the human need to find ultimate meaning in life, to share norms and values, and to participate in aesthetic and ritual practices. Control over ideology brings general social power.
- 2 Economic power derives from the need to extract, transform, distribute, and consume the resources of nature. It is peculiarly powerful because it combines intensive cooperation with extensive circuits of distribution, exchange and consumption. This provides a stable blend of intensive and extensive power and normally of authoritative and diffused power.
- 3 Military power is the social organization of physical force. It derives from the necessity of organized defence and the utility of aggression. Military power has both intensive and extensive aspects and it can also organize people over large areas. Those who monopolize it can wield a degree of general social power.
- 4 Political power derives from the usefulness of territorial and centralized regulation. Political power means state power. It is essentially authoritative, commanded and willed from a centre.

The struggle to control ideological, economic, military and political power organizations provides the central drama of social development. Societies are structured primarily by entwined ideological, economic, military, and political power.

(Mann 1993: 6–10)

predicated solely on the experiences and expectations of men—and, typically, a certain ethnic/racial class of men. Thus, taking women seriously made a difference to the standard view of world politics. Liberal feminists look at the ways in which women are excluded from power and prevented from playing a full part in political activity. They examine how women have been restricted to roles critically important for the functioning of things (such as reproductive economies) but that are not usually deemed to be important for theories of world politics.

To ask 'where are the women?' was at the time quite a radical political act, precisely because women were absent from the canonical texts of international relations, and thus appeared invisible. Writers such as **Cynthia Enloe** (1989, 1993, 2000) began from the premise that if we simply started to ask 'where are the women?' we would be able to see their presence and importance to world politics, as well as the ways in which their exclusion from world politics was presumed a 'natural' consequence of their biological or natural roles. After all, it was not that women were actually absent from world politics. Indeed, they played absolutely central roles, either as cheap factory labour, as prostitutes around military bases, or as the wives of diplomats. The point is that the conventional picture painted by traditional international theory both ignored these contributions and, if recognized, designated them as less important than the actions of states-men. Enloe demonstrated just how critically important were the activities of women to the functioning of the international economic and political systems. She illustrated exactly how crucial women and the conventional arrangements of 'women's and men's work' were to the continued functioning of international politics. Most specifically, Enloe documented how the concepts and practice of militarization influenced the lives and choices of men and women around the world. 'Militarization', she writes, 'is a step-by-step process by which a person or a thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military or comes to depend for its well-being on militaristic ideas' (2000: 3; also see Elshaint 1987; Elshaint and Tobias 1990). Enloe is an example of a scholar who begins from a liberal premise, that is that women and men should have equal rights and responsibilities in world politics, but draws upon socialist feminism to analyze the role of economic structures and standpoint feminism to highlight the unique and particular contributions of women.

A second strand of feminist theory is **socialist/Marxist feminism**, with its insistence on the role of material

masculine behaviour and masculine experiences, and therefore represented not a universal standard—but a highly specific, particular standard. Standpoint feminists argue that seeing the world from the standpoint of women radically alters our understanding of that world. Standpoint feminism has undergone dramatic changes since its first articulation to incorporate the critiques of women of colour, who argued that, like socialism, it presumed that class **identity** (or in this case, sex identity) was the primary affiliation of all women and, accordingly, the single source of their oppression. The standpoint position also runs the risk of essentializing and fixing the views and nature of women, by saying that *this* is how women see the world (Gioseff 2003). Nonetheless despite these dangers, standpoint feminism has been very influential in showing just how male-dominated the main theories of world politics are—in part because it is grounded in a simple premise. In an important early essay, for example, **J. Ann Tickner** (1988) reformulated the famous 'Six principles of political realism' developed by the 'godfather' of Realism, Hans Morgenthau. Tickner showed how the seemingly 'objective' rules of Morgenthau in fact reflect male values and definitions of reality, rather than female ones. As a riposte, Tickner reformulated these same rules taking women's (as opposed to men's) experiences as the starting point.

