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Date Feb 27, 1995
This thesis accepts the premise that something is amiss in international political theory but, in contrast to numerous recent works, aims to provide more than a eulogy, lament, or nostalgic retrospective on the field. Instead, it seeks to get at the root cause of the problem.

I argue that the perennial malaise of international theory is a problem of discipline, in both the ordinary and scientific sense. First, the field is in the grip of unprecedented theoretical tumult, its practitioners in danger of drifting out of familiar currents into a boundless sea of relativism. Second, the scientific status of the discourse remains an issue of concern to many scholars. But the first group of "theorists" promise us little more than diversity, while the second look for theoretical shelter in the false haven of empirical science. The crisis of international theory is thus inflamed by a misrepresented debate in which either too much emphasis is placed on consensus, or too great a virtue made of difference. Returning to the insights of E. H. Carr, I reconceptualize the problem of theoretical consensus in international relations as an issue that is inherently irresolvable and, at the same time, workable.

The thesis argues against the view that international relations cannot achieve secure status as a discipline without attaining, or at least aspiring to construct, a global empirical theory. Following Carr, I argue that there are deep and enduring differences in international theory, differences that can always be counted on to undermine the "panacea of a global explanatory theory" (Hoffmann, 1960). These differences are traced, via Carr, to a basic antithesis deriving from the contrasting requirements and standards of normative and empirical theory. By the same token, however, I argue that differences that are
irreconcilable on their own theoretical terms can be reconciled within the broader ambit of discipline, provided that the latter is understood as a community of scholars united by basic human interests -- the avoidance of war for example -- and not as a field of study amenable to the canons of science.

To demonstrate the argument, I undertake a study of neoliberalism, focusing in particular on international regimes. I focus on neoliberalism because it is the heir apparent to realism, and on regime theorists because of their explicit attempt to reconcile idealist and realist perspectives. My critique of these approaches concentrates on their open agenda to synthesize realist and liberal international theory. I conclude that regime theory, as it is conceived by neoliberals, disguises, but ultimately founders, on the irreconcilable theoretical differences identified by Carr.
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines a common but mistaken assumption about international theory: that its present state of crisis derives simply from the breakdown of the classical or Realist paradigm. This conviction is not only wrong, but leads to two broad forms of distortion: (1) the belief that everything is open to question — that there are no firm foundations for international theory; (2) the belief that international theorists must focus all the more narrowly on the facts of international politics, going about their business as usual.

Both orientations reflect mistaken premises about international relations, and neither orientation comprehends fully the bases of the field's periodic bouts of disciplinary angst. Its present impasse -- its third great debate -- is not much of a debate, nor is it much of a crisis. Rather, the inescapably normative and empirical dimensions of international politics can always be counted on to generate conflicting assessments of the purpose, limit, and status of international theories, and to pose deeper questions about the discipline as a whole. If there is a crisis, it is a crisis largely in terms of the decline of Realism as the dominant paradigm, and not axiomatically a crisis of international relations.

By many accounts, the dissensus and ambiguity characteristic of international theory is only a recent phenomenon. The long-standing dominance of Realism makes this a difficult claim to dispute. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to trace the problem of international theory to the supposed collapse of its central paradigm. On the contrary, by normal standards of science, it seems more likely that an endless succession of paradigms is the best that international theory can hope for. Paradigms, after all, are governed by more than "methodological or even factual
criteria," and susceptible to the notoriously shifting influences of "value and normative positions."¹ A scientific discipline seems an unlikely goal if our construction of the problem(s) of international theory is prone to reformulation every time fair weather turns foul.²

On the other hand international theory -- unless it is a meaningless oxymoron -- cannot be abandoned to the harpies of despair. It cannot suffice logically or practically to dismiss international theory as an elusive quest simply on the grounds that it cannot measure up to normal standards of science.³ Such a stance puts the problem of international theory negatively: it defines the field by what it is not and, more importantly, by what it cannot hope to become. This thesis puts the problem of international theory positively, reconceptualizing and -- to some extent -- recovering what it is about.

The vision of an empirical science of international relations modeled on the natural sciences is a difficult one to displace, especially when it appears that the only alternative approach is explicitly antithetic to any recognizable version of theoretical progress. But the dichotomy of positivism versus relativism that is at the heart of the third debate poses the problem of international theory too starkly, and offers mutually unattractive 'choices' -- (1). a directionless proliferation of paradigms -- i.e. business as usual, or; (2). a directionless eruption of epistemological, theoretical, and methodological orientations. Rather, international theory must be reconceptualized to better match its subject matter, and to better reflect what it can,


and cannot, reasonably be expected to accomplish. The scientific or non-scientific status of international theory, while important, is something of an intellectual sideshow. Our central purpose is as simple as it is profound: to identify and "illuminate the concrete empirical problems of the field." But in attempting to address this problem it becomes evident that international theory is also about coming to terms with a complex, subtle, and changing reality.

Coming to terms with the realities of world politics is of course far from a straightforward undertaking. The first reality to come to terms with is that international theory is both an empirical and normative enterprise. In textbooks, this intellectual reality has been portrayed via the pedagogically useful, but misleading, practice of treating international theory as either empirical or normative — explanatory or historical, diagnostic or predictive, rationalist or reflective, and so on. But, as E. H. Carr, Stanley Hoffmann, Hans Morgenthau, and other central figures in the formative years of the field knew well, international politics is "the science not only of what is, but of what ought to be." It is not exclusively normative or empirical, but "stands uniquely at the nexus of the great issues of peace and war, "theories of the good life" and "theories of survival," "ethics of responsibility" and "ethics of conviction," and political theory and governmental practice.

How can international theory be simultaneously normative and empirical? If we accept the proposition that international theory involves "the constant

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6 Ibid, p. 529.
interaction of irreconcilable forces,\textsuperscript{7} are we not required to accept that it must forever be devoid of purpose or meaning? The latter appears to be the conclusion of Morgenthau, Hoffmann, and a host of international theorists that link the viability of international relations to a global explanatory theory. Progress in the discipline of international relations is thus understood popularly as contingent upon the ability of international theorists to transcend the dichotomy of idealism and realism. It is not self-evident, however, that this dichotomy can or should be transcended. Carr, for example, is emphatic that "the two elements -- utopia and reality -- belong to two different planes which can never meet."\textsuperscript{8} Political thought cannot aim to reconcile utopia and reality, but "sound political thought" will combine "purpose with observation and analysis."\textsuperscript{9}

Some have been inclined to interpret Carr's position on the relationship between idealist and realist thought as indicating confusion, ambiguity, and intellectual fence sitting. This is because some aspects of Carr's argument seem to conflict with other positions. In particular, his notion of irreconcilable differences between utopian and realist thought seems at odds with passages in which Carr appears to take a "manifestly realistic" position on "political thought and practice."\textsuperscript{10} But, despite tensions in his argument, Carr denies explicitly that utopian and realist orientations to international theory and practice can be united in thought. While criticism of Carr focuses on alleged ambiguities in his argument, it


\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., p. 93.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., p. 10. It is my view that Carr did not mean by "sound political thought" anything as ambitious or elaborate as a comprehensive explanation of international politics.

\textsuperscript{10} Martin Griffiths, \textit{Realism, Idealism, and International Politics: A Reinterpretation}, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 34.
derives from dissatisfaction with his anti-unitarian conception of theory. Because modern international theorists have tended to model their enterprise on the single epistemological standard of empirical science, Carr's position seems to challenge the discipline of international relations as a whole.

This thesis argues that Carr got the epistemological dualism of international theory and practice right, and it employs neoliberal inspired discussions of international regimes to demonstrate both a lingering commitment to global explanatory theory in world politics, and the pitfalls of failing to recognize that the study of international politics continues to be impacted by irreconcilable theoretical differences. The argument is unique in that its treatment of debates within and among neoliberals, neorealists, and regime theorists is not meant to contribute to or validate discussions of paradigmatic succession, but to serve as a window into a more fundamental problem of discipline in international relations, of which increasingly arcane debate about paradigms is symptomatic. It is my view, inspired and informed by Carr, that the discipline of international relations must be defined as a conceptual means of analysis that gives to idealism and realism alike its due, thus avoiding the exclusive logic of paradigms, the nihilistic logic of the perspectivists, the monistic logic of the traditionalists, and the synthetic logic of the neoliberals. The virtue of such an approach is that it avoids interminable debate about the scientific or non-scientific status of international theory, and invites us to conceptualize it "as a science with a character of its own that reflects its subject matter." 11 We cannot, nor should not, avoid the fact-value problem of international theory, but neither should we continue to treat it as the critical issue.

The perpetual crisis of international politics to date may say less about the success or

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failure of the field, than it attests to the unrealistic and misplaced expectations of many of its practitioners. Conversely a less ambitious, but more realistic, assessment of the discipline of international relations puts the perennial crisis of international theory in its proper perspective.

I wish to make clear that while my position requires reassessment of our expectations for, and understanding of, the problem of disciplinary progress in international relations, the latter issue can in my view be treated as distinct from often arcane debate about what constitutes progress in a particular perspective or "paradigm." This thesis neither countenances nor surrenders to the creeping tide of perspectivism in the discourse. On the contrary, the differences that I define with Carr as irreconcilable on their own theoretical and philosophical terms, are reconcilable within the broader ambit of discipline, provided that what we mean by discipline is not identified exclusively with the "panacea," "utopia," or "elusive" standard of a global explanatory theory.

Organization

This thesis is, by turns, a study on and in the theoretical enterprise of international politics. In its broadest manifestation, it is a study of the problem of discipline in international political theory. It also deals with a more circumscribed problem: assessing the contribution and place of the emergent perspective of neoliberalism. Its argument is structured in this way because the contested state of international relations -- its much heralded "disarray" -- obviates straightforward taxonomy. Such disarray, while partly the product of seemingly changing reality, is largely the product of conflicting assessments of what international theory is, what or whose interests it serves, the level of scientific sophistication to which reasonably it might aspire and, indeed, the meaning of science itself. Because these questions cannot be
answered definitively, their very asking threatens to undermine the modicum of intellectual consensus lingering beneath the turbulent surface of the discourse. Nevertheless, they must be engaged if intelligible estimation of the status of the field, and the intellectual locus and import of its innovations, is to be made.

Chapter one begins this exploration. It does so not with a view to resolving the many problems afoot in international theory, but with the more modest goal of enumerating three broad perspectives on the extent, causes, and consequences of its latest crisis. It is in deference to the profound depth and scope of disciplinary incertitude extant in the field that this thesis commences not with a "state of the art," but with three "states of the art."

While chapter one takes the contested state of our enterprise for granted, chapter two argues that the perceptions of disciplinary stalemate are exaggerated, and fanned by the pervasive and dubious view that a unified theory of international politics (positivist or otherwise) is possible. It argues that we must accept the existence of irreconcilable epistemological elements in international thought, but that we are not required to embrace the nihilistic creed of some of the post-positivists. This argument builds on Carr's suggestion that international thought invariably is composed of idealist/utopian and realist strands that "belong to two different planes which can never meet." 12 This conception of irreconcilable differences has been susceptible to challenge on the grounds that it cannot be transcended, and thus cannot yield a unitary, global theory of international relations. This challenge, I argue, is a weak one that presupposes wrongly that Carr really meant to transcend his own dichotomy, and implies falsely that international relations cannot aspire to the status of discipline without transcending epistemological contentions.

12 Carr, p. 93.
Chapter two also raises problems in defining and conceptualizing progress in international relations, and argues that our discipline -- if properly conceived -- can accommodate and frame debates that are irreconcilable on their own terms. I return to this theme in chapter five.

Chapter three shifts the analytical focus of the thesis away from issues concerning the state of the field, to an examination of the "new facts" that are thought widely to challenge existing interpretations of world politics. But, because interpretation and fact are inextricably fused elements of international thought, chapter three continues indirectly to explore the main problem of the thesis: conceptualizing a coherent discipline of international relations. The principal purpose of this chapter is to introduce, assess, and situate in "paradigmatic" terms neoliberal arguments about international change.

The fourth chapter of the thesis argues that neoliberalism, understood as a perspective committed broadly to the "progressive modification" of neorealism, is a misguided project that fails on its own theoretical terms. It explores and challenges the logical foundation of neoliberalism, largely via reference to problems of definition, method, and logic that arise in the predominantly neoliberal enterprise of regime analysis. It argues that the proposed improvement of neorealism by neoliberals founders on their inability or unwillingness to recognize that the methodological narrowness of neorealism is not incidental to its world view, but integral both to its depiction of international politics and to its normative prescriptions. It also argues that the debate between neoliberals and neorealists is conducted in almost blithe detachment from broader issues concerning the status of the discipline as a whole. This chapter also suggests that too heavy an emphasis on the possibility or desirability of regimes obscures consideration of other aspects of international political relations that may render regime explanations of
international cooperation redundant, and focuses in particular on the bipolar context, and intra-alliance character, of regime development and analysis.

If we accept that international relations always demands accommodation between competing ontologies, we are better able to comprehend the intellectual impulses behind recent theoretical activity, and to recognize seemingly novel innovations as variations on a familiar theme. It is my view that the seemingly technical and arcane debate between neoliberals and neorealists is at base an outward manifestation of the deep problem of epistemology identified by Carr. Two general features of neoliberalism make it a compelling case: (1). growing recognition of its status as paradigmatic heir presumptive to the realist throne, and; (2). its explicit attempt to synthesize, combine, or at least play down the distinction between, realist and liberal insights about international politics.

Realism is popular, difficult to displace, and seems to appeal to something basic in international theorists, but its survivalist/state-of-nature logic seems at odds with the increasingly cooperative character of international relations. The resolution of this problem offered by the neoliberals rests on the notion that, if the world is changing, Realism can be made to change along with it. This raises one obvious logical problem: at what point in the "progressive modification" of Realism are we obliged to call it something else?13 Such a project, premised explicitly on the need to keep pace with the always ambiguous realities of international politics, also misses the point of Realism. Realism, and neorealism in particular, is founded ironically on a deliberate detachment from reality. More importantly, in my view,

13 Robert Keohane, a strong advocate of Realist revision, is nevertheless aware of this problem. "Modified structural models" may be indebted to Realism, but may also be "too different to be considered Realist...." Robert O. Keohane, "Theory of World Politics," in Robert O. Keohane, ed., Neorealism and its Critics, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 190.
neorealism has sparked theoretical activity and response increasingly detached from the broader problem of discipline.

Neoliberals, in seeking to preserve some aspects of Realism while gladly relinquishing its less palatable normative arguments, are engaged in an oddly premised, and ultimately misconceived, enterprise. The menu of Realism is set, and its conceptual dishes cannot be sampled à la carte. A key neoliberal premise, for example, is that Realist skepticism regarding the prospects for political progress -- defined typically as more cooperation between states -- is no longer appropriate. By the same token, however, many neoliberals are impressed by the explanatory elegance of neorealism and seek to retain its commitment to parsimony. But parsimony is as much a part of Realism as its philosophical skepticism; it is methodological, and thus derives from the application of Realist epistemology. Because neorealists and neoliberals speak the same rationalistic language, it is tempting to assume that they hail from the same intellectual province. This assumption, however, is wrong; the gulf that divides Realists from liberals is epistemological not methodological, and cannot be bridged.

The theoretical case study of neoliberalism is not meant to defend Realist and neorealist insights, so much as it is intended to demonstrate the futility of attempting to reconcile a genuinely Realist account of international relations with theoretical approaches deriving from different normative and epistemological impulses. By presuming that Realism is in need of redemption, neoliberals are led to overlook and discount a powerful, and authentically Realist, theory of international regime creation and maintenance. Convinced that Realism is either anachronistic or confined in its salience to a shrinking realm of security politics, the neoliberals are inclined to limit their analyses empirically to economic issues, and

intellectually to a voluntarist and benign conception of cooperation. Such an orientation is not "invalid in its own terms," but "these terms are limited as an account of regime phenomena and are not the only terms available, whether to analysts of or especially to actors in regimes."\(^{15}\) At the very least, the causal logic of neoliberal theories of change can be reversed or -- to put it differently -- the security dominant logic of Realism can be reaffirmed. The general process of change by which neoliberalism is inspired -- including the increasingly collaborative character of international relations -- can be viewed not as challenging the security structure of states, but as deriving from, and thriving under, the stability inherent in the modern configuration of that system. The newest liberal challenge in international theory may thus find itself run over by the very wagon to which it has hitched its fortunes.