The fourth version is **post-modern feminism**, which develops the work of post-structuralism (especially that of Foucault and Derrida) to analyze specifically the concept of gender. Therefore, it might help to read the following in conjunction with the section on post-modernism below. Essentially, post-modern feminism criticizes the basic distinction between **sex** and **'gender'** that earlier feminist theories found so useful in thinking about the roles/lives of men and women in world politics and in analyzing the gendered concepts of world politics itself. This distinction between sex and gender was useful because it allowed feminists to argue that the position of women and men in the world was not natural, but highly contingent and dependent upon the meaning given to biological differences. Yet, while extremely useful, the acceptance of the sex-gender distinction retained the binary opposition of male-female, and presumed that while gender was constructed, sex was wholly natural. However, as a number of scholars demonstrated, what we understood sex to be, what biological differences were, was heavily influenced by our understanding of gender—that is, that sex was

as constructed as gender (Fausto-Sterling 1992, 2000; Haraway 1989, 1991; Fox-Keller 1985; Longino 1990). Thus, as Helen M. Kinsella argues:

it is an increasingly difficult position to defend that sex is prior to gender. The more one searches for the brute reality of sex, the more one finds that is gendered—that is, that the understanding of sex as a fact is itself a 'cultural conceit' (Haraway 1991: 197). In other words, this understanding of sex and sex difference is paradigmatic for a way of thinking about difference—as binary, as complementary, as given in nature. What are obscured, then, is the relations of power and politics which produce, distinguish, and regulate these concepts of 'gender' and of 'sex'. (2003: 295)

This does not mean that our biological bodies or 'the determination of sex' is not important. Rather it suggests that 'understanding this process leads to questions concerning how sex and gender operate to create the reality through which bodies materialize as sexed, as sexualized ... as objects of knowledge and subjects of power' (Kinsella 2003: 296; also see Kinsella 2005a, 2005b, 2006).

In questioning the sex-gender distinction, in arguing that sex is not the origin of gender but an effect of gender, post-modern feminists introduced the concept 'gender performativity' (Butler 1990). Performativity is itself a tricky concept, and one that is easily misunderstood. However, a good place to begin is thinking about an act that is repeatable, yet alterable, and an act or a production that can only make sense within a larger social construct of agreed-upon norms. To think about gender performativity is to think about gender as not given or rooted in sex, but as something that is enacted and produced in social relations. In Judith Butler's famous phrase 'gender is a doing'. This is still a difficult concept in feminist theory, and it is highly contested as well. Nonetheless, the concept of gender performativity opens the sex-gender distinction to analysis while, simultaneously, displacing the subject of 'woman' from the centre of feminist theorizing and introducing the question of identity. For, rather than presuming women are the subjects of feminism, Butler asks how subjects are produced. To try to understand this process in world politics is to ask, to put it simply, how world politics produces certain kinds of 'soldiers', certain kinds of 'workers', certain kinds of 'states' that are not simply men or women, male or female, but complexly positioned states that seem, to us, completely natural.

Box 10.2 V. Spike Peterson on the global political economy and the sex/gender distinction

In her book on the global political economy, feminist V. Spike Peterson focuses upon two roughly simultaneous occurrences—the explosive growth in financial markets that shape business decision-making and flexible work arrangements and the dramatic growth in informal and flexible work arrangements that shapes income generation and family well-being. She notes that ‘informalization reaps higher profits for capital, depresses formal wages, disciplines all workers and through the isolation of informalized workers impedes collective resistance’ while ‘flexibilization feminizes the workforce: an increasing number of jobs require few skills and the most desirable workers are those deemed to be unorganized, docile, but reliable [and] available for part time and temporary work and willing to accept low wages’. Taken together, Spike Peterson argues, these developments render ‘women, the poor, migrants, and recent immigrants the prototypical workers of the informal economy and arguably the future of all but elite workers worldwide’.

The final form of feminism to mention is **post-colonial feminism**. It might help to read the following in conjunction with the discussion of post-colonialism in this chapter. Post-colonial feminists work at the intersection of class, race, and gender on a global scale, and especially analyzes the gendered effects of transnational culture and the unequal division of labour in the global political economy. From this perspective, it is not good enough to simply demand (as liberal feminists do) that men and women should have equal rights in a Western-style democracy. Such a move ignores the way in which poor women of colour in the global South remain subordinated by the global economic system; a system that liberal feminists were slow to challenge in a systematic way. In other words, the concerns and interests of feminists in the West and those in the rest of the world may not, therefore, so easily fit. Post-colonial feminists are also critical of Western, privileged academic intellectuals (men and women) who claim to be able to ‘speak for’ the oppressed, a form of cultural **imperialism** with important material effects. Perhaps the most influential post-colonial feminist scholar in this vein

Key Points

- Liberal feminism looks at the roles women play in world politics and asks why they are marginalized.
- Marxist/socialist feminists focus on the international capitalist system and patriarchy.
- Standpoint feminists want to correct the male dominance of our knowledge of the world.