The fifth and concluding chapter argues that, the alleged novelty of problems in contemporary world politics aside, newer approaches are distinguished from conventional international theory less by novel concepts than by "new" normative emphases on long-standing international processes. It returns to themes introduced in chapter two, and concludes the thesis by situating neoliberal theory in the context of an enduring, fundamental, and irreconcilable antithesis between utopian idealism and political realism in international thought. It accepts the neoliberal view that Realist and liberal theory (as defined in international relations) are not dichotomous, and sympathizes with the felt need for paradigmatic security that seems to impel conventionally-minded scholarship. But Realist and liberal theory derive from distinct intellectual traditions and cannot be synthesized. Realism is resigned to a predominantly descriptive account of the realities of international politics, offering up occasional policy prescriptions on the basis of certain discernible

(but unalterable) patterns of events; liberalism is predominantly purposive, idealist and, at a minimum, conceives of greater scope for change and actor agency than Realism. Separately these orientations speak to different but equally vital impulses in our need to know something about world politics, and together form the conceptual framework that is international theory. That is why they cannot be regarded as mutually exclusive. But neither can they be regarded as synonymous, or even perhaps compatible, without leading to theoretical distortion. Rather they must, as Carr so ably pointed out, be understood as part of an antithesis -- as mutually necessary and vital. Expressed in the jargon of science, the vocabulary of neoliberalism is bequeathed from Realism, but its epistemology hails from a decidedly different ontological conception of the problems of world politics. This conception, while expressed in terms of novel concepts, is grounded in a humanist, reflectivist side of international theory that has always stood in opposition to, and helped to define, the Realist tradition.
CHAPTER ONE
AN OVERTURE TO THEORY:
THREE ORCHESTRATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The most formidable difficulty facing a theoretical inquiry into the nature and ways of international politics is the ambiguity of the material with which the observer has to deal.

Hans Morgenthau

Introduction

This chapter is preliminary to the thesis in the way that an overture ushers in a musical work. It does not function as an "introduction" in the usual sense because the essence of its subject -- the status of international theory and its potential for disciplinary growth -- is itself an issue in dispute. Chapter one simply sets the mood of international theory; it establishes the setting of the thesis to follow. That mood is mixed, running the gamut from expressions of theoretical despair to anticipation of theoretical renewal and progress. But, as the presence of these discordant notes would lead us to suspect, the prevailing temper in the discourse is one of crisis, irresolution, and frustration. What or who is theory for? What should we study and how ought we to study it? How ought we to define progress?

This thesis does not promise to resolve these issues, but neither does it seek to join the descant of despair presently heard above the many voices and sections of international theory's burgeoning musical cast. Ultimately, such clamor consists
either of variations on recognizable themes, or of inconsequential digressions. But in its present state -- or rather states -- the dulcet tones of international theory are muted by an intellectual dissonance. Hence, the sense of incertitude captured by this chapter is the discipline's own and cannot be ignored.

Theoretical Cacophony -- An Inauspicious Prelude

K. J. Holsti asserts that "international theory is in a state of disarray."¹ That few would dispute this claim is a barometer of the depth of the problem. Indeed, it is the only generalization about the field able to garner wide assent. Consensus ends with the description of the problem, yielding to a maelstrom of hypotheses concerning its cause/s and consequences, and to a multitude of possible and/or necessary responses. In a peculiar way, the depth of discombobulation in the field signals faint hope for new or renewed growth, betraying as it does a lingering sense of purpose -- what some might term an "insistent real-worldism"² -- in the face of voluminous, and often feckless, speculation pertaining to the role of theory. I will return to, and develop this theme, below. For the moment, however, the discordant character of the field will be taken for granted, if only as a device for getting at a more troublesome, and deeply contested, set of issues pertaining to why international theory is in trouble.

Obviously, there is no agreement on this score -- the state of international theory, and the sources of its impasse, are precisely the issues at stake. Thus, disarray does not portend crisis in the discipline, so much as it challenges the very notion of


an international discipline. It does so not because the theoretical impulse in
international relations is trammeled or extinguished but, on the contrary, because
the pervasive sense of unease about our purpose has encouraged a directionless
proliferation of paradigms, theories, and approaches. Gone, or at least threatened, is
that modicum of common purpose -- that sense of scholarly community -- which is
the lifeblood of a discipline. The upshot is that it now seems impossible to say
definitively what the functions of international theory are; to return to the
metaphor established above, the harmonious organization of international theory's
many instruments and voice ranges seems unlikely. Indeed, there are not even
agreed criteria via which to judge who belongs in the symphony.

The recent "development" of international theory has opened the door to a
perspectivism that raises serious questions relating to the definition, or even
possibility, of theoretical progress. Some approaches even problematize, directly or
by implication, the concept of progress itself. While this is not the place to expound
on what constitutes progress in the discipline, a minimal expectation for a theory is
that it deepen understanding of our subject matter. Many of the new approaches to
international theory seem unlikely to meet this test, and their very existence and
multiplication threaten to reduce the concept of international theory to a
meaningless oxymoron. Thus, while perspectivism does not logically preclude
intellectual advance -- progress via a Socratic dialogue for example -- it does raise the
spectre of theoretical nihilism. While peripheral to the purpose of international
theory as ordinarily defined, this exotic medley of approaches has slowly but
inexorably made its way from the margins, to the centre, of the discourse. And they
have influenced the discipline not merely in terms of defining current research
areas, but by casting doubt on the utility, legitimacy, and political neutrality of a

3 K. J. Holsti, "Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall, Which are the Fairest Theories of
unitary conception of discipline. We are thus left to reflect not simply on a crisis in international theory, but on a general confusion over how, or why, it has come about.

Three Orchestrations of the Problem of Discipline

While taken almost for granted that international theory and politics has entered a new and uncertain phase, how it got here is far from clear, nor is it an issue free of controversy. The distinguishing features of this "third debate" seem clear enough: (1). a general disenchantment with Realism; (2). anti-positivist tendencies; (3). confusion over appropriate research methods and questions, and; (4). epistemological ferment.4 The sense that everything theoretical is up for grabs has in some quarters gone virtually unnoticed, leading some scholars to focus all the more narrowly on the "normal" business of research.5 But, to an unprecedented extent, it is the business of research in international politics -- and the theoretical presuppositions that have tended to guide it -- that is the issue at stake.

For some theorists, this intellectual reality challenges long-standing and widely shared convictions about both the principal problems of international politics, and the appropriate function and purpose of theory. Disharmony, far from endemic to the discourse, is a new and unwelcome feature.6 This position is

4 Yosef Lapid defines the third debate as "the confluence of diverse anti-positivistic philosophical and sociological trends" in international theory, and thus views it as in some measure a re-expression of the earlier "history versus science" controversy -- the second debate. Yosef Lapid, "The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era," International Studies Quarterly, 33, No. 3 (September 1989), pp. 263-37.

5 Ibid., p. 236.

captured by Holsti's notion of a "dividing discipline," a metaphor that captures the first broad orchestration of the problem of discipline in international politics.

Other commentators view international politics as resistant fundamentally to theory, and impervious to the standards and measures of "normal science." This orientation traces the confusion of international relations to the importation of standards of evaluation and progress developed in, and appropriate to, the natural sciences, but inapplicable to the "ambiguous material" of world politics. This second broad orchestration of the problem of discipline is captured by Yale Ferguson's and Richard Mansbach's metaphor of an "elusive quest."8

The third broad orchestration of the problem of discipline identified in this chapter is less a perspective than a disparate set of concerns that I will term perspectivism. Dominated by anti-positivist or post-positivist theorists, perspectivism, like the above orientations, depicts disciplinary breakdown as a key descriptive attribute of international relations. But, in stark contrast to his/her conventional counterparts, the perspectivist does not hear the term "crisis" as a rallying cry for disciplinary overhaul and renewal, but as symptomatic of disciplinary implosion, a process that he/she is eager to abet in the name of diversity, and under the banner of deconstruction.

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1. The "Dividing Discipline"

The idea of a dividing or divided discipline has considerable intuitive appeal. Indeed, lack of methodological and intellectual consensus seems so obvious and well documented a feature of international theory that it requires little further discussion. But the extent to which contemporary theory is in disarray depends obviously on the extent to which past theorizing was characterized by intellectual unity and coherence. Unfortunately, it is precisely this issue -- the disciplinary status and/or potential of the subject -- that is now in dispute. The melodiousness of the discourse requires keen hearing; also, music can be arranged in different ways, and is at least partly in the ear of the listener. As Holsti puts it:

"contemporary writers in international theory do not agree on the means of classifying the contending approaches: each uses somewhat different criteria so that we do not have even a roster of schools, persuasions, or paradigms."

There can be no doubting the value of consensus; without a modicum of common cause we cannot hope to make music. We can get around the problem -- or rather define it away -- by changing our expectations, abandoning ordinary conceptions of musicality, and embracing perspectivism as a sort of end-point in itself. This might be rewarding in terms of honing our individual skills, but, collectively, blowing our own horns can yield only an unintelligible medley. While this may be enough to satisfy some of us, it is not sufficient to meet the basic requirements of international theory: that it identify, shed light on, and ultimately help to resolve fundamental problems in the real world of international politics.

9 Holsti., The Dividing Discipline, p. 5.
But identifying the importance of consensus moves us no closer to achieving it. Contemporary theorists simply "do not see the world in the same ways nor do they agree on what is important to know, or how to know it."\(^{10}\) Broad agreement about the purpose, substance, and methods of the discipline is not merely absent, but models of consensus are themselves under attack. The realities of international politics, we are told, are multiple, contested, fleeting, and constructed socially -- usually in deference to, and in reflection of, the interests of a dominant group or class.

An important rejoinder to the arguments of the perspectivists is that consensus in international relations has always been a matter of degree. What Holsti describes as the classical tradition, for example, reflected agreement over the broad contours of international politics, not its specific features. The classical tradition exhibited and contained a high degree of diversity and vigorous debate, including disputes over: (1). the causes of war; (2). essential actors, and; (3). appropriate images of world politics.\(^{11}\) But these three sources of debate also stood as guidelines to inquiry that, taken together, constituted the "criterion for a taxonomy of approaches to the field."\(^{12}\) Thus, consensus in the classical tradition tended to mean agreement amongst scholars over what to disagree about.

Similarly, there is considerable scope within the framework of the dividing discipline for interpretation of where, retrospectively, the boundaries of intellectual consensus in international theory should be drawn. Under Holsti’s taxonomic guidelines, for example, distinctions between Hobbesians, Kantians, and Grotians


\(^{11}\) Holsti, \textit{The Dividing Discipline}, p. 8.

\(^{12}\) Ibid.
are subsumed under a single classical paradigm. What emerges is an internally diverse classical tradition, ranging from the relative pessimism of Hobbes and Rousseau to the optimism of Kant and Bentham.

Other taxonomic assessments and intellectual histories of international politics tend to divide the field into several competing paradigms or models, organized typically around the broad, competing, and internally diverse approaches of Realism, liberalism, and Marxism. Also, the wide embrace of concepts like paradigm and scientific discipline has not prevented disputes about past and present trends in international scholarship. Arend Lijphart, for example, suggests that "traditional theorizing was... governed by... a paradigm (that) remained the basis of the research tradition that dominated the field until the 1950s." Following closely the "general developmental pattern of scientific disciplines outlined..." by Thomas Kuhn, Lijphart attributes the "downfall of the classical paradigm" to its supersession by newer methods and approaches together constituting a new behavioral

13 Ibid., pp. 7-13 & pp. 15-22. Holsti describes the classical tradition as a central paradigm in international theory, with one major paradigmatic challenger in Marxism.


paradigm. Holsti, by contrast, suggests that the behavioral revolution never challenged the classical paradigm: "new methodologies do not by themselves create new paradigms...; the challenge to the classical tradition comes... not from scientific activity, but from scholars and practitioners whose normative priorities differ fundamentally from those inhabiting the classical tradition" (emphasis in original). But for Lijphart methods "are not just sets of techniques"; "methods may entail different substantive conclusions or at least different substantive hypotheses." Thus, concludes Lijphart, "a comparison of the rival schools reveals that their differences are not merely procedural and that the behavioral school possesses a distinctive substantive metaphor of the kind that has guided the traditional paradigm." 

Despite the many ways in which the field can be classified, and vigorous debate over its core substantive problems, an impressive degree of thematic continuity, internal coherence, and intellectual consensus can also be discerned, if not in the contemporary discourse, than with benefit of hindsight. Such a proposition at least is at the core of the dividing discipline argument. Again, however, difficulties inherent in taxonomy -- and recognized by Holsti -- make the true depth of consensus difficult to gauge. Under Holsti's "criterion for a taxonomy of approaches to the field," what emerges is an impressively wide, broadly consensual classical tradition. But other retrospectives on the field either place less emphasis on consensus, or link unity of purpose to a narrower "state-centric" or

16 Ibid., p. 58.

17 Holsti., The Dividing Discipline, p. 39.

18 Lijphart, pp. 62 & 63.

19 The 'state-centric' approach to international politics is identified as an almost universally distinguishable feature in the intellectual history of world politics. The state, while a modern construct, can be said to trace its lineage through
Realist orientation. Thus, while most theorists recognize something akin to the classical tradition identified by Holsti, it is Realism -- and, more to the point, its demise -- that is implicated in what is perceived widely as a process of disciplinary erosion. Defined widely as the classical tradition or, more narrowly, as the Realist paradigm, this approach has only recently lost its firm grip on international theory.

2. The "Elusive Quest"

The dividing discipline metaphor -- applied broadly to traditional international studies or more narrowly to political Realism -- expresses a sense of consensual erosion in contemporary international discourse. Fragmentation and turmoil is viewed as endogenous -- as attributable to changes within established research traditions. Other scholars, however, view international political study as resistant fundamentally to theory. Martin Wight, for example, argues that international theory seems hardly to exist at all, largely because "older theoretical treatments of international relations are not easily accessible" and "are scattered over the writings of many highly diverse authors."20 This orientation, rearticulated by Ferguson and Mansbach, casts doubt on the relevance of the Kuhnian conception of paradigm for the study of international politics.21 International theory might, for example, contain no "agreed on sets of puzzles requiring solution"; far from an extant or

the Greek city-states and other pre-modern polities. Thus, it is easy to demonstrate that an established pattern of state or state-like interrelationships has long informed intellectual inquiry.


21 Ferguson and Mansbach, The Elusive Quest, pp. 14-31
potential discipline, the best international relations might hope for is "a limited convergence of scholarly interests...." 22 Even the widely held conviction that political Realism is a strong paradigmatic contender is challenged: "retrospectively, Realism seemed the nearest thing to such a paradigm in international relations, but it was -- and is -- far from a genuine one." 23 Theoretical ferment is thus identified as an endemic feature of international politics, and reminds us that attempts to view the subject as anything more than a loose field of study must amount inevitably to an "elusive quest." 24

As Ferguson and Mansbach suggest, the requirements of a cumulative science of international politics are not met with ease. It is possible, however, to accept such a claim without accepting their radically relativist conclusion: that international theory can do no more than express and reflect an historically specific and perennially changeable normative ethos. 25 This conclusion precludes not merely the development of "a cumulative science" of international politics based on "paradigm advances of the Kuhnian sort," but also the recognition of numerous insights that have proven to have inter-generational relevance. 26 Relatedly, Ferguson and Mansbach seem to construct too rigid an evaluative criterion for

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22 Ibid., pp. 22-24.

23 Ibid., p. 216.

24 The elusive quest may be a somewhat misleading metaphor. Ferguson and Mansbach write elsewhere, for instance, that "though it will be difficult, we can adapt empiricism to the task of making sense of the world around us." Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach, "Between Celebration and Despair: Constructive Suggestions for Future International Theory," International Studies Quarterly, 35, No. 4 (December 1991), p. 364.


26 Holsti, "Mirror Mirror...," pp. 257-58.
gauging the extent to which a field of study can or cannot be considered a discipline. Methodologically, it is difficult to dispute the claim that the Kuhnian model may have little relevance to international politics. Disciplines, however, are founded on more than research methods -- scientific or otherwise. Ferguson and Mansbach reify a unitary and, by their own account, unrealistic standard of measurement of intellectual progress in international relations, thus hitching the heavily laden wagon of discipline to a single, and lame, horse.