It is here that the distinction between (positivist) sex and (constructivist) gender is crucial. In contrast to positivist notions of sex (as a biologically natural binary of male-female) gender is a systematic social construction that dichotomizes.... As a social construct, gender is not “given” but learned (and therefore mutable). Most significantly, gender is not simply a trait of individuals, but an institutionalized structural feature of social life.... in short, gender is not simply an empirical category (referring to embodied men and women) but an analytical one, such that all social life is gendered.... [Gender] structures divisions of power and authority which determine whose voices and experiences dominate culturally and coercively.... and it structures divisions of labor which determine what counts as work, who does what, kind of work and how different kinds of work are valued.’

(V. Spike Peterson 2003: 1, 111, 31, *original italics*)

is Gayatri Spivak, who combines Marxism, feminism, and deconstruction (discussed below) to interpret imperialism, past and present, and ongoing struggles for decolonization. In an influential essay ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, Spivak (1988) acknowledged the ambiguity of her own position in a privileged Western university and argued that elite scholars should be wary of homogenizing the ‘subaltern’ and try to speak *for* them in their ‘true’ voice (what she calls a form of ‘epistemic violence’). The concept of the subaltern is discussed below, but it essentially refers to subordinated groups and in this instance to underprivileged women in the global South. In not recognizing the heterogeneity of experience and opinion of these diverse women, seemingly benevolent and well-meaning academics are at once patronizing in their desire to redeem them and unwittingly complicit in new forms of colonialism. Some post-modernists have also been criticized along similar lines for being too Western-centric and gender-blind. The combination of colonialism and **patriarchy** has made it doubly difficult for the resistance and agency of the subaltern to be heard and recognized.

- Post-modernist feminists are concerned with gender as opposed to the position of women as such. They look into the ways in which masculinity and femininity get constructed.
- Post-colonial feminists work at the intersection of gender, race, and class on a global scale.

Post-modernism

Post-modernism has been a particularly influential theoretical development throughout the social sciences in the last twenty-five years. It reached international theory in the mid-1980s, but can only be said to have really arrived in the past fifteen years. Nonetheless, it is probably as popular a theoretical approach as any discussed in this chapter and overlaps with a number of them. Part of the difficulty, however, is precisely defining post-modernism. This is in addition to the fact, of course, that there are substantial theoretical differences within its various strands. One useful definition is by Jean-François Lyotard: ‘Simplifying to the extreme, I define post-modern as incredulity towards metanarratives’ (1984: xxiv). Incredulity simply means scepticism; ‘metanarrative’ means any theory that asserts it has clear foundations for making knowledge claims and involves a **foundational** epistemology. Post-modernism is essentially concerned with **deconstructing** and distrust-ing any account of human life that claims to have direct access to ‘the truth’. Thus, Marxism (including critical theory), Freudian psychoanalysis, and standpoint feminisms are all suspect from a post-modern perspective because they claim to have uncovered some fundamental truth about the world.

Three central themes in post-modern work are briefly discussed in this section: the **power-knowledge** relationship, the performative nature of identity, and various textual strategies used by post-modern thinkers. Work on the power-knowledge relationship has been most influenced by **Michel Foucault** (1977, 1978, 1984, 1994). (Note, however, that this relationship is also a key concern of **critical theory** (see Ch.8).) Foucault was opposed to the notion dominant in **rationalist** theories and **positivism** that knowledge is immune from the workings of power. Instead, Foucault argued that power in fact **produces knowledge**. All power requires knowledge and all knowledge relies on and reinforces existing power relations. Thus, there is no such thing as ‘truth’ existing outside power. To paraphrase Foucault, how can history have a truth if truth has a history? Truth is not something external to social settings but is instead part of them.

Accordingly, post-modernists look at what power relations are supported by ‘truths’ and knowledge practices.

Post-modern international theorists have used this insight to examine the ‘truths’ of international relations theory to see how the concepts and knowledge claims that dominate the discipline in fact are highly contingent on specific power relations. Three recent examples on the concept of sovereignty in the history and theory of international politics are by Cynthia Weber (1995), Jens Bartelson (1995), and Jenny Edkins *et al.* (1999). In each book, the concept of sovereignty is revealed to be both historically variable despite the attempts of mainstream scholars to imbue it artificially with a fixed meaning, and is itself caught up in the practice of sovereignty by producing the discourse about it.

How do post-modernists study history in the light of this relationship between power and knowledge? Foucault’s approach is known as **genealogy**, which is to undertake a ‘history of the present’ and turn what we accept as natural into a question. Box 10.3 reproduces Richard Ashley’s (1987) summary of this. The central message of genealogy is that various **regimes of truth** merely reflect the ways in which, through history, both power and truth develop together in a mutually sustaining relationship. The way to uncover the workings of power is to undertake a **detailed historical analysis** of how the practices and statements about the social world are only ‘true’ within specific **discourses**. Accordingly, post-modernism is concerned with how some discourses, and therefore some truths, dominate others in very concrete ways (see, for example, Edwards 1996). It is for this reason that post-modernists are opposed to metanarratives, since they imply that there are conditions for establishing the truth or falsity of knowledge claims that are not the product of any discourse, and thereby not the product of power.

A second theme is how post-modernists view identity not as a fixed ‘thing’ but as a **performative** site (you may wish to refer back to the discussion of post-modern feminism in the previous section). One way to approach this is to make a comparison with how identity is understood in mainstream Constructivism (see Ch.9). David Campbell has summarized the approach to identity by a leading Constructivist, Alexander Wendt:

anarchy by first providing a reading of anarchy according to the traditional IR literature. He then undertook a second reading showing how the seemingly natural opposition between anarchy and sovereignty in the first reading is in fact a false opposition. By disrupting the first reading, Ashley shows just how arbitrary is the 'truth' of the traditional assumptions made about anarchy and the kind of logic of state action that it requires. In a similar move, R. B. J. Walker (1993) looked at the construction of the tradition of Realism and shows how this is only possible by ignoring the major nuances and complexities within the thought of the key thinkers of this tradition, such as Machiavelli and Hobbes (also see Williams 2005, 2007). Post-modernism is taking apart the very concepts and methods of our thinking. It helps us think about the conditions under which we are able to theorize about world politics and for many is the most appropriate theory for a globalized world.

Key Points

- Lyotard defines post-modernism as incredulity towards meta-narratives meaning that it denies the possibility of foundations for establishing the truth of statements existing outside of discourse.
- Foucault focuses on the power-knowledge relationship and sees the two as mutually constituted. It implies that there can be no truth outside of regimes of truth. How can history have a truth if truth has a history?
- Derrida argues that the world is like a text in that, has to be interpreted. He looks at how texts are constructed and proposes two main tools to enable us to see how arbitrary the seemingly 'natural' oppositions of language actually are. These are deconstruction and double reading.

Box 10.4 Post-modern methodologies

In her book on discourse analysis and the Bosnian war, Lene Hansen directly challenges the assumption that post-modern and post-structuralist writing is not very good at empirical research and is vague as to its methodological choice.

'Many of the methodological questions that poststructuralist discourse analysis confronts are those that face all academic work: what should be the focus of analysis?; how should a research design be built around it?; and how is a body of material and data selected that facilitates a qualitatively and quantitatively reliable answer? Poststructuralism's focus on discourses as articulated in written and spoken text calls... for particular attention to the methodology of reading (how identities are identified within foreign policy texts and how should the relationship between opposing discourses be studied?) and the methodology of textual selection (which forums and types of texts should be chosen and how many should be included?.'

(Hansen 2006: 2)

in the case of opposites in language where one term is always privileged over the other. Therefore, deconstruction is a way of showing how all theories and discourses rely on artificial stabilities produced by the use of seemingly objective and natural oppositions (such as public/private, good/bad, male/female, civilized/barbaric, right/wrong). Double reading is Derrida's way of showing how these stabilizations operate by subjecting the text to two readings. The first is a repetition of the dominant reading to show how it achieves its coherence. The second is to point out the internal tensions within a text that result from the use of seemingly natural stabilizations. The aim is not to come to a 'correct' or even 'one' reading of a text, but instead to show how there is always more than one reading.