3. Perspectivism

It has long been recognized that the requirements of international theory may differ fundamentally from those of other disciplines. Doubts about the scientific status of this relatively new field have dogged it from its inception, as Wight’s musings over the very existence of international theory attest. Perhaps, however, too much has been made of Wight’s seemingly descriptive assessment of the discourse. First, Wight would probably concur with Lijphart that "there is considerably more theory in international relations... than is apparent at first sight,"27 and observed himself that there are "many theoretical writings about international relations."28 Second, Wight in fact was concerned little with what he termed the “external matter” of where international theory could be found, and instead focused on the more profound issue of why international theory tended to exist largely as a residual category of theoretical explorations in domestic politics.29 The barriers to international theory, in other words, were internal and traceable to two basic

27 Lijphart, p. 42.

28 Wight, p. 17.

29 Ibid., pp. 20-21.
attributes of the emerging field: (1). an intellectual prejudice imposed by the sovereign state, and; (2). a belief in progress. Wight thus alerts us to the inescapable ideological character of international theory at an early stage in its development.

This theme has been taken up with renewed vigour in recent theoretical discussions, generating debate not merely over the presuppositions of theorists -- this after all is a familiar theme in the social sciences -- but over prevailing assumptions about theory as well. Inspired by the eruption of philosophical and epistemological questions in other fields, these critical theorists have attempted to bring international theory in line with developments in the social sciences generally. These critics, as their pervasive use of the term "post" positivist implies, seek to reject and/or transcend the alleged ideological hegemony of the positivist philosophical mode in international scholarship. Because this epistemology finds its clearest, most forceful, expression in Realism, challenging positivism has in practice tended to mean challenging Realism. Post-positivist analyses therefore attack Realism only to the extent that it represents, and encourages, an epistemological orientation that "tends to define the boundaries of legitimate enquiry so as to preclude or discourage consideration of philosophical and epistemological questions...." It would in fact make little sense from a critical perspective to target Realism per se, since post-positivists claim to reject the positivist-inspired tendency to treat theories as separate, “self-contained entities.”

Critical approaches challenge standard conceptions of international politics both in terms of its particular research questions, and as an organized field of study.

30 Ibid., p. 20.
31 Tooze, p. 286.
32 Lapid, p. 239.
As such, critical theorists have done as much to place themselves at the margin of international discourse as international discourse has done to marginalize critical theorists. It is inadequate, however, to dismiss and/or trivialize critical insights in international theory -- as has sometimes been the case -- simply on the basis of their inability to generate testable research programs. This response is not merely unfair, but misses entirely the point of most philosophically-inspired critiques of international theory. Critical theorists do not challenge the notion that international theory should be premised on research, but seek instead to expand what they perceive as the unduly narrow scope of conceptions of knowledge and knowing in international politics.

Nevertheless, it is not surprising that post-positivist theoretical innovations have been greeted widely with a mixture of skepticism and hostility. First, it is difficult to imagine how intellectual progress can be served -- in the short term at least -- by episodes of "self-doubt and metatheoretical ferment." Such excursions at best seem destined to be inconclusive and, at worst, "likely to come at the expense of actual research." Second, "post-positivism is not a unitary philosophical platform" and thus contrasts poorly with, and is unlikely to be substituted readily for, "the simplistic coherence of the positivist philosophical movement." Third,

33 This for example is the principal basis of Keohane's reservation about what he terms "reflective approaches" in international theory. Robert O. Keohane, "International Institutions: Two Approaches," International Studies Quarterly, 32, No. 4 (December 1988), p. 393.

34 In international politics, suggests Tooze, "knowledge -- and hence legitimate activity" -- has tended to be viewed "as the product of a particular kind of research." Tooze, p. 285.

35 Lapid, p. 236.

36 Ibid., p. 239.
and relatedly, the targets of the new philosophy of science are not always clear. Post-
positivism is inspired obviously by a disaffection for positivist analyses but to say
this may be to say little because, as Anthony Giddens suggests, "in critical theory,
'positivism' has a much broader and more diffuse meaning than it does for most
other writers." Mark Neufeld, for example, notes distinct strains in the positivist
tradition in international theory. Ultimately, however, positive knowledge
requires that all data be "attached to social action in the public realm, so that they(it)
can be treated as 'intervening variables' between the 'stimulus'... and the
response...." This requirement, suggest the critics of positivism, does not merely
preclude a full understanding of subjective meaning, but also forbids recourse to
other more appropriate modes of understanding. Whatever the validity of this
critique, it is clear that many positivist-inspired theorists of international politics
have attempted to address the issues they stand accused of ignoring.

Methodological disputes in or about international relations are scarcely novel
and, in many respects, recent eruptions merely mirror or repeat earlier debates
concerning appropriate roles and expectations for the discipline. There is thus an
ironic sense of the familiar in post-positivism's anti-traditionalist stand. That

37 Anthony Giddens, Studies in Social and Political Theory, (London:

38 These he identifies as: (1). strict behaviouralism, and; (2). meaning-oriented
behaviouralism. The latter approach, as Neufeld's label implies, partly transcends
the strict behaviouralist view that positive knowledge cannot include "subjective
meanings." Or, more accurately perhaps, all behaviouralists tend to share the
conviction that positive science must be based on empirical evidence -- what
Neufeld terms "publicly observable objects or events" -- but part company over
whether or not behavioural science can develop methods amenable to measuring
subjective meaning. Mark Neufeld, "Interpretation and the 'Science' of

39 Ibid., p. 44.
international politics is suffused irredeemably with ideologies, and its objectivity hampered by the ambiguous boundaries of facts and values, adds nothing to the insights of E. H. Carr, Martin Wight, or Hans Morgenthau. But at the core of post-positivism is a deep-seated disenchantment with conventional, namely Realist, international theory that derives not from scientific disagreement, but from disagreement over science. For post-positivists, Realism is not a scientific tradition but a tradition masquerading as science, while serving really to propagate and defend the interests of the current political order in world politics and, for that matter, in the academy. Hence, for post-positivists, the notion of consensual erosion is less relevant a conceptualization of the discourse than the idea of intellectual liberation. Indeed, consensus from a critical standpoint tends to be viewed not as a feature of conventional international theory, but as a political goal or strategy of conventional international theory. Theoretical innovations within established traditions of research are therefore treated skeptically, and believed to constitute little more than attempts to protect and reinforce reigning theoretical/epistemological orthodoxies.40 Hence, even while acknowledging the sense of crisis in the discourse, critical theorists do not share the pervasive anxiety about its uncertain future. On the contrary, it is suggestive not of a crisis in the theoretical understanding of world politics, but symptomatic of a crisis of legitimacy in hitherto dominant, and epistemologically narrow, modes of understanding. The breakdown of the classical tradition thus signals -- and exemplifies -- the waning power of positivistic/rationalistic epistemologies in the social sciences generally. From this standpoint the consensual erosion of international theory constitutes a

sort of intellectual Waterloo for positivist dogma and is therefore a development to be celebrated.

Hints of Harmony

This chapter identifies and enumerates three broad, and essentially competing, perspectives on the state of the art of international politics: (1). the dividing discipline -- this orientation emphasizes the steady erosion of consensus, and thus disciplinary well-being, characteristic of traditional international theory; (2). the elusive quest -- this perspective describes and affirms the inadequacy of the concept of "normal science," and thus academic discipline, in international politics; (3). perspectivism -- the proponents of this approach reflect and feast on the remnants of a "discipline" packaged as objective "science" but allied with, and reflective of, the interests of a dominant political order; they thus anticipate and urge a process of theoretical renewal and "genuine" intellectual progress made possible only by the collapse and delegitimation of Realism's single epistemological standard. This approach, by implication, opens the door to competing conceptions of discipline.

If there is a dominant motif in this chapter or "overture" it is one of dissonance. In keeping with the subject it introduces, this chapter is composed of several orchestrations. But there is a tunefulness to be discerned in the seeming disharmony among international theorists; their orchestrations are in many respects variations on a single theme. This theme has only been hinted at here, but will be developed in rhythm with the argument to follow. Suffice it now to note that a measure of disagreement and uncertainty must be accepted as endemic to international relations. International theorists, like musicians, have varying talents, styles, and dispositions, ensuring that their enterprise always contain an element of improvisation or interpretation. But these differences, while irreconcilable on their
own theoretical terms, can be reconciled in a wider disciplinary ambit, where unity and common purpose envelope and diffuse arcane debates. Thus, even amid the present cacophony, struggling to be heard, are vague harmonies, composed of familiar notes and chords, and played on recognizable instruments. The key to this music is discipline, in both the ordinary and social-scientific sense.

In recent years, the troubadours of international relations have been unable to agree on how to achieve harmony, who is in the band, appropriate instruments, and even how to define music. Some stress the need for a strong conductor -- empirical science for example -- but over-emphasize the homogeneity of their ranks, mistaking a cast of strolling players for an orchestra. Yet, as Stanley Hoffmann suggests, "if no effort at harmony is ever made, the mixture of notes can hardly fail to produce cacophony." I will argue below that international theorists would be wise to heed the words of Hoffmann, but wiser still to: (1). abandon their aspirations for perfect harmony; (2). focus on determining who really belongs in the band; (3). recognize that theirs is inescapably a realm of variations on enduring themes, and; (4). take solace in their shared commitment to music.

CHAPTER TWO
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND EPISTEMOLOGY:
A POINT OF ENTRY

Many of us who are aware of the philosophical and theoretical context of our understanding are regularly confronted by an insistent "real-worldism," which defines knowledge and knowing as unproblematic in the philosophical sense.

Roger Tooze

Introduction

This thesis aspires to contribute to an intellectual discipline afflicted so profoundly by incertitude that its practitioners cannot agree on what to study, how to study it, why to study it, why their enterprise is in trouble, nor even on the extent to which they are in disagreement about these and other issues. Who these practitioners are is also unclear, as the increasingly contested boundaries, methods, and purposes of the enterprise militate against the construction of membership criteria. To be sure, the very notion of a discipline in trouble raises logical problems: because shared scholarly and practical goals are the *sine qua non* of discipline, their absence does not signal an enterprise in trouble so much as cast doubt on its existence. Such incertitude has spawned a self-propelling genre of disarray, the first stirrings of which could be discerned in the comparatively placid 1960s.¹

Inspired initially by the failed expectations of a particular Kuhnian conception of scientific discipline, the term "crisis" no longer adequately captures the state of

international relations, nor the mixed mood of its theorists. "Crisis" has become a perfunctory and vague device, more like a literary convention than a useful description of the field. The field is not in crisis so much as it appears to be up for grabs. International theorists must contend against "wrested, forced, and biased interpretation" not merely of their political events, but also of the academic status of their field. Since the state of an enterprise divided against itself cannot logically be captured by unitary terms, chapter one eschewed recent convention and began not with a depiction of the discipline in crisis, but with three competing conceptions or orchestrations of the field and its problems. It functioned not as an introduction per se, but as a mood piece -- as a theoretical overture.

While the first chapter took the contested states of international theory for granted, this chapter begins the exploration of the thesis into the bases and causes of the discord. But, because the genie of epistemology is out of the bottle, intelligible discussion of the problem of disciplinary progress in international relations cannot begin without confronting the growing centrality of the new philosophically-guided critiques. Defined by their anti-positivist musings, these theorists do not express doubts about the "theorize-ability" of world politics, so much as they postulate and propound a version of theory that cannot avoid serving the interests of some one, some group, some class, or some country. Realism, in particular, is depicted as a "running dog" of the current political order -- as politics masquerading as "science."
The post-positivists, however, focus on Realism as symptomatic of a more general aspect of international theory: that it is an inherently ideological realm. They thus cast doubt on all claims to objectivity, and -- to a degree unprecedented in the youthful discourse -- challenge the notion that international relations are susceptible to the evaluative standards of "normal science."

This chapter is organized into three sections that, individually and collectively, help to lay the groundwork for both a systematic critique of neoliberalism in chapter four, and the discussion of the problem of discipline in chapter five.

Section one reviews in capsule form the arguments of the post-positivists. Inevitably it does some injustice to the subtlety and internal diversity of this very broad perspective, but I am not concerned with post-positivism as a problem in its own terms. Indeed, post-positivism is both antithetic to, and beyond the pale of, the discipline of international relations as I understand and define that entity in summary form below, and in detail in chapter five. Post-positivism is dispensable, and is discussed here with a view to dispensing with it. There are, however, three compelling reasons to review the "third debate": (1). post-positivism, while a self-marginalizing set of approaches, is increasingly central to the texts of international relations, and has done much to deepen the sense of misgiving already afoot among international theorists; (2). international theorists have not merely responded inadequately to the challenge of post-positivism but have, in some respects, played into the hands of their critics, further imperiling the integrity of our enterprise; (3). while post-positivism is peripheral to the purpose of international theory, issues of epistemology are not. There are genuine and deep philosophical differences among international theorists that cannot be reconciled. As the post-positivists suggest, this intellectual reality is obscured, to the general detriment of our enterprise, by the modern tendency to equate a particular empirical tradition in international theory and research with the discipline as a whole. But while the post-positivist diagnosis is essentially sound, the prescription -- a generous but indeterminate dose of perspectivism -- is wrong; it can only poison the theoretical environment, and undermine the shared vocabulary, and shared sense of vocation, that defines a scholarly community.
The second section of this chapter argues that the epistemological dimensions of international thought run deep, but are relatively uncomplicated, and can be reduced to a core antinomy: idealist versus realist political thought. Allowing for differences in representation, this antithesis is remarked by every international theorist of note, but most emphatically by E. H. Carr. The idealist-realist antinomy does not, however, threaten the viability of a discipline of international relations. On the contrary, the modern and pervasive tendency to model the discipline of international relations narrowly on the empirical sciences threatens to eradicate the idealist-realist antinomy.

In anticipation of the central argument of the thesis, the final section of the chapter undertakes a preliminary discussion of the problem of discipline -- and, more specifically, problems of defining intellectual progress -- in international relations. It treats sympathetically Stanley Hoffmann’s argument that at the core of a discipline must be a “principle of order” -- a modicum of consensus regarding the scope and purpose of international theory. But in making this claim, Hoffmann seems implicitly to consign disputes over method to a lower order of theoretical disagreement. While he is correct to do so, methods ultimately amount to applied epistemologies, and disagreements on the latter level seem directly to threaten the “principle of order” that he identifies rightly as integral to a discipline. Hoffmann resolves the problem by suggesting that normative and empirical approaches to international theory can in principle be connected by a wider and overarching “general theory” or “conceptual framework” capable of posing basic questions about our subject. As Hoffmann is aware, however, the "panacea of a global explanatory theory" is not on the horizon, and seems less probable now than ever before. Carr’s

3 Hoffmann, Contemporary Theory in International Relations, p. 7.

4 Ibid., p. 10.
suggestion that international theory must always contend with irreconcilable theoretical differences continues to be persuasive. But if the distinct approaches to international politics cannot be brought together under a common theoretical yoke, they can be marshaled under a less restrictive conception of discipline than the one that has tended to guide post-World War Two international scholarship.

This chapter thus closes with an approach to international theory that accepts the existence of genuine and irreconcilable philosophical differences, but that does not condemn the field to what Hoffmann calls a "flea market" of approaches. This approach is not a theory, but a conceptual means of approaching the problem of discipline (and thus the problem of ordering theories) in international relations. It derives principally from Carr's suggestion in The Twenty Years Crisis that "sound political thought" must always be based on, but can never reconcile, elements of "utopia and reality." While at first glance such an inference seems to condemn the field to something less ambitious than an academic discipline, Carr actually lays the basis for an approach to the study of international politics better attuned to the ontological composition of the subject than that offered by many of his fellow theorists.