In international theory, Richard Ashley (1988) has performed exactly such a double reading of the concept of

Post-colonialism

Post-colonialism has been an important approach in cultural studies, literary theory, and anthropology for some time now, and has a long and distinguished pedigree. Founding texts arguably date back as far as the first oral histories and journals of freed African slaves in the United States (Gates 1987) and the political writing of W. E. B. DuBois, the leading African-American intellectual of his generation ([1903] 1993). Despite such ancestry, post-

posture entails a readiness to approach a field of practice historically, as an historically emergent and always contested product of multiple practices... as such, a field of practice... is seen as a field of clashes, a battlefield... one is supposed to look for the strategies, techniques, and rituals of power by which multiple themes, concepts, narratives, and practices are excluded, silenced, dispersed, recombined, or given new or reverse emphases, thereby to privilege some elements over others, impose boundaries, and discipline practice in a manner producing just this normalised division of practical space.

Fourth, what goes for the production and disciplining of social space goes also for the production and disciplining of subjects: From a genealogical standpoint there are no subjects, no fully formed individual egos, having an existence prior to practice and then implicated in power political struggles. Like fields of practice, subjects emerge in history... as such, the subject is itself a site of political power contest and ceaselessly so.

Fifth, a genealogical posture does not sustain an interest in those noble enterprises—such as philosophy, religion, positive social science, or the utopian political crusade—that would embark on searches for the hidden essences, the universal truths, the profound insights into the secret identity that transcends difference... from a genealogical standpoint... they are instead restuated right on the surface of political life. They are seen as political practice intimately engaged in the interpretation, production, and normalisation of modes of imposed order, modes of domination. They are seen as means by which practices are disciplined and domination advances in history.'

(Ashley 1987: 409–11)

nature of **political agency** reveals culture as a relational site for the politics of identity, rather than a substantive phenomenon[on] in its own right' (Campbell 1998: 221; also see Campbell 1992, 1993). On this view, while appropriating some of the labels and terms of post-modernism, Constructivism does not really challenge the dominant discourse about identity.

A third post-modern theme concerns **textual strategies**. The main claim is that, following Jacques Derrida (1976), the very way in which we construct the social world is textual. For Derrida, the world is constituted like a text in the sense that interpreting the world reflects the concepts and structures of language, what he terms textual interplay. Derrida has two main ways of exposing these textual interplays, **deconstruction** and **double reading**. Deconstruction is based on the idea that seemingly stable and natural concepts and relations within language are in fact artificial constructs. They are arranged hierarchically

Box 10.3 Foucault's notion of genealogy

'First, adopting a genealogical attitude involves a radical shift in one's analytical focus. It involves a shift away from an interest in uncovering the structures of history and towards an interest in understanding the movement and clashes of historical practices that would impose or resist structure.... [W]ith this shift... social enquiry is increasingly disposed to find its focus in the posing of "how" questions, not "what" questions. How... are structures of history produced, differentiated, reified, and transformed? How... are fields of practice prised open, bounded and secured? How... are regions of silence established?'

Second, having refused any notion of universal truth or deep identities transcending differences, a genealogical attitude is disposed to comprehend all history, including the production of order, in terms of the endless power political clash of multiple wills. Only a single drama is ever staged in this non-place, the endlessly repeated play of dominations. Practices... are to be understood to contain their own strategies: their own political technologies... for the disciplining of plural historical practices in the production of historical modes of domination.

Third, a genealogical attitude disposes one to be especially attentive to the historical emergence, bounding, conquest, and administration of social spaces... one might think, for example, of divisions of territory and populations among nation states... one might also think of the separation of spheres of politics and economics, the distinction between high and low politics, the differentiation of public and private spaces, the line of demarcation between domestic and international, the disciplinary division between science and philosophy, the boundary between the social and the natural, or the separation of the normal and legitimate from the abnormal and criminal... a genealogical

identity is said to come in two basic forms, one of which is 'those [deemed] intrinsic to an actor...'. As an instance of this, [Wendt] claims that 'being democratic... is an intrinsic feature of the U.S. state relative to the structure of the international system.' It is not difficult to appreciate that a position that regards certain identities as 'intrinsic', and includes among them highly contestable concepts such as 'democracy', is reductionist in its representation of politics.

(1998: 279)

Campbell is suggesting that in mainstream Constructivism identity is regarded as a kind of object or substance that can be observed and measured. But for post-modernists, identity ought to be conceived as having 'no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality' (Campbell 1992: 9). In contrast, stressing the performative make-up of identity and the constitutive

diasporas, to name just a few. A diaspora is the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions.

Despite this overlap of subject matter, post-colonial approaches have been largely ignored in IR given its **state-centrism** and **positivism**. But this is now changing, not least because old disciplinary boundaries are breaking down, and since the attacks of 11 September 2001 scholars in International Relations are beginning to understand how the histories of the West and the global South have always been intertwined (Barkawi 2004, 2006). Post-colonialism, given its interdisciplinary origins, has made a significant contribution to the destruction of these disciplinary boundaries. And as a result, IR scholars have begun to see the world in new 'post-colonial' ways (Barkawi and Laffey 2006), also making use of both traditional and non-traditional sources for understanding the world such as literature, poetry, and film (Holden and Ruppel 2003).

As with the other approaches surveyed in this chapter, there is no one satisfactory definition of post-colonialism. For a start, the prefix 'post' might seem to imply the end of colonial practices. This would be a mistake. **Colonialism** is 'the political control, physical occupation, and domination of people over another people and their land for purposes of extraction and settlement to benefit the occupiers' (Crawford 2002: 131). In many ways, of course, this **judicial** practice of controlling territory and peoples has ended. And a number of post-colonial scholars have looked at how this major transformation altered the politics and society of both the metropole (e.g. Britain) and the former colony (e.g. India) (Hall 2002). But much post-colonial scholarship also highlights the important degree of **continuity** and **persist-ence** of colonial forms of power in contemporary world politics. For example, the level of economic and military control of Western interests in the global South is in many ways actually greater now than it was under direct control—a form of '**neo-colonialism**' (Grovogui 1996; Duffield 2001). So although the era of formal colonial imposition by force of arms is apparently over (with the exception of the US occupation of Iraq in 2003–4), an important starting point for post-colonial scholarship is the issue of vast inequality on a global scale, the forms of power that make this systematic inequality possible, and the continued domination of **subaltern** peoples. The term 'subaltern' was originally used by Gramsci to



'Unlike the Americans, the French and British . . . have had a long tradition of what I shall be calling Orientalism—a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western Experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or

gender (Ch.15). But the issue of race has been almost entirely ignored. This is even though race and **racism** continue to shape the contemporary theory and practice of world politics in far-reaching ways (Doty 1993; Castles 2000; Vitalis 2000; Persaud 2002). As an international institution, racism has historically been part of the emergence of humanitarian norms sanctioning obligations as a kind of colonial mission. But racism may also help explain the lack of 'humanitarian' action by the West in the 1994 Rwanda genocide. It has been an important factor in garnering support for the increased militarization of Western **immigration policies** (Simon 1998). And the unprecedented increase in US prison growth in recent years, which has overwhelmingly relied on racist assumptions about crime and conviction rates, is intimately connected to structural adjustments in the domestic economy associated with globalization (Gilmore 1998/9). In 1903, W. E. B. DuBois famously argued that the problem of the twentieth century would be the problem of the 'colour-line'. How will transnational racism continue to shape the twenty-first century?

It is absolutely crucial to bear in mind that for post-colonial scholars imperial and other forms of power really operate at the **intersection of gender, race, and class**. Consider, for example, how it is possible for nations in the West to perceive of themselves as **civilized** and their enemies as **barbaric**. As a way to justify imperial rule in India the British employed both racist and sexist assumptions in pointing to the 'uncivilized' way women were being treated by Indian men. The enlightened (white) British males would bring civilization to (dark) India at the same time as they exploited the country economically. The issue at stake, however, was not so much the freedom of women in either Victorian Britain or India, as effective strategies of imperial rule (Metcalfe 1997).

the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.'