1. Crisis -- What Crisis? The "Third Debate" in Perspective

Incertitude is a signature feature of our enterprise: "in both theory and practice international politics can bring on despair... this is an occupational hazard in the

5 Ibid., p. 6.

field for which there is no remedy."\textsuperscript{7} The recent eruption of another argument over theory thus comes as no surprise. But this "third debate" lacks the curious sense of continuity characteristic of previous disputes. This is because present debate is not about anything in particular, but about everything in general.\textsuperscript{8} Unlike previous dust-ups, the viability of the field cannot be presupposed --indeed, it is the principal matter at stake. Hence, the notion that recent discussion constitutes a debate is an odd one: "it is curious how little debate this (controversy) has engendered, if we understand by 'debate' an arena in which arguments are joined rather than one in which assertions are juxtaposed."\textsuperscript{9} Some observers, however, discern a "coherent and consequential pattern in the current intellectual cacophony," linking the breakdown of the positivist orthodoxy to "a more reflexive intellectual environment in which debate, criticism, and novelty can freely circulate."\textsuperscript{10} Hence, what for some looks like chaos is for others evidence of a "new Socratic spirit."\textsuperscript{11}

The "third debate" does not have clear parameters, but it does have battle lines. These can be drawn between: (1). optimistic assessments of the prospects for a discipline of international politics modeled more or less loosely on the natural


\textsuperscript{10} Lapid, p. 238 & p. 250. This contrasts sharply with Holsti's more recent depiction of post-positivist pluralism as a kind of "intellectual demolition derby." Holsti, "International Relations...," p. 406.

sciences, and; (2). theoretical representations of international politics as an unstable realm in which all "truth" and meaning is an interpretation. Advocates of the first position can be described as conventional theorists, while their counterparts can be called post-positivists. Conventional theorists may question, or even stretch the limits of, positivist assumptions, but they remain relatively untroubled by issues of philosophy and epistemology. Clearly, however, they are perturbed by the directionless proliferation of paradigms, models, research programs, and abstract theories that has come to be called international theory. The proponents of perspectivism, on the other hand, seem inclined to celebrate and promote -- for its own sake -- a proliferation of paradigms and epistemological orientations in international scholarship. Thus, the "third debate" is in reality a theoretical impasse that leaves the field of international relations perched precariously between the mutually unappealing alternatives of scientific infighting and epistemological ferment.

The Rise of Post-Positivism

Though the state of international theory defies ready classification, the appeal or practice of employing generic labels in describing the field has always been strong. Post-positivism is the latest such label.

Post-positivism is not an approach to international politics, but a constellation of theoretical orientations compassing many themes, and rooted in a number of intellectual traditions. Despite its internal diversity, however, this cluster of approaches is argued to contain a number of unifying and coherent messages. Mark Hoffman, in an excellent review of four representative samples of post-positivist scholarship, discerns three broad unifying themes. First, post-positivists are united by "a skepticism towards traditional social theory" that leads them to
challenge: (1). its belief in "a hierarchy of forms of knowledge," and; (2). its
"overriding emphasis on technical or scientific forms of rationality." Second, post-
positivists are united in their desire to reject all foundational orthodoxies. Third,
post-positivists are united in their concern to redefine conceptions of "political
space" in international relations, seeking chiefly to transcend the modernist
preoccupation with the state as the defining form of political society. 12

Hoffman's exposition on the "various strands of critical theory" focuses on
continuities and discontinuities alike. Thus, while post-positivists are united in
questioning the "very foundations of international theory," they do so in two ways:
(1). via a strategy of critical interpretivism, or; (2). via a strategy of radical
interpretivism. 13 Critical interpretivism for Hoffman is marked by a "minimal
foundationalism" which accepts that a contingent universalism is possible and may
be necessary in both ethical and explicatory fields." Radical interpretivism by
contrast denies "even the possibility of a minimal or contingent foundationalism,"
and presses instead for "the deconstruction of texts and intertexts of world
politics." 14 This ambiguity of purpose is revealed in the different ways in which the
term post-positivism is employed. 15


13 Ibid., p. 177 & p. 170.

14 Ibid.

15 For example, the term is sometimes applied taxonomically -- as a depiction of a new post-positivist era in international theory and research. This usage links post-positivism to earlier developments in the evolution of the field, as is revealed in the term "third debate." But, as already observed, this term confers on recent international theory a sense of coherence and intellectual continuity that it seems scarcely to warrant. The post-positivist label is also employed philosophically -- to
Hoffman also notes that the new critical voices in international scholarship tend to be lumped under the different, but presumably synonymous, rubrics of post-positivism, critical theory, and post-modernism. But, as Hoffman's own distinction between critical and radical forms of interpretivism suggests, such double labeling is misleading. Critical interpretivism, for example, deserves the label post-positivism because it seeks to transcend the limits of positivistic forms of rationality. But, in keeping with the approach to social theory developed by Jurgen Habermas that influences this brand of critical thinking, theoretical emancipation remains rooted in the theory and practice of modernity. Given that radical interpretivism as defined by Hoffman is explicitly "post" modern and deconstructive, it is difficult to understand how postmodernism can be employed as a synonym for post-positivism. Thus, the term post-positivism better captures the sense of disjunction between the established approaches to international theory and most of their present challengers, but remains at a very high level of descriptive generality.

If Hoffman's interpretation of interpretivism is meant to differentiate post-positivist theory from the established tradition to which it owes its name, it is also meant to demonstrate a degree of coherence and intellectual purpose in post-positivism frequently denied by its critics. These concerns are picked up by Mark describe an internally diverse but presumably coherent collection of theoretical movements. There is a tension between the taxonomic and philosophical uses of the term because key tenets of post-positivism qua philosophy challenge openly the suggestion that the positivist philosophy of science has been eclipsed. Indeed, critical social theory derives from the double assumption that positivist philosophy is alive and well in the international discourse, and that genuine intellectual progress demands emancipation from positivist strictures. For examples of these differing usages see Yosef Lapid, passim. Thomas Biersteker, "Critical Reflections on Post-Positivism in International Relations," International Studies Quarterly, 33, No. 3 (September 1989), and Jim George, "International Relations and the Search for Thinking Space," International Studies Quarterly, 33, No. 3 (September 1989).

16 Hoffman, p. 173.
Neufeld, and together these scholars have begun to piece together an invaluable
guide-book to the largely foreign vocabulary of the new international theories.17
Nevertheless, post-positivism signifies a cluster of approaches different
fundamentally to anything encountered previously in international politics; the
intellectual Baedekers of Hoffman and Neufeld aside, the messages of post-
positivism remain largely alien and foreign to international practitioners raised in
the thoroughly positivist milieu of the classical tradition. In each of its various
manifestations, post-positivism rests on a set of theoretical presuppositions that
seem almost guaranteed to marginalize it vis-à-vis the alleged epistemological
fortress of positivism. By challenging traditional conceptions of theory the post-
positivists break consciously from the established rules of intellectual engagement,
thus placing themselves beyond the pale of intelligible international debate as
defined historically in the discourse.

I do not mean to suggest that the approaches to international politics lumped
-- often carelessly -- under the rubric of post-positivism can contribute to the
advancement of international knowledge only if they can be made to speak the
prevailing language of the discourse. Such a posture would not merely be
intolerant, but would miss the point of these approaches in the first place. In many
respects, however, advocates of a post-positivist agenda in international theory have
done more to marginalize themselves than the benign neglect -- or genuine
befuddlement -- of traditionally-minded international scholars could ever
accomplish. This is because, of the two strands of critical theory identified by
Hoffman -- critical interpretivism and radical interpretivism -- the latter has tended
to epitomize the movement. This is due not merely to popular
perceptions/misperceptions of what post-positivism is about, but to a tendency

amongst various self-proclaimed post-positivists to reject all foundational logic, and to celebrate methodological pluralism not as a means to theory, but as an end in itself. Its rich intellectual heritage and multiplicity of substantive concerns aside, post-positivism is often reduced to a uniform -- and radically relativistic -- intellectual manifesto:

   (in international politics) "there are no givens, nothing is to be taken for granted, nothing is axiomatic, and all arbitrarily imposed boundaries are to be challenged."^18

The notion that everything is open to question seems an inauspicious starting point for international theory however defined. Not surprisingly, therefore, the post-positivist creed articulated above has been taken up with little gusto; theoretical innovation -- while everywhere in evidence -- has tended to take the form of correcting rather than rejecting existing theories.19 True to the self-fulfilling logic employed by some critical theorists, this response has generated a suspicion that the attempt to correct the alleged oversights of existing international approaches amounts to little more than an ideological patch-up job, aimed largely at protecting and reinforcing established theoretical/epistemological orthodoxies and the current political order.20 This latter charge unites post-positivists of both the critical and radical variety.

The suggestion that international theories may have ideological content is scarcely novel. But the post-positivists purport to transcend archaic debate about

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18 George, p. 270.

19 See, for example, the discussion of neoliberalism in chapters three and four.

value-bias versus objectivity in international research, and argue instead that the positivistic philosophy of science in which international theory has tended to be embedded is itself an historically specific -- read modernist -- ideology of science. Realism, the principal target of post-positivists and conventional critics alike, is thus identified as little more than a "running dog" of the current political order.

The charge that international scholarship serves only to perpetuate the political agenda of the powerful and privileged stands out as a dominant post-positivist theme, and is particularly strong in the work of Richard Ashley.\textsuperscript{21} There are, however, profound weaknesses in this argument. It is thus surprising that international theorists have not challenged more vigourously than they have to date the presupposition that their field is little more than a social/ideological fabrication. Instead, they have tended to emphasize the inability of new approaches to generate much in the way of theoretical and empirical fruit. This response misses entirely the point of much of the new scholarship in international politics, and leaves conventional analysts exposed to the charge that they are more interested in propping up a shaky discipline than they are committed to exploring alternative paths to knowledge. In not confronting these charges, conventional international theorists play unwittingly into the hands of their critics, yielding the field -- literally and figuratively -- to a largely manufactured crisis.

That there are profound cognitive limits in a positivist approach to international theory cannot be denied, and these weaknesses will be explored below. But the epistemological narrowness of the ruling "orthodoxy" can only be asserted,

not demonstrated. Allegations of epistemological or ideological narrowness are grounded themselves in a ideological or -- more accurately perhaps -- counter-ideological posture. In promising to liberate international political study from the strictures of positivist science, the post-positivists invoke an evaluative standard which no theorist can hope to meet. In directing our attention to the ideological content of scientific Realism, for instance, they prompt us to consider the degree to which all judgments of this sort are founded necessarily on belief: "we can only escape from one ideology into another."22 The issue of ideology in international theory may thus be as important as it is intractable, leaving us to draw the "rueful conclusion that all views about ideology are themselves ideological."23 Hence, the view that "theory is always for someone or some purpose" is hardly a scathing critique, but a pointless and trite observation.24 Realists, for example, do not attempt to hide their presupposition that we are self-interested agents; on the contrary, they embrace this premise.

Critical theorists also base their critique on questionable assumptions about the established approaches to international politics, and about positivism per se. First, by focusing on the alleged epistemological one-ness of international politics, they trivialize or ignore the importance of the different normative impulses that underlie competing images of the world within the wide ambit of discipline. This is an ironic outcome given the post-positivist tendency to dwell on matters ideological. The inter-paradigm debate is thus collapsed into an in-house dispute...


over research methods; Marxists, Realists, and liberals -- three unlikely compatriots -- are lumped together under the banner of conventionalism because of their allegedly shared belief that a science of international politics is manageable only on the level of instrumental action.\textsuperscript{25} And the collapse of international theory's competing paradigms rests itself on the virtual equation of positivism to science. It should be stressed that this equation is not made by critical theorists. On the contrary, these critics of positivism are acutely aware that science is as much about interpretation as nomological explanation.\textsuperscript{26} The culprits again are the shadowy agents of positivist paramountcy. In Ashley's account, for example, practical Realism -- the Realism of understanding, \textit{verstehen}, interpretation or whatever the synonym -- is overwhelmed by technical Realism -- not because Realist scholarship is devoid of hermeneutic sensibility, but because "Realist scholars are at base positivist scientists oriented by a technical interest in control."\textsuperscript{27}

This argument simply does not give Realist or classical scholarship enough credit. Subjective meanings -- norms, rules, principles, and so forth -- can be treated as facts and scrutinized via a positivist framework, as the burgeoning literature on international regimes attests. But, as Neufeld suggests, behaviouralists "do not see the 'meaningfulness' of social life as necessitating any change at the level of the positivistic logic of investigation."\textsuperscript{28} It is this aspect of positivist-inspired scholarship -- the treating of subjective meanings as facts -- that prompts accusations

\begin{enumerate}
\item See Ashley's discussion of scientific Marxism. Ashley, "The Poverty of...," pp. 255-259.
\item Neufeld, p. 42.
\end{enumerate}
of ideological control from positivism's critical flank. But such an undertaking is precisely the goal of positivist scholarship. Hence, what to critical theorists is an ideological agenda, is to positivist scientists a methodological requirement.

Another mistaken premise at work in post-positivism is that positivist analyses cannot engage in a genuine intellectual skepticism. This aspect of positivist science is stressed more by anti-modernists than by critical theorists, with the latter concerned less with the epistemological aspects of international theory than with how to relate the complex interplay of its technical, practical, and emancipatory interests to a concrete analysis of international political life.29 Critical theorists, in other words, are concerned to demonstrate the "inherent reflexivity of modernity," whereas post-modernists -- tarred unfortunately with the same post-positivist brush -- seek wholly to transcend modernist versions of truth/science. Anti-positivist and anti-modernist streams do converge under the broad banner of post-positivism, but positivism and modernism should not be conflated. As Anthony Giddens points out, for example, the "radicalizing of doubt" now associated widely with post-modernism is in fact an example of the reflexivity characteristic of modernity. Clearly the Enlightenment inspired exaggerated expectations for establishing foundations to knowledge, expectations that live on in positivism. But the Enlightenment philosophy of knowledge has evolved from a project involved with the securing of certainties, into a tradition of speculation that corrodes "the very basis of foundationalism."30 Philosophical skepticism, though hardly prevalent in international relations, is a conspicuously modern feature of social theory, and


30 Ibid., p. 207.
forms the basis of the creed that "all claims to knowledge are in principle open to revision in light of further information."^{31}

Finally, I want to stress that the present mood of crisis in the discourse derives less from the challenge of meta-theory as it is posed by the post-positivists, than from the ineffectual, or non-existent response, that this assault has engendered from the theoretical mainstream at which it is aimed. International theorists are not merely on the defensive, but seem to be in retreat. They have done little to resist the mounting tide of concepts and new areas of study that threaten to define their field out of existence, and have all but abandoned the vital task of defining the purpose of their enterprise. Trapped between the false idols of positivism and perspectivism, they are in danger of forgetting that theory is "no more than 'a set of tools whose usefulness is tested in their ability to solve concrete problems.'"^{32} Questions about theory are, however, inevitable; as the advent of the "third debate" attests, we ignore them at our peril. While it is tempting to beat a retreat to the citadel of behavioural science, or to focus narrowly on our own work, these are false havens. Communication is the bedrock of a discipline, and a theoretical Babel is preferable to silence. Hence, we cannot vacate the field to the post-positivists unless we are content to take our aspirations for a discipline of international politics with us.

But while it is necessary and important to render problematic knowledge and knowing in the philosophical sense, "philosophies of science are not theories of international relations."^{33} Ultimately, the problem of international theory is less a problem of how we know(epistemology) than what we think we see(ontology).

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^{32} Hoffmann, Contemporary Theory, p. 8.

Why, then, should we even confront issues of epistemology? Because failure to do so opens the door to precisely the sort of theoretical ferment that the post-positivists now seek to exploit. There are genuine philosophical differences, and distinct epistemological streams, in international scholarship, strains that predate, and help to shape, the modern configuration of our field. These traditions are not multiple, à la post-positivism, but dual, à la classical international theory. Thus, while the post-positivists are right to condemn epistemological monism in all its forms, they are wrong to promote -- and we are wrong to accept laying down -- an open-ended perspectivism.

2. Epistemology and International Relations -- How, and Why, it Really Matters

The frequency of disciplinary identity crises in international relations makes it difficult to say whether theoretical fragmentation is a disease, or the symptom of a deeper intellectual malady. On the one hand, such outbursts might be inevitable and cathartic -- a sort of disciplinary self-maintenance perhaps. On the other hand, this seems plausible only as a description of past eruptions over theory, and unduly hopeful with regard to the present turmoil. The only certainty is that, in some form or other, the problem of meta-theory is always with us. This appears to confront international theorists with two choices: (1). ignore and/or avoid issues of epistemology; (2). confront issues of epistemology as logically prior to international theory and research. The former strategy seems likely to yield theoretical anomalies, tensions, and fads, while the latter promises to mire the field in interesting, but empty and pedantic, debate over scholarly methods. Unhappily, neither "choice" promises to move us any closer to knowledge of "what is going on' in the real world," and both pave the way toward a potentially open-ended perspectivism.34

34 Holsti, "International Relations at...", p. 407.
Hence our real choice, as I see it, is: (1). abandon our disciplinary aspirations and recognize that, in the study of international relations, no firm conclusions can ever be drawn, or; (2). recognize that the problem of epistemology, and its implications for the discipline in international politics, is posed wrongly. I wish to argue the latter point.