(Said 1979:1)

Post-colonial scholars do not only focus on issues of domination, though this surely is important. For example, Franz Fanon used **psychoanalytical** theory to suggest how colonialism and Western stereotypes warped the psyche of colonized subjects (1967a). But post-colonial scholars also look at how forms of power have been resisted in both violent and non-violent ways. Antonio Gramsci argued that even though powerful ideologies (hegemony) subordinated some classes of people there would always be counter-hegemonies of **resistance** (see Ch.8). In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967b), Fanon, who was a revolutionary during the Algerian independence struggles against France, identified what he saw as the inherent violence in struggles for decolonization. But resistance has also taken more peaceful forms, with some arguing that post-colonial scholarship itself is an example of effective dissidence (Chowdhry and Nair 2002). Post-colonial scholars, therefore, also investigate the multiple and diverse forms of resistance to colonizing ideologies and offer strategies of empowerment and not only critique.

Key Points

- Given the state-centrism and positivism of IR, post-colonial approaches have been largely ignored until recently as old disciplinary boundaries are breaking down.
- Post-colonialism essentially focuses on the persistence of colonial forms of power in contemporary world politics, especially how the social construction of racial, gendered, and class differences uphold relations of power and subordination.
- Racism, in particular, continues to operate in both obvious and sometimes subtle ways in contemporary world politics but this is not captured in traditional approaches to international theory.
- Post-colonial research seeks to offer positive resources for resistance to imperial and other forms of power and not just critique.

Conclusion

This chapter has summarized the main alternative accounts of world politics to the dominant realist mainstream of international theory. The realist perspective, and particularly the **neo-neo synthesis**, as discussed in Ch. 7, dominates the literature in the discipline of International Relations. That is the theoretical debate you will find in most of the journals, particularly in the USA. It focuses on the kinds of international political relations that concern many Western governments, particularly the debate about the future **security** structure of the international system and economic foreign policy. But do you think that it is wide enough a perspective to capture what are to you the most important features of world politics? You might think that we need theories that define the political realm rather more widely, to take in identity, ethnicity, and culture. You might also think that the alternative theoretical perspectives outlined here are actually even better than realist accounts for thinking about security and economics.

Alternative theories obviously differ enormously with regard to what they are 'alternative' about. They are really very different, but they were put together in one category because they all reject the central concerns of rationalism. Of course, these alternative theories do not cohere to one theoretical position in the way that the realist theories do. In some important ways, if you are a liberal feminist, then you do not necessarily agree with post-modernism. In short, some theories gathered under 'alternative' have a set of mutually exclusive assumptions and there is

no easy way to see the theories being combined. Some combinations are possible (a feminist post-modernism, or a critical historical sociology), but the one thing that is clearly correct is that the whole lot cannot be added together to form one theoretical agenda in the way that the neo-neo debate serves on the realist side. Moreover, some of these alternative theories do not have the same idea of how to construct knowledge as the realists, and therefore often reject the notion of coming up with testable hypotheses to compare with those provided by the realist position (see Keohane 1989a). This means that the prospect of a realist-post-modern debate, for example, is very low. The two sides simply see world politics in very different ways. You have to decide which side (or which subdivision) you think explains world politics most effectively.

There is no one theory of world politics that is right simply because it deals with the truth. What you should take from the theoretical positions outlined here is scepticism any time a theorist tells you that they are dealing with 'reality' or with 'how the world really is'. This is where the values of the theorist can be smuggled in through the back door. World politics is very complex and there are a variety of theories that try to account for different parts of that complexity. You should work out which theories both explain best the things you are concerned with and also offer you the chance to reflect on their own assumptions. One thing is for sure: there are enough theories to choose between and they paint very different pictures of world politics.

Questions

- 1 Why do the post-positivist theories reject positivism?
- 2 What does it mean to say that the main difference between theories is whether they are explanatory or constitutive?
- 3 What is at stake in the debate between foundational and anti-foundational theories?
- 4 Why have alternative theoretical approaches to Realism become more popular in recent years?
- 5 What are the main implications of historical sociology for the study of world politics?
- 6 Which variant of feminist theory or any combination of them, seems to capture most accurately the way 'gender' makes the world go around? (Enloe)?