While the "third debate" is nominally a dispute over epistemology, it is ultimately a disagreement over some enduring, and very familiar, issues. That these issues seem numerous, and to pertain to every conceivable aspect of international theory and research, is to be expected given the methodological promiscuity encouraged by the persistent importation and application of investigative techniques and standards of progress developed in other sciences. But beneath the jargon, the neologisms, the new issues and actors, and the burgeoning nomenclature of the field is an enterprise called international theory/politics that invariably must confine, or at least concentrate, its attention on the complex interplay of states, institutions, and individuals that properly are its concern. Though great turmoil characterizes this enterprise it comes now, as always, "from new and entirely different conceptualizations of the priority of problems within the field."35 That the state is a metaphysical abstraction cannot be denied, nor can we escape the reality that all criteria for inclusion in, or exclusion from, international politics is inherently normative. The term methodology sounds objective enough, but research techniques and priorities inevitably are a function of values. Yet none of these factors undermines the desirability, necessity, or practicality of devising an ontological framework (read discipline) for the study of international politics.36 The


36 On the concept of ontological framework see Giddens, "Structuration Theory...," p. 201.
relevant facts of international politics can be debated, and will always in some sense be constructed but, at the end of the day, it is on the facts of world politics that an authentic theory of international relations must concentrate.

I do not mean to suggest that international theorists should engage in a form of theoretical autarky. International theory cannot be insulated from debates, trends, and developments in the social sciences. But the realities of international politics, however complex and changeable, are the stuff of international theory. It makes little difference if these facts are constructed socially, or if our key concepts are metaphysical or analytical abstractions. These issues are important and relevant, but ultimately distract international theorists from the need to establish a conceptual/ontological framework for the study of international politics, and thus from their primary purpose: understanding and diagnosing the core problems of international relations and making recommendations on how to solve, or at least address, these problems. While we cannot resolve the endemic problem of normative priorities and values in international research, this does not preclude thinking about international politics as a science. Rather, international theorists ought to avoid getting mired in the potentially insoluble and intellectually empty question of whether their field is a science or a non-science, and to recognize that -- because it is inescapably normative and empirical -- theirs is "a science with a character of its own that reflects its subject matter."37

But the manner in which the problems of world politics are conceptualized depends obviously, if often implicitly, on epistemological assumptions. It is thus misleading to speak of epistemology and ontology as though they were wholly separate things; how we know conditions and shapes what we think we see. But precisely because they reside at the deepest and murkiest level of the theory process,

37 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
issues of epistemology in international relations are resistant fundamentally to fruitful, and even intelligible, debate. As outlined in chapter one, the state of international theory is more a product of premises about what it can and should accomplish than it is a reflection of concrete developments within the field. Hence, epistemological debates may be as profound and important as they are irresolvable, and may merely compound the already difficult problem of theory construction in world politics.

Nevertheless, the impulse to avoid the sort of disciplinary introspection encouraged by the post-positivists should not become an excuse for philosophical laziness. Though little can be gained by embracing the nihilistic creed of the radical interpretivists, meta-theory is endemic to international politics, and logically does not preclude the possibility of intellectual progress. On the contrary, questions about progress in international theory seem doomed to tautology unless they can be based on measurable and non controversial criteria. By the same token, however, international theory is irredeemably a realm of contested concepts. That it often does not seem to be so is testament to a once impressive and widespread methodological and normative consensus among its practitioners. No such consensus exists today, nor is a uniform philosophical basis for international theory a reasonable or desirable objective. International theorists, therefore, must search for a balance between the mutually exclusive, but equally injurious, practices of open-ended perspectivism and epistemological monism.

Such a balance can be found, and begins with our recognition of the dual epistemological character of international relations. At a very general level, we can

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38 See for example the argument of Ferguson and Mansbach that the development of international relations as an objective science is confounded by its "relative absence of objective concepts." Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach, The Elusive Quest, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), p. 34.
discern a constant interplay between two types of theory in international politics: normative and empirical. The first type of theory is "produced by political philosophy," while the latter is produced by modern science. In international textbooks these differing conceptions of theoretical purpose tend to be presented as exclusive. This is a pedagogically useful representation but, as Hoffmann notes, it is impossible wholly to separate the "kinds of efforts to which the word 'theory' applies" in international relations. Because in practice the uses of theory are difficult to keep distinct, normative and empirical theory are more like a dimension of international scholarship than a sharp dichotomy. But, precisely because these forms of theory derive from different epistemological traditions, they are irreconcilable on their own terms.

Hoffmann treats the need for balance between normative and empirical forms of theory almost literally, suggesting that the scales of the discipline need to be tipped more in the direction of "general empirical theory." Clearly, Hoffmann regards "philosophical reflections" and "empirical studies" as distinct, and mutually constitutive, elements of international relations. It is unfortunate, however, that he associates the term normative narrowly with "ethical desiderata," since all forms of theoretical debate in international politics reflect, directly or indirectly, the normative concerns of participants. Hence, the dual epistemological impulses of international theorists may be captured better by the antinomy of idealism and realism first divined -- in the literature at least -- by Thucydides, and established

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39 Though it is possible to enumerate other kinds of theoretical efforts, it is this basic typology that recurs throughout the discourse. Hoffmann, for example, adds a third category: policy science. As he observes, however, policy scientism expresses no sense of theoretical purpose. Hoffmann, Contemporary Theory..., pp. 8-10.

40 Ibid., p. 8.

41 Ibid., p. 9.
firmly by Carr. Realism in this sense should not be construed narrowly with the large-r-Realism of a Morgenthau or a Waltz, but widely with the small-r-realism of every international theorist that seeks to "square certain parts..." of his/her dogma "with a sluggish and recalcitrant political reality." 

For the remainder of this chapter, and throughout the thesis: (1). large-r-Realism will refer to realism as a paradigm or perspective in international politics associated with distinct normative and ontological assumptions regarding states and their forms of interaction, and; (2). small-r-realism will refer to a distinct epistemological orientation, or attribute of international thinking, that stands in opposition to what Carr terms the "wish dreams" of utopian idealism. In light of this distinction, idealism/utopianism versus realism is an epistemological axis of contention that may or may not coincide neatly with particular research traditions or perspectives. When we differentiate between Realists, liberals, or Marxists it is on paradigmatic grounds, and not on the basis of their often unacknowledged or ambiguous stance vis-à-vis epistemology. Thus, Realists, Marxists, and Liberals have a distinct normative orientation to, and conceptualization of, the primary problems of international politics, but are all realists to the extent that they seek to adapt and preserve their approaches in the light of threatening new facts. Similarly, each of these perspectives contains a speculative, idealist, and metaphysical epistemological stream that has only in post-World War Two scholarship been subsumed by the stronger current of positivistic science. To use Carr's language, these approaches have "matured," shedding over time a largely purposive and

42 Ferguson and Mansbach, The Elusive Quest, p. 35.


44 Carr, p. 10.
utopian grounding, in favour of an orientation to theory that "combines purpose
with observation and analysis." Again, however, the key point is that
international theory, while it assumes discrepant forms or perspectives, harbours a
deep and enduring epistemological dualism.

Where do These Epistemological Dimensions Come From?

The antinomy of idealism and realism is premised on, and grounded historically
and intellectually in, competing conceptions of the problem of progress. It is not a
taxonomic ordering device, but the outward expression of a deep epistemological
dualism in international scholarship and, indeed, in international scholars. Thus,
idealism and realism are not traditions in international relations, but philosophical
currents that run though it. And yet there is in international politics a recurring
dispute between Realists and liberals that, in my view, is based on conflicting
philosophical differences regarding the prospects for progress in international
theory and politics. This dispute rests on alternately pessimistic and optimistic
assessments of the power of human reason, conflicting orientations that together
form an epistemological dialectic predating international theory and modernity.

I want to stress again that I do not view the idealist/realist antinomy
identified by Carr as identical to the theoretical traditions of Realism and liberalism.
Perspectives, paradigms, research traditions, or whatever we term them, are distinct
from the sets of presuppositions or "meta-theories" that attempt to tie them
together. As Hoffmann notes, however, "existing theories of international relations
can... be compared to planes flying at different altitudes and in different

45 Ibid.

46 Wendt, p. 391.
directions."\(^4^7\) Realism, despite increasingly shrill allegations that it contains only a partial explanation of international politics, is a high flying theory because its proponents aspire to provide a comprehensive theoretical framework for international relations. Realism is thus nearer to constituting a distinct epistemological orientation to world politics than are theories of regimes, nationalism, imperialism, crisis-decision-making and other "lower altitude" analyses.\(^4^8\) Liberalism is more difficult to generalize, especially since in recent debate it more often resembles a squadron of approaches than a single perspective. The essence of a liberal approach to world politics is thus a thing best understood apart from the medley of orientations that can claim affinity to it. Apprehended in this way, liberalism is no less ambitious a flyer than Realism, though its itinerary is different, and more nearly approximates an idealist trajectory. Nevertheless, as I argue in chapter five, Realists and Liberals occupy the same airspace, though the latter aims at a more remote destination than the former.

Realists and liberals are divided in their interpretation of a range of issues in international relations, including core concerns, important actors, the nature and structure of relationships between actors, actor motives, diagnoses of problems, prospects for change, and prescriptions. Disagreement over these issues may be mild, depending obviously on the priorities of individual theorists. The latter, however, are often consciously or unconsciously suppressed; with rare exceptions, scholars resist identification with a particular "school," and seldom show -- or even acknowledge that they have -- ideological colours. But disputes over what to study, how and why to study it, how to prioritize problems, and so forth, disclose indirectly

\(^{4^7}\) Hoffmann, Contemporary Theory..., p. 9.

\(^{4^8}\) Ibid.
normative and attitudinal differences.\textsuperscript{49} Choosing what to study, for example, may raise the question of appropriate mode of analysis, hinting at ontological, and thus epistemological, differences. Differences of the latter variety are more profound than any of the above, and even seem to challenge the disciplinary matrix in which distinctions between Realists and liberals are framed, and thought to be useful. Modern international theorists, with their eyes trained firmly on "observable phenomena," have thus had neither incentive, nor much opportunity, to disperse the mists of theory that they might better perceive issues of epistemology.\textsuperscript{50}

Realist and liberal international theory are not often viewed as distinct epistemological orientations. On the contrary, they are often assumed to be epistemologically homogeneous perspectives, interested jointly in empirical research, and adhering jointly to positivist methods. While this is an apt characterization of much Realist and liberal scholarship in the post-World War Two era, it requires serious qualification. First, both traditions predate the advent of international relations as a discipline modeled consciously on the empirical sciences. It is thus worth exploring the intellectual heritage of these traditions, and worth asking whether the parameters of empirical science have trammeled philosophical subtleties. Second, liberalism and, to a much lesser extent, Realism span a number of approaches or "sub-models." Economic liberals and Realists, for example, share the assumption that individuals are rational actors with fixed preferences, while other streams in the liberal current view human interests, and human nature, as protean. This makes generalization about these approaches difficult, as the curious lexicon of recent debates among and between Realists and

\textsuperscript{49} Ferguson and Mansbach, \textit{The Elusive Quest}, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{50} This sentence is based on a deliberately ironic inversion of Wendt's claim that problems in international theory are obscured by the "smoke and heat of epistemology." Wendt, p. 425.
liberals attests. International relations scholars, for example, distinguish routinely between Realists, neorealists, soft Realists, modified Realists, hard Realists, neoliberals, weak liberals, strong liberals, and so forth. Ultimately, however, the compatibility and/or sameness of selected aspects of liberal and Realist scholarship seems rather an uninteresting issue. Theoretical poaching is endemic to international relations. The issue of interest is not whether the poachers are moving the fences, but whether they are breaking them down. Because the fence in question is ultimately epistemological, no amount of theoretical incursion can topple it.

My position is that the core idealist/realist antinomy of international thought is alive and well, but that the first half of it has been driven into a kind of subterranean theoretical exile. Ironically Carr, who so forcefully enshrined idealism as a core attribute of thought in international relations, has done more than most theorists to discourage its open embrace. Had Carr, Hans Morgenthau, and others not so mightily excoriated the idealists, the utopian tradition -- which is very much a part of the liberal heritage -- could more readily be discerned as a defining and enduring aspect of international thought. Theorists who challenge the Realist and liberal/economic presupposition that individuals behave in rational (read egoistic and self-interested) ways are anti-rationalist, naive, or idealist. Thus, when this presupposition is challenged, it is usually only gently so. Robert Keohane, for example, is at pains to demonstrate that his argument that international cooperation can enjoy broader scope than the Realists suggest neither challenges

51 Wendt, passim.

Realist assumptions, nor is unduly idealist. Only now, in the hiatus of Cold Warring, is idealism again being openly embraced, albeit tentatively -- almost apologetically -- and, sometimes, in the new form of neo-idealism or humanism.

At the risk of monotony, realism versus idealism is an epistemological axis of contention that does not correspond precisely to the theoretical debate/s between Realists and liberals in international relations; as I argue above, this is partly because idealism is an attribute of thought that most international theorists feel compelled to disown, and, as I argue below, partly because the latter axis is constructed erroneously in recent discussion. Realism presents fewer problems than the liberal enterprise because, as Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach suggest, it is "less a theory than... a set of normative emphases which shape theory." Simply put, Realists guard their epistemological presuppositions less jealously than liberals.

While Realists and liberals will converge and diverge over a range of issues, interpretations differ over the depth and significance of these disagreements. But if the fence that divides them is epistemological, the precise ontological construction of international relations becomes an issue of secondary import. Realism is a metonym for the modern state, but is an attribute of thought about international politics historically and logically distinct from that entity. This leads some observers to conclude, wrongly, that because the state is an historically specific manifestation

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53 As discussed in Ferguson and Mansbach, The Elusive Quest, p. 105.


55 Ferguson and Mansbach, The Elusive Quest, p. 79.

56 Holsti, for example, suggests that Realists and liberals diverge over "the degree of order" and the "presence" or "quality" of a "society" of states, but converge over what to study, and why to study it. Holsti, The Dividing Discipline, p. 27.
of human relations, realism is an historically specific idea. But ideas about the world, while they may or may not find empirical validation in it, stand apart from the world. The point is not that the world changes, or that we constantly see it in different ways, but that -- whether or not it changes -- we continual see it in the same ways.

The notion that international relations is an empirical science, however pervasive, is a relatively new idea. Thus, while reflecting on the philosophic roots of recent debates may seem like a digressive rumination, it is worth remembering that many of the figures that are now claimed retroactively as international theorists were political philosophers that searched for the causes of war "in human nature, the nature of political or economic regimes, or the very structure of the international milieu." With benefit of hindsight, the dispersed and unsystematic character of this thought is lamentable. But if the taxonomic order of science is an undoubted ally to knowledge, it is neither an intrinsic nor indispensable advantage. And the hubristic notion that philosophical theory is to be understood as a sort of proto-science of international relations does not merely make too great a virtue of systematization, but exaggerates the disorder of prior theoretical inquiry. The "age of ideology" immediately antecedent to the Second World War, for example, was one "well stocked with predictions and recommendations" and "instruments for action as well as objects of belief." But the age of ideology foundered on its inability to reconcile "favourite utopias and international realities," while the science of international politics has been hobbled by its reluctance to admit that such a dualism exists.

57 Ibid., p. 80.


59 Ibid.
I will now demonstrate in brief form the philosophical bases of the Realist/liberal dialectic. While it is my contention that this dialectic reveals elements of the realist/idealist antinomy, it often does so indirectly. Also, while Realists and liberals are divided on a number of matters, the following paragraphs focus only on the issue of intellectual and political progress which, in my view, most readily discloses epistemological difference. I want to make clear that I am not talking about disciplinary progress, which I regard as an issue analytically distinct from this brief discussion, a theme to which I will turn next. Finally, I make no claim to deal exhaustively or adequately with these traditions.

Two Views of Progress in International Politics

Keohane suggests that: "to declare an interest in 'progress...' would... both... expose one's own naiveté and... make one's work seem less scientific than that of one's apparently more objective peers."60 Ironically, it was the advent and application of science to modern social inquiry that first inspired, or at least encouraged, an unparalleled hubris regarding the possibilities and prospects for intellectual and political advance. Keohane's remark also links ideas about progress narrowly to idealism, as though Realists had no conception of, or insights to offer on, the problem. What constitutes progress is contested, and tends to be defined in accordance with the moral and intellectual standards and expectations prevailing at a given historical juncture.61 It is thus not immediately clear how, or if, the advent


61 The literal meaning of progress remains neutral: "a moving forward (in time and space)." Goodwin, p. 136.
of empirical science distinguishes modernity from antiquity over the problem of progress in human relations.

While outwardly a modern and liberal concept, the idea of progress is neither exclusively modern nor liberal. Theories of progress have proliferated since the Enlightenment, and have tended to dominate and define the liberal intellectual tradition. But ancient political philosophers merely conceptualized and problematized progress in a manner different from their modern counterparts, making straightforward comparison of the eras difficult and misleading. Ambiguities over how progress is to be understood and measured lead inevitably to conflicting assessments over its desirability, its limits, and evidence of its existence. The analytical break between antiquity and modernity is also misleading, as contemporary conservative philosophy shares with antiquity the belief that the betterment of humanity should be construed in terms of staving off decline and/or preserving what advances have been made. And, while grounded largely in the optimistic theories of civilization characteristic of the Enlightenment, an unbridled passion for progress did not extend to all of the rationalists. Rousseau, for example, exhorted the Academy of Dijon with his "theory of regress" and his essay on the *Origin of Inequality Among Men*. While convinced of the natural goodness of mankind, Rousseau had little faith in men.62

It is important to specify the way in which progress is a contested concept. Few, for example, would dispute the desirability of progress. Rather it is the way in which knowledge accumulates, and what can be said to constitute progress in material terms, that is contentious.63 This question leads us away from science -- a mode and method of inquiry singularly unadapted to judgments of this sort -- to


political philosophy and, ultimately, to presuppositions about knowing and knowledgeability (human nature).

Arguably the least secure of the social scientists, it is scarcely surprising that international theorists have resisted defining and conceptualizing progress, along with other thorny philosophical issues. As a result, the study of international politics is in significant respects founded on a collection of contentious concepts and assumptions that for ostensibly analytical reasons have not been treated as contested. Generalization implies exception, and numerous international scholars have contributed important empirical and theoretical contributions to the problem of change and progress in world politics. Yet scholarly analyses and debates in international politics have evolved largely "within the confines of positivist... informed frameworks and ... under the dominating shadow of political Realism." While debates about progress have arisen, they have tended to do so in relation to the requirements and analytic usefulness of specific theories, paradigms, or "research programs" and not over deeper issues of epistemology.

The reluctance of international scholars to engage in philosophical debates can lead to trouble inviting, for example, the recent broadside of the post-positivists. Philosophical aversion can thus be construed as evidence of a conscious attempt, bordering on conspiracy, to avoid engaging in critical self-reflection, exposing the embeddedness of international scholarship in a positivist philosophy of science that


65 Mark Hoffman, p. 169.
identifies knowledge only with itself. But if international theorists have demonstrated little interest in meta-theoretical issues, it has had more to do with the peculiar nature of their subject than with the theoretical/ideological taskmaster of positivist science. In any case, it is impossible to speculate fruitfully on where international theory is going without reflecting on where it has been. Ideas, innovations, and trends do not arise in a conceptual vacuum; international theory, like other branches of inquiry, is rooted in -- and reflective of -- extant debates over the appropriate modes of intellectual inquiry, and the proper uses of knowledge. The realization that international theory may reflect a world of multiple realities encourages theoretical creativity, diversity, and pluralism, but it does not require the abandonment of all theoretical, intellectual, and academic standards.

The Roots of Idealist Optimism: a Liberal Tradition

In modernity progress has often been associated with science, and science in turn has tended to be associated with various agendas and ideas that can be characterized broadly as liberal. But science, like liberalism, is a broad term and contains numerous orientations. In social science, for example, ideas and theory may precede factual observation and thus be idealist, relying principally on deductive scientific method. Conversely, explanatory constructs may derive from direct observation of a seemingly external physical reality and thus be materialist, relying principally on empirical and inductive scientific method. Liberalism, and the modernity in which it is embedded, is indebted to both of these versions of science, and to many

66 Hoffmann, The State of War, pp. 5-7.

67 Goodwin, p. 5.
ideas besides. In the Anglo-Saxon tradition, however, empiricism -- associated originally with Locke -- has been the dominant orientation to science.68

Comparison of these general orientations to science reveals a contrast, even a tension, in their foundational precepts about knowledge and its corresponding methods of acquisition. To the empiricist, scientific investigation precedes theory, or rather induces theory, through the observation of (preferably) large numbers of facts, episodes, instances, or -- in modern jargon -- problem sets. This orientation engenders a skeptical response from the rationalist, who believes that understanding cannot emerge without theoretical preconceptions or ideas.69 This abstract dispute over epistemology emerges, albeit in somewhat disfigured form, in the neorealist/neoliberal debate to be explored more fully below.

For the present it is useful to determine what it is that sets the liberal version of intellectual and political progression in international politics apart from other perspectives. First, it might be suggested that liberalism is synonymous with progress, a proposition that accords clearly with popular usage of the term. But this usage is tautological. As noted earlier liberals do not have a monopoly on the idea of progress but merely conceptualize it in a manner different from their intellectual rivals. Second, it is useful to note that liberalism is rooted in a set of modern orientations that views knowledge as potentially unbounded, both in itself and in its practical applications, an approach that contrasts to that of the ancients. This too however is problematic. Essentially liberal ideas can be discerned in antiquity, and antiquarian ideas can be discerned in modernity. Ideas, while in an important sense a product of their historical ethos, cannot be dated with the same precision accorded

68 Ibid., p. 5.

69 Ibid.
historical events: "...political theory, just because it is theory, is never just a photograph of the particular institutions with which it may be dealing."  

The search for a liberal theory of progress is compounded further by the equally difficult, and logically prior, problem of defining the liberal tradition itself. A hallmark of liberalism is its great internal diversity. By definition, the ideas of liberalism cannot be distilled into a single coherent creed. But, because in popular usage liberal has become an antonym for conservative, it is tempting to define liberalism negatively -- as an intellectual tradition and political movement that stands opposed to the tenets of other traditions. In their attempt to discern the central features of a liberal tradition in international politics, for example, Mark Zacher and Richard Matthew seem to treat liberalism as a residual category of Realism and Marxism.  

But liberalism does not translate easily into international theory, largely because its key message -- that order among peoples and states should be based on discussion and consent, and not on arbitrary power -- matches poorly with the apparent realities and possibilities of world politics. An added difficulty peculiar to international politics is that many liberals are also political Realists, in the sense that they claim to identify with a liberal version of progress in world politics even while decrying that vision as unrealistic or exaggerated. A similar problem has been noted in Marxism, a tradition that has had little difficulty in

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identifying its central elements but -- like liberalism -- has had difficulty translating into, or generating, international theory.73

Liberalism must be depicted not as a unitary philosophical and political platform with a coherent and indisputable core, but as a mighty and wide intellectual river, containing and feeding off of numerous streams. These streams, together with numerous smaller tributaries, sometimes meander, but converge ultimately over the belief that progressive change in the human condition is inevitable. In this sense liberalism appears in the guise of a "necessary truth." It is perceived not as a version of progress -- as one political ideology among others -- but as the basis of reality itself. The development of liberalism as philosophy in fact seems to parallel, and imitate, its own depiction of real-world progress: "the slow development and accumulation of its principles promotes the view that there is something natural about liberalism."74

In international theory the liberal stream of thought is described by F. H. Hinsley as the "Anglo-Saxon liberal conception of society and the state," a tradition predicated on the premise that inter-governmental relations should be, or will be, replaced "by the free play of enlightened public opinion between societies."75 This premise derives from the prior assumption that a latent "community of interest" unites humankind. It is this belief that leads to liberal skepticism that "a state-centred politics, however enlightened, could produce 'real' change in the way the world's affairs are handled -- or in its outcomes."76 The intellectual roots of this

73 Berki, passim.

74 Goodwin, p. 33.


tradition are deep and diverse, drawing among others on the Enlightenment-inspired philosophy of Kant, the classical political economy of Adam Smith, the utilitarian philosophy of Bentham, and the post-utilitarian philosophy of Mill.77

Early articulations of liberal optimism about the possibility of human progress relied on little more than intuitive appeal to an "invisible hand," or to other manifestations of the deus ex machina. This version of progress contrasts obviously with Marx's political ideology, and also with his conception of progress based on scientific laws pertaining to the "materialist conception of history."78 Scientific versions of liberalism have been attempted, but "a systematic presentation of liberal international theory is not offered in any well known texts."79 But, because of the advent of parsimonious/scientific theory in Realism, and an apparent intellectual overlap between Realist and liberal descriptions of the world, some international scholars have attempted to place liberal arguments on a firmer scientific basis by wedding them to neo-realist concepts. This development is ironic since neorealism is itself indebted deeply to a liberal-economic conception of rationality, and to the methods of classical micro-economic analysis in particular.

The predominance of the liberal version of progress derives on the one hand from its message of progress, and on the other hand from its propensity to recognize, affirm, and tolerate different conceptions of -- or paths to -- intellectual and material advance. The view that knowledge may progress as a result of the collision of diverse opinions, points of view, and ideas is germane to liberalism, but

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77 Holsti, The Dividing Discipline, p. 27.
79 Zacher and Matthew, p. 107.
is not synonymous with liberalism *qua* political ideology. As Holsti puts it: "the whole edifice of intellectual activity at least since the fifteenth century has been based on the assumption of progress through the conflict of ideas."80 This contrasts starkly with both the progressive but dogmatic message of Marxism, and with the post-positivist conception of intellectual conflict as a good in itself. While there are instances for liberals in which intellectual pluralism has no apparent purpose, they embrace pluralism not for its own sake, but as a means to general intellectual advance.81

Finally, while the intellectual foundations for what Carr terms "utopian optimism" are broad, it derives its signature belief in an absolute ethical standard for human conduct largely from three essentially liberal philosophical traditions: natural law, Enlightenment rationalism, and utilitarianism. In the natural law tradition, ethical principles are derived intuitively, in the rationalist tradition, such principles are derived via scientific discovery, and in the utilitarian tradition, the science of morals culminates in an ethical standard expressed as "the greatest happiness of the greatest number."82 Superficially, the career of utopian optimism seems to have followed an evolutionary and increasingly objective trajectory. Such

80 K. J. Holsti, "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Which are the Fairest Theories of All?", *Millennium*, 33, No. 3 (September 1989), p. 257.

81 For example, Holsti's suggestion that pluralism has no "intrinsic value" resonates with modern, essentially liberal, moral and political philosophy on this point. Holsti, "Mirror, Mirror...," pp. 256-257. It should be noted, however, that liberal philosophers like John Stuart Mill affirm a version of intellectual pluralism that on the surface has no apparent purpose. This is because Mill's overriding concern is with individual liberty and not with the moral/intellectual progress of society. But even in Mill individual liberty is linked ultimately -- if incidentally -- to the greater good or utility of society. See John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," in Richard Wolheim, *John Stuart Mill: Three Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 30.

82 Carr, p. 23.
a view, however, may itself be utopian. That utility should displace natural law as an ethical standard in international politics is largely a matter of historical accident, and a function of developments within the increasingly modern political societies from which such influential doctrines tend to emanate; utilitarian conceptions of the good have more to do with political expediency than with something demonstrably scientific and objective.83

The Roots of Realist Skepticism

If liberalism is manifestly a philosophy of political and intellectual progress, political Realism is manifestly a doctrine of skepticism. Realists, in contrast to the Enlightenment-inspired optimism of the liberals, are suspicious of the human power of rationality. The author Jonathan Swift puts the Realist position on rationality as well as any international theorist when he suggests, with deliberate ambiguity, that "man is an animal capable of reason."84

But how can human reason be both a vehicle for reformist idealism and an impediment to sustainable political progress? Hobbes for example -- a favourite Realist muse -- seems to invoke a decidedly liberal conception of rationality in The Leviathan that leads not to unbounded human progress but to absolute sovereignty. In Hobbes's case the argument for sweeping sovereign power is predicated on a model of human knowledge and interest that logically cannot permit escape from his state of nature. Hobbes is forced to resolve this problem by claiming that "reason

83 The changing character of countries like Britain meant that moral principles had to be expressed less in abstract, intellectual, and aristocratic terms, and more in the increasingly familiar, democratic parlance of "public opinion." Ibid., pp. 23-24.

suggesteth convenient articles of peace.\(^{85}\) The real convenience, however, is in Hobbes's use of rationality. For Hobbes the possibility of human progress "consists partly in the passions" and "partly in... reason," but he is unambiguous in his suggestion that "the passion to be reckoned upon is fear."\(^{86}\)

Realists retrospectively claim Hobbes as one of their own and, like him, cast a jaundiced eye on the power of human reason. Together they share a broadly liberal or "bourgeois" conception of rationality but do not embrace the version of progress to which it is often linked.\(^{87}\) Thus, while the normative liberal argument for human advance contains a conception of progress built on rationality, the Realist conception of progress consists in coming to terms with either: (1). the limits of human reason, or; (2). structural impediments to rational outcomes. Classical Realists have tended to stress the former constraint, while modern Realists -- inspired largely by the structural Realist or neorealist theory of Kenneth Waltz -- have tended to stress the latter impediment to progress. It should be noted that liberals and Realists tend to agree over the desirability of progress, but have very different conceptions of its sustainability in international politics. What constitutes progress in the international sphere thus comes to be defined and measured differently by liberals and Realists.

The persuasiveness of Hobbes's skeptical assessment of human reason hinges on the adequacy of his depiction of the state of nature or, more accurately, on his depiction of life in a society that is no longer held in check by sovereign authority.\(^{88}\)


\(^{86}\) Ibid., p. 200.

\(^{87}\) Ibid., p. 12.

\(^{88}\) As Hobbes puts it, he is interested in an analysis of "men that have formerly lived under peaceful government." Ibid., p. 187.
The advent of the market and other subsequent developments render Hobbes's universal proclamations suspect and, from a contemporary vantage point, distasteful. But in international politics basic Hobbesian premises have been difficult to supplant, largely because inter-state relations have often been treated as a functional equivalent to -- or a real life example of -- his state of nature. Hobbes in fact initiated this practice in his attempt to render his abstract conception of the natural misery of man more concrete:

it may... be thought there never was such a time nor condition of warre as this; and I believe it was never generally so, over all the world.... yet in all times, Kings, and persons of Soveraigne authority, because of their Independency, are in continuall jealousies, and in the state and posture of Gladiators... which is a posture of War.89

But precisely because Hobbes employed this reference to world politics for illustrative reasons, it is questionable that one can distill from his now famous gladiators much in the way of an international theory. Indeed, the attempt to do so is ironic, as Hobbes seemed to view international politics as different qualitatively from -- and less miserable than -- relations within an anarchical society of individuals.90

Hobbes of course said things that allow us to tease out elements of an international theory, but it is best to remember that his overriding concern was with civil society or -- in modern language -- with domestic politics. International politics, however, does provide a useful arena for demonstrating the distinctiveness of liberal and Realist versions of rationality. In the liberal story of reform and

89 Ibid.

progress, rational, egoistic individuals succeed despite their nasty passions in a great
social and political transformation, and would effect a similar transformation in
world politics if states did not place obstacles in the way. This liberal conception of
progress contains a strong element of serendipity. It does not resist the Hobbesian
characterization of man but rather harnesses him/her to the market, a mechanism
that structures, shapes, and channels the passions toward the attainment of the very
human interests that they seem so starkly to threaten. In the Hobbesian version of
progress "the passion to be reckoned upon is fear," while in the liberal version of
progress the interest to be reckoned on is economic.

There is no scope for, or conception of, this sort of transformation in Hobbes,
despite suggestions that his argument contains an essentially capitalist logic. For
classical Realists progress is desirable and possible but, to the extent that it depends
on rationality, is unlikely to be sustained. The political world is the product of forces
inherent in human nature; if that world is to be improved, "one must work with
those forces, not against them." To the extent that this is possible considerable
progress can be achieved but can never transcend our innate cognitive limits.

91 For a brief and excellent overview of the liberal story of progress see: Albert
O. Hirschman, The Passions and the Interests, (Princeton NJ.: Princeton University

92 This is consistent, for example, with C.B. Macpherson's reading of Hobbes.
University Press, 1962), pp. 61-64.

93 Morgenthau, p. 3.

94 Neorealists, wishing to remove all vestiges of classical Realism's
antediluvian dependence on "fallen man," put the problem of progress differently,
but no less skeptically, than the Realists. For neorealists the problem of progress is
less a matter of cognitive limits than an issue of externally generated constraints.
Neorealists preserve, but soften somewhat, the philosophical pessimism of the Realist tradition. They transcend Realism's reliance on medieval metaphysics and crude empiricism, but ultimately reconceptualize rather than reject the grounds for Realist skepticism about progress. The theoretical reconstruction of Realism can thus be portrayed largely as an exercise in method; it simply systematizes classical Realist insights and weds them to a modern deductive science. Clearly, however, the intent of neorealists is to effect what Ashley describes as the "progressive scientific redemption of classical Realist scholarship."95 This characterization is sardonic, but does capture accurately the declared purpose of Kenneth Waltz's theory of international politics. Hence, despite the popular practice of treating Realism and neorealism as synonyms, neorealism aims explicitly to expand Realism's scope for intellectual progress. Indeed, because Waltz tends to equate intellectual progress in international politics with deductive theory, it is more accurate to describe neorealism as the inaugural Realist theory of international politics than it is correct to view it as a more advanced form of classical Realist scholarship.96

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95 Ashley, "The Poverty...," p. 260.

96 The impetus for Waltz's theory is his dissatisfaction with extant versions of "scientific" Realism, and with Morgenthau's theory in particular. Just as Waltz equates intellectual progress with scientific theory, he also reduces science to deduction, explanation, and prediction. Suddenly the analyses of Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Morgenthau seem less than scientific. Their scholarship is scientific in purpose, but falls well short of the standards of scientific theory articulated by Waltz. This new standard is not of course Waltz's standard, but derives from the broad and influential stream of liberal positivism characteristic of much scholarship in the modern social sciences. In fact, Waltz's conception of theory is shared widely in the international literature, though he is also taken to task by many scholars for making an exaggerated virtue of theoretical parsimony -- or, conversely, for trivializing the everyday facts of international politics and overemphasizing the importance of its broad systemic forces. Waltz's conception of theory -- which will be elaborated more fully below -- is shared by some of his most strident critics, and has been implicated in a range of innovations that owe as much to liberal international theory as they do.
Waltz's scientific rendering of Realism seems premised oddly in the sense that Morgenthau, like many scholars of his day, was imbued with the assumptions and goals of behavioural science. Morgenthau, however, exhibited considerable ambivalence over the appropriate ambitions and uses of science in international theory and, in the practice of international politics, led the charge against what he termed the fallacy of "scientific utopianism," a movement inspired by pacifist strains in liberal political philosophy. Indeed, Morgenthau sought vigourously to "ground Realism in a... thorough philosophical skepticism," a mission that in his view required supplanting the pervasive rationalism that had "crippled the ability of statesmen to make political judgments." Morgenthau, in a manner

to Realism. It is thus vital to the development of this thesis to be clear as to where neorealism resides on the issue of progress and to establish how, or whether, neorealism differs on this issue from the classical Realist tradition.

97 There are, for example, problems inherent in the way that neorealism is conceived. Neorealists continue the statist orientation of classical Realism, but adopt an atomistic epistemology -- also bequeathed from Realism -- that seems by definition to threaten "the ideal of the state-as-actor upon which their... theory of international politics depend(s)." Ashley, "The Poverty of...," p. 279. But this tension in neorealism's conceptual foundations is not a contradiction, or at least need not become a contradiction, because Waltz conceives of states -- for the explicit purpose of theory construction -- as the functional equivalent of individuals. States for Waltz, in other words, are atomistic. Waltz's critics may be right to suggest that treating states seriously means transcending or rejecting atomistic thinking, but it is in the attempt to build on neorealism's parsimonious theoretical foundations that the tension identified above is more fully disclosed, and it is in neoliberal analyses that it blossoms into an outright contradiction of Waltz's theoretical purpose. Kenneth Waltz, "Anarchic Orders and Balances of Power," in Neorealism and its Critics, Robert O. Keohane, ed., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), passim.

98 Morgenthau., pp. 41-49. Morgenthau's antipathy to utopian science helps to explain his inability to satisfy Waltz's criteria for a scientific theory of world politics.

reminiscent ironically of neorealist critics like Ashley, took issue not with science, but with scientistic analyses of international politics. Rational science, as envisaged and applied to social issues since the Enlightenment, adopted a monocausal and naturalistic logic that paradoxically precluded understanding of the requirements for a rational -- and thus good -- foreign policy.

Part of the problem derives from the double meaning, and sometimes sloppy usage, of the term rationality in international scholarship. Morgenthau, and Realists and neorealists generally, use the term adjectivally and, for the purpose of analysis, posit rather than investigate historically the existence and interests of a "rational" unitary actor. On the other hand, however, Morgenthau's conception of international politics is a historical one, and nowhere does he suggest that the conditions under which foreign policies evolve and operate are fixed for all time.100 Rationalism, by comparison, is a philosophical doctrine that divorces knowledge from practice; it contains an a priori epistemology that promises to yield truth and knowledge independent of empirical investigation and experience. It is rationalism in this sense to which Morgenthau's preeminently pragmatic theory of political Realism stands opposed. Chapter four demonstrates that these ambiguities come to a head in neorealist/neoliberal debates over international regimes.

There is in Morgenthau an apparent tension over the appropriate role of international theory though, on balance, his distaste for idealism seems to impel him more toward the use of science as an investigative method than as the basis for a systematic, comprehensive technical knowledge of statecraft.101 This cues Waltz to attempt the scientific overhaul of classical Realism, and prompts him to take

100 See principle number three of Morgenthau's six principles of political Realism. Morgenthau, pp. 10-16.

101 On this point see Ashley, "Political Realism and the Human Interests," passim.
Morgenthau gently to task for not teasing out more fully elements of an international theory already present in a Realist analysis. Morgenthau's principal shortcoming, suggests Waltz, is his inability to view international politics as a system of states with a precisely defined structure. His oversight is thus analytical, not methodological: Morgenthau fails to recognize that rational behaviour may lead to unwanted results due to structural constraints generated by the independent activities of numerous states pursuing numerous foreign policies.102

The salience of Waltz's argument depends obviously on the persuasiveness of his conception of theory. Suffice it to point out here that Morgenthau and Waltz differ considerably on this point, with the former exhibiting a clear reluctance to abstract more than necessary from ostensible political realities, and the latter convinced that theory depends upon, and commences with, abstraction from reality. But with a dubious logic analogous to the complaints of his own critics, Waltz seems to criticize Morgenthau largely for failing to do what Morgenthau had no intention of doing.

Apart from its suspect claim to have adapted classical Realism progressively in intellectual terms, it might be asked whether neorealism does much to modify Realism's skeptical treatment of the problem of political progress. This perhaps sounds odd as Realism is viewed widely as having no conception of moral and political progress -- how can one build on what is apparently not there? As Martin Wight suggests, international theory as a whole has taken little interest in moral and political progress and thus contrasts oddly, and poorly, to the tradition of political theory/philosophy that for generations has been predicated on

investigation of the "good life." For Wight the primary source of this seeming indifference to human progress is the inter-generational hegemony of problem-solving Realist theories. In Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes, there is no cunning of reason, no hidden hand, and no telos to guide the human journey. Far from an end to history, statespersons and states alike seem destined -- if destined for anything -- to repeat the mistakes of the past. History is cyclical and repetitive, not linear and progressive. Political/international theory, to the extent that it sets itself goals, has the distinctly minimalist task of ensuring human/state survival.

Yet it is a mistake to assume that Realists, and neorealists, have no conception of progress. This charge is rooted not in political experience but in ideology; it rests on a particular conception and standard of human progress that Realism is not merely unsuited to meet, but has historically denied as realizable. Progress for Realists consists of a pragmatic assessment and acceptance of the prospects and possibilities for human moral, social, and political development. The pervasive influence of this skeptical tradition is demonstrated by the often uncritical but tautological suggestion that Realists are realistic about the problem of progress. But Realist skepticism is not built on air; it is grounded in a philosophy of progress that, at best, is cautiously optimistic about the prospects for sustained improvement of the human condition. This tradition is influenced by a conservative distaste for experiment and change, and rooted in a medieval distrust of reason. This version of progress is revealed in its opposition to a more optimistic tradition designated broadly as liberal, and resides in recognizing that progress of the latter variety may not be possible.

But the Realist conception of progress, while defined popularly by its opposition to the optimistic tradition of liberalism, should not be construed merely as reactive or negative. First, the faith of Realists in the power of human reason clearly waivers, but theirs is preeminently a doctrine of rational conduct -- a kind of philosophical-how-to of rational behaviour for states and statespersons. Realism is in this sense very much concerned with political progress, though morality is admittedly quite another matter. Second, Realists do not deny the possibility for change, but doubt whether change is always desirable and/or progressive. Third, modern Realism -- thanks largely to Waltz -- reconceptualizes the problem of progress around structural impediments to successive change and not around the classical Realist theme of cognitive and/or moral weakness. In a sense, neorealism turns the *deus ex machina* of the liberal story of progress on its head. Methodologically, neorealists begin with (and borrow heavily from) classical liberal-economic premises about individual behaviour. But the hidden hand of Adam Smith is replaced by Waltz's equally invisible system structure. In the liberal version of progress individual passions are transformed almost magically into collective interests. For neorealists, conversely, the same egoistic individuals identified by the classical economist may not achieve rational and desirable outcomes due to structural obstacles placed in their way by international anarchy.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Waltz, for example, employs Rousseau's famous metaphor of the stag hunt to demonstrate how common interests and purposes can -- contra Rousseau -- fail to achieve desirable, collaborative outcomes under conditions of anarchy. Loriaux, p. 402. See also Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 159-186.
3. Epistemology and the Problem of Discipline: Recovering Our Balance

This chapter began by reviewing a set of "meta-theoretically" derived observations on the teetering state of our discipline: international relations. Section two pointed to a perennial clash of realist and idealist philosophies of the human condition as a more balanced, serviceable, and adequate conception of the insuperable problem of epistemology. The remaining section of this chapter introduces a conceptual method, or means of analysis, for achieving such a balance.

In keeping with the distinctly downbeat mood of contemporary theorists, the thesis has thus far emphasized ambiguities, tensions, and contradictions that seem to be pulling the discipline of international relations apart. The remaining section of this chapter examines aspects of continuity, community, and sense of purpose among international scholars, commencing a disciplinary salvage operation to be completed in chapter five. It begins with an overview of the traditional objectives of international theory, re-evaluates those objectives in light of recurring disagreements and obstacles, and offers a revised conception of the discipline that accommodates -- but does not reconcile -- basic epistemological disputes. The rethinking of the enterprise requires downsizing our aspirations for consensus but preserves the wide sense of purpose characteristic of a scholarly collective; it extricates us from insoluble debate about who theory is for, and retrieves the field from the harpies of the "third debate."

Finally, this chapter sets the stage for discussion of the "new paradigmatic" contender in international relations: neoliberalism and its cognate approaches. The attempt by neoliberals to preserve and extend the deeply influential, but normatively unappealing, perspective of neorealism expresses the modern conviction that international relations cannot credibly be termed a discipline
without a strong paradigm in its intellectual vanguard, but founders on the old reality that key elements of international politics remain closed to systematic empirical analysis. That which is beyond the ken of objective science falls now, as always, on the other side of the epistemological fence, into the province of idealism. However, this means only that the ultimate reality of international relations resides at least partly in a realm that evades phenomena. By no means are the neoliberals idealist if idealism is to be understood (wrongly) as merely a synonym for gullibility. If international regimes can be said to constitute utopias, they are both remarkably modest and fragile ones.\textsuperscript{105} But where empirical theory ends, philosophical theory begins, and the latter invariably "is oriented to the realization of an ideal... which provides a description of reality based on \textit{a priori} concepts of the nature of man or of various institutions."\textsuperscript{106} Inevitably, in modern international theory, these ideals bear the unmistakable stamp of liberal institutionalism.

Before proceeding to the theoretical case study of this thesis, however, the traditional objectives of international relations scholars remain to be discussed. Ordinarily, an avowedly theoretical thesis on international politics might be expected to begin with a definition of international theory, a demarcation of its disciplinary boundaries, a justification of its intellectual autonomy, and a statement of its purpose/s. But there is little that is ordinary about the present state of the field, and these preliminaries have had to wait.

\textsuperscript{105} Regime analysis might thus be said to accord with Hoffmann's proviso that "we must try to build relevant utopias." Hoffmann, \textit{Contemporary Theory...}, p. 189.

\textsuperscript{106} Hoffmann, \textit{The State of War}, p. 6.
International Relations: Problems of Disciplinary Autonomy, Organization, and Purpose

The theoretical enterprise in international relations has been variously defined, but never more cogently than by Hoffmann: "the... systematic study of observable phenomena that tries to discover the principal variables, to explain the behaviour, and to reveal the characteristic types of relations among national units."107 This definition, however, was tendered in 1965, when relations among "national units" clearly were primary, but at roughly the time that powerful transnational corporations were flexing their global muscles, and that a host of intergovernmental and nongovernmental actors were rapidly changing the demographics of international society. Defining the analytical domain of international relations is thus an old problem, but one that has recently threatened to become an insuperable one.

Because definition and autonomy is an inextricably fused issue in international relations, growing doubts over how, or even if, to draw boundaries around the field seem to threaten to define it out of existence. Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach even go so far as to suggest that we have stopped caring about whether or not the field has "identifiable boundaries."108 This may or may not be true. But if the scattered and unsystematic character of international inquiry precludes the establishment of an international discipline in the Kuhnian-inspired sense, it does not preclude knowledge about international politics. The Ferguson and Mansbach problem is not one of intellectual progress, but a matter of

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107 Ibid., p. 4.

intellectual organization, supervision, and order. These are admittedly valuable aids to knowledge, but -- in a pinch -- they are dispensable ones.

Ferguson and Mansbach overstate the implications of the boundary "problem" because they seem to misapprehend the function of a definition of discipline in international relations. As Hoffmann notes, the "function" of such a definition is: "to indicate proper areas of inquiry, not to reveal the essence of the subject. How could one agree once and for all upon the definition of a field whose scope is in constant flux, indeed a field whose fluctuation is one of its principal characteristics?" Thus, while scholars might not agree on where the boundaries of the discourse should be drawn, this is both an occupational hazard and a largely procedural matter. There is evidence, moreover, that international scholars have had relatively little difficulty in affirming the distinctiveness of the international system:

while the intertwining of domestic and external, and commercial and diplomatic concerns, has become particularly pronounced in the last few decades, this does not nullify the traditional observation that there are fundamental differences between diplomatic-strategic behavior and the activities of politicians and traders at the local and international levels.

While definition is a surmountable problem in international scholarship, the problem of method raises more serious difficulties. As Hoffmann suggests, with great foresight, an unsupervised "conglomeration of partial approaches" to international theory cannot but lead to parochialism, disorder, and faddism. The

109 Hoffmann, Contemporary Theory..., pp. 5-6.
111 Hoffmann, Contemporary Theory..., pp. 6-7.
problem of discipline is thus partly a matter of finding a way of organizing different approaches, and making them relevant to international relations. Hoffmann was forced to conclude in 1960 that such a "principle or order" was missing, and recent developments have done much to compound the problem.¹¹²

Because Hoffmann equates the systematic organization of approaches to international politics with a theory of international relations, the disciplinary implications of the absence of such a principle of order seem serious. But the issue of method in the social sciences is invariably a plural problem -- it is an issue of methods. To recognize that there are different types of theory is to recognize an intellectual reality, but such awareness does not entail abandonment of the theoretical effort.¹¹³ Rather, it points to other analytically distinct but closely related problems of theory, and to the issue of theoretical purpose in particular.

Hoffmann discerns two broad methods of international theory, each related closely to, and reflective of, two conceptions of purpose. These approaches revolve respectively around two modes of understanding or, rather, two purposes for which understanding is to be sought: (1). prediction, and; (2). description.¹¹⁴ The essential duality of theory described by Hoffmann tends very much to recur, often with slightly different labels, throughout the theoretical literature. Theory on the one hand is to be predictive, prescriptive, explanatory, and problem oriented. Theory on the other hand is to be diagnostic, historicist, and narrative. But while these

¹¹² Ibid., p. 7.

¹¹³ Hoffmann suggests that international theory, while in some senses heir to the same challenges as other social sciences, "is in certain ways deeply original; the general problems of the social sciences are raised in it in special ways and in special sharpness." Hoffmann, The State of War, p. 7.

¹¹⁴ These are not precisely the labels used by Hoffmann, but capture the essence of his position. Ibid., pp. 16-17.
orientations are distinctive, and have their different theoretical protocol, they are united by the wider purpose of understanding. The primary purpose of theorists in all disciplines, argues Hoffmann, "is to seek knowledge and understanding for their own sake."115

Though Hoffmann's presentation of the problems of definition, autonomy, organization, and purpose is an excellent conception and defense of the enterprise, it tends to crowd out the philosophical tradition of theory that he identifies as antecedent to the modern discipline. On the one hand, Hoffmann clearly regards philosophical theory as integral to international relations, though he is less than happy with its "lamentable state."116 On the other hand, Hoffmann hangs his hopes for progress in the discipline squarely on "general empirical theory;" his definition of international relations as a modern discipline both equates it to empirical theory, and distinguishes it from political philosophy.117 This is understandable in light of his conviction that international theory has no intrinsic value, and of his apprehension that philosophy tends toward idealism, resignation, and to an over-simplification of reality.118 The "very usefulness of theory," he argues, "depends on its ability to illuminate the concrete empirical problems of the field."119

Hoffmann's construction of the relationship between empirical and philosophical theory rests less on acceptance that they are mutually constitutive and valid methods for understanding international relations, and more on the view

115 Hoffmann, Contemporary Theory..., p. 10.

116 Hoffmann, The State of War, p. 20.

117 Ibid., p. 4.

118 Ibid., p. 20.

119 Hoffmann, Contemporary Theory..., p. 12.
that philosophy is a necessary, but not wholly welcome, supplement to empirical investigation. If empirical theory is a beacon with which to illumine international reality, philosophy is a candle that may shed light on the darker regions of the field. As Hoffmann puts it, "a genuine understanding of philosophical theory will... operate as a methodological warning system." 120

That this conception of the relationship between empirical and philosophical theory has tended to dominate post-World War Two international scholarship is not surprising. Human nature is not merely passé, but an inauspicious starting point for empirical theory. The issue, however, is not whether there is room for both an empirical and non-empirical approach to the problem of theory, since, thus posed, the latter can serve only as a prop for the present inadequacies of the former. As Ferguson and Mansbach put it: "although 'impressionistic' work will fall short of the standards enshrined in the canons of science for 'causation,' 'explanation,' and 'laws,' it can 'inform' in ways that empirical studies have, to date, largely failed to do." 121 But "impressionistic work," if understood as idealist, has nothing to do with the "canons of science" as understood by Ferguson and Mansbach; it is rooted in a philosophical tradition intellectually, logically, and historically distinct from empiricism, "strict" or otherwise. Hence, in some theoretical debates issues of epistemology may not be raised or implicated -- as may be the case in debates between Realists and neorealists for example. But there also exists in international relations theory a deeper, and different, axis of contention involving presuppositions about knowledge and knowledgeability.

120 Hoffmann, The State of War, p. 20.

While Hoffmann's conception of our purpose is an eminently acceptable one, he needlessly links the viability of the discipline to the "panacea of a global explanatory theory." Hoffmann and subsequent generations of scholars have laboured mightily on this vision of an architectonic theory of international politics, but we seem further now than ever before from achieving it. This is because such an objective is neither "premature" (à la Hoffmann) nor "elusive" (à la Ferguson and Mansbach), but overly ambitious. It is premised on the reconciliation of theoretical approaches that cannot be reconciled accept, as Hoffmann suggests, in terms of their mutual commitment to the broad interest of knowledge. Idealist and realist theories -- which are essentially what Hoffmann means by "sky-bound" and "earth-bound" theories -- cannot be connected in a unitary theory, and the conviction that they can be so reconciled has caused unneeded anxiety about the viability of our enterprise, and exaggerated perceptions of its infirmity.

Rethinking the Problem of Discipline

The remainder of this chapter examines a conception of discipline that does not envision a "global explanatory theory," but that also does not condemn the field to a meaningless perspectivism. This argument is raised here as a guidepost to the chapters to follow, but is not consummated until chapter five.

The problem with international politics is that it is inescapably normative and empirical, and the problem with international theory is that its practitioners have tended to view the subject as either an empirical science, or as a wholly normative undertaking. This problem has been played out through a successive series of debates and paradigms, culminating not in Hoffmann's envisioned "global

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122 Hoffmann, Contemporary Theory, p. 10.
explanatory theory," but in distorting images, specious debates, and false or misleading dichotomies.

As the advent of post-positivism attests, the vision of an empirical science of international relations modeled on the natural sciences is a difficult one to displace, especially when the only alternative approach appears to be explicitly antithetic to any recognizable version of theory. But the problem with generalizations in international politics is not that they are impossible to derive, but that the context of action -- the players, the relative importance of agency and structure, the knowledgeability of actors, and so forth -- is subject to continual change. Under such conditions, the attempt to construct a discipline of international politics modeled on the natural sciences is more apt to generate faddism, paradigm proliferation, and internal wrangling than it is likely to yield a genuinely cumulative knowledge of world politics. Hence, the failed potential of international politics may say less about the success or failure of the field than it attests to the unrealistic and misplaced expectations of many of its practitioners. Conversely, a less ambitious, but more realistic, assessment of the discipline as a domicile for two broad interpretations of international reality promises to put its often arcane in-house debates in perspective, and to quiet our perennial mood of crisis.

If international theory cannot advance reliable generalizations about the reality of world politics it cannot, properly speaking, be a theory of anything. This proposition sounds radical, especially in light of the residual commitment to behavioural science that still informs much international scholarship, but it amounts to more than a statement of the obvious -- that international theory cannot be a science in a manner analogous to biology -- and to much less than a

vindication of purposeless perspectivism. Rather, international theory must be reconceptualized better to match its subject matter, and better to reflect what it can, and cannot, reasonably be expected to accomplish. The precise scientific or non-scientific status of international theory, while important, is something of an intellectual sideshow. International theory is first and foremost an ontological exercise that derives its meaning, and value, from the ability of its practitioners to "illumine the concrete empirical problems of the field." But, as Hoffmann notes, we cannot walk before we learn to crawl: "our first purpose should be to throw light on these problems, because we cannot dream of solving them as long as we have not elucidated them." Whether we like it or not, we are back to the problem of theory and, thanks to the dual nature of our understanding, back to epistemology.

But, if we accept the proposition that the primary challenge of international theorists is to construct a conceptual means of analysis, the perennial conundrum of values versus objectivity in international scholarship is no longer the critical issue. There is nothing novel in such an approach, though the unreflective and uniform usage of the term theory in international relations makes such an orientation to theory seem alien. International theory is "a set of tools" whose worth is most apparent in concrete empirical analyses, but too often this proviso has been taken to refer narrowly to empirical research programmes, and not widely to empirical issues related to the conceptual organization of the actors, institutions, and processes that define the field.

The founding figures of the modern discipline of international relations had no difficulty recognizing the need to balance its dual epistemological roots. Carr in

124 Hoffmann, Contemporary Theory..., p. 12.

125 Ibid.

126 Giddens, "Structuration Theory...," p. 205.
particular captured the essence and challenge of international theory with his suggestion that it ought, like all "sound political thought," to be "based on elements of both utopia and reality."\textsuperscript{127} International theory, or rather interpretation of its reality, had to be regarded as fluid and changeable, and could not be tied to a fixed or uniform standard of theory.

International theory is neither empirical nor normative, realist nor idealist, scientific nor non-scientific, positivist nor interpretivist, but all of these things at once. It is descriptive and explanatory, reflective and rationalist, diagnostic and prescriptive, hermeneutic, practical, and technical. In textbooks international theory may be portrayed as based either on reason or understanding, but we ought to avoid confusing pedagogical convenience with intellectual reality.

The strength of Carr's conception of international theory rests in its essentially instrumental nature. Carr does not offer up typologies of theory -- the conflicting perspectives common to international texts -- but a conceptual means of analyzing the complex, and always changing, interplay of theory and practice, free will and determinism, ethics and politics, and other variations on his central antithesis of utopia and realism. International theory cannot build reliably, or solely, on generalizations about international reality because the latter are inextricably bound up with normative attitudes that are not merely resistant to objective analysis, but are variable across time and culture. Theorists that do not attempt to achieve some form of accommodation between the empirical and normative aspects of the world they seek to understand engage in little more than political ideology.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{127} Carr, p. 93.

\textsuperscript{128} They construct what Carr terms a "concrete expression(s) of particular conditions and interests." Ibid., p. 14.
What I have termed Carr’s conception of discipline is not without problems, nor is Carr without critics. But the bulk of critical attention has focused on Carr’s alleged inability to transcend convincingly his own idealist/realist antithesis, and thus largely misses the point — Carr’s central point — that idealist and realist attributes or elements of international thought cannot be transcended. Martin Griffiths, for example, argues with R. B. J. Walker that there is in Carr an implied transcendence of the idealist/realist antithesis that is "frustratingly defeated" by Carr himself.129 This raises two possibilities: that Carr does not really mean to suggest that idealism and realism are elements of thought in direct and unequivocal opposition; or that Carr does not mean to imply that idealism and realism can be transcended in international theory. I believe the latter proposition to be true.

In a similar vein to Griffiths, Ken Booth describes The Twenty Years Crisis as a “flawed” work that demonstrates Carr’s confusion over “where he stood in relation to utopianism and realism.”130 This confusion, argues Booth, has been an “unhelpful influence” on the development of international theory. Booth describes Carr’s failing as more intellectual than moral: Carr could not quite make out the precise relationship between utopian and realist thought. Carr, for example, claims that utopia and reality belong to “two different planes which can never meet,” but suggests elsewhere that “sound political thought” must contain elements of both utopia and reality.131 But, as Booth almost acknowledges, confusion over Carr’s contribution to international theory has more to do with the way in which

129 Martin Griffiths, Realism, Idealism, and International Politics: A Reinterpretation, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 34.


131 Ibid, p. 531.
subsequent scholars have failed to penetrate and/or fully comprehend the force of Carr's subtle argument, than it can be attributed to intellectual ambiguity in The Twenty Years Crisis itself. It may be a "widely held view" that Carr sounded the "death knell of utopianism as a respectable intellectual tradition," but widely held views are often mistaken. As Booth admits, Carr's readers have "pounced upon his attack on utopianism but generally have failed to note his uncertainty, his criticism of realism and his positive comments about utopianism." Though Booth is right that Carr has been misunderstood, Booth himself seems to miss the gist of The Twenty Years Crisis, blaming its author for the misconceptions of his critics.

What Booth fails to recognize, and Griffiths does not want to accept, is that Carr, in describing utopian and realist theory as antithetic, eschews explicitly both dichotomous and synthetic forms of logic. International theory is both empirical and normative. It is not a study of separate parts, but a study in the balancing of contrasted ideas. There is subtlety here, but no confusion, no ambiguity, and no "intellectual dilemma." Carr clearly and explicitly defines politics as "the constant interaction of irreconcilable forces." But because international politics is reducible to a fundamental tension between utopia and reality, international theory need not be ideological. Rather, in combining and balancing the elements of utopia and reality discernible at all times, in all societies, international theory becomes a sound and fruitful tool of analysis. In contrast to the numerous debates and

132 Brian Porter, as cited in Ibid., p. 527.
133 Ibid., p. 531.
134 Carr, p. 94.
135 Ibid, p. 93.
perspectives that have come to define international theory, Carr describes a single but fundamental antithesis. This helps us to recognize that the many paradigms and dichotomies of international politics may be variations on a single theme, and to find order and continuity in a seemingly chaotic and disjointed realm.

It is perhaps because Carr's approach to international theory is more explicitly ontological than epistemological that many scholars have had difficulty figuring out where to "fit" him. Carr addresses the issue of fact and value in international theory and research, but he does not engage it. Rather, he defines the problem as insoluble and attempts to move beyond it through the composition of a theoretical orientation that seeks to recognize and accommodate, not resolve, the interdependence of "purpose and analysis" in international theory.136 A value-free science of international politics sounds like a nice idea, but the effort to construct such a beast is not simply Sisyphean in conception, but apt to obscure, and thus impair, the true purpose and potential of international theory. Carr does not suggest that international theory cannot be scientific, but that good sciences -- like good people -- know their limitations: "no science deserves the name until it has acquired sufficient humility not to consider itself omnipotent, and to distinguish the analysis of what it is from aspiration about what it should be."137

The hubris of science cautioned against by Carr has often gripped the social sciences and international politics alike, with developments in the former realm invariably driving innovations in the latter. A net importer of ideas and concepts, international theory has used developments in other seemingly more objective fields to bolster its own status as science. During the behaviouralist revolution, for example, the incorporation of new quantitative methods promised to put the study

136 Carr, pp. 3-5.

137 Ibid., p. 9.
of world politics on a firmer scientific terrain than was previously imagined possible. The scientific confidence of the field was bolstered not merely by new investigative techniques, but by the seductive suggestion that scientific progress in international relations followed a noncumulative pattern admirably suited to a Kuhnian standard of science.\(^{138}\) But the promise of Kuhnian science proved fleeting and only temporarily invigorated the field because, as Holsti reminds us, and as Carr knew, paradigms -- or whatever we call them -- are defined by normative priorities and not by methods.\(^{139}\) On the other hand, however, aspirations of a value-neutral science of world politics persist, making many international theorists reluctant to admit an interest in issues of a normative character,\(^{140}\) and thus obscuring the extent to which "scientific" questions and methods are grounded inevitably in normative commitments.\(^{141}\)

The infeasibility of Kuhnian, Popperian, Lakatosian or other versions of scientific progress for international relations do not render the field impervious to science, but prompt us to conceptualize it as a special science. Such a realization, far from an admission of scientific failure, is a mark of intellectual maturity, and seems a more adequate and appropriate conception of discipline that one modeled narrowly on the empirical sciences. Empirical theory and value theory are not tradable, but inextricably fused elements of international inquiry. They can be separated analytically in textbooks, but they cannot be separated in practice.\(^{142}\)

\(^{138}\) Ferguson and Mansbach, *The Elusive Quest*, pp. 13-31. See also Carr, p. 4.

\(^{139}\) Holsti, *The Dividing Discipline*, p. 7.

\(^{140}\) See footnote 58 above.

\(^{141}\) Ferguson and Mansbach, *The Elusive Quest*, p. 35.

\(^{142}\) Carr, p. 4.
International theorists, and social theorists generally, have often ignored this sensible proviso, preferring to construct and/or organize their theories in terms of mutually exclusive engagements with reality, culminating in the stark dichotomy of existential philosophies versus deterministic sciences. Carr rightly saw this dichotomy, and its many manifestations, as regressive intellectually:

Immature thought is predominantly purposive and utopian. Thought which rejects purpose altogether is the thought of old age. Mature thought combines purpose with observation and analysis. Utopia and reality are thus the two facets of political science. Sound political thought and sound political life will be found only where both have their place. 143

Conclusion

This chapter argues that the pervasive belief that international theory is in a state of deep crisis is unwarranted, and fueled by the equally pervasive and questionable assumption that a unified theory of international politics (positivist or otherwise) is possible. Without embracing the radically relativist claims of the post-positivists, I suggest that it is both possible and necessary to accept the existence of irreconcilable epistemological elements in international thought. This argument returns to, and affirms, Carr's suggestion that international thought invariably is composed of idealist/utopian and realist strands that "belong to two different planes which can never meet." 144 Carr's conception of irreconcilable differences has been susceptible to challenge on the grounds that it cannot be transcended, and thus cannot yield a unitary, global theory of international relations. But this challenge, I argue, is a weak one that presupposes wrongly that Carr really meant to transcend his own

143 Ibid, p. 10.
144 Carr, p. 93.
dichotomy, and implies falsely that international relations cannot aspire to the status of discipline without transcending epistemological contentions. This chapter suggests that, rather than offering a theory of international politics, Carr offers an approach to the problem of theory in international politics, a conceptual framework that is well attuned to the ontological composition of the subject, and gets us out of affirming either single epistemological standards for the discipline, or abandoning our enterprise to the meaningless perspectivism countenanced by the post-positivists.

Having established that the role of international theory is one of accommodation between competing ontologies, we are able better to comprehend the intellectual impulses behind recent theoretical debates, and to recognize seemingly novel innovations as variations on a familiar theme. The following chapter thus shifts the analytical focus of the thesis away from issues concerning the state of the field, to an examination of the "new facts" that are thought widely to challenge existing interpretations of world politics. But, because interpretation and fact are inextricably fused elements of international thought, chapter three continues indirectly to explore the main problem of the thesis: conceptualizing a coherent discipline of international relations.

The debates explored in chapter three, however, are seldom connected explicitly by their participants to the sort of epistemological concerns identified above, but are propounded as though they belonged to a discrete realm of contention. The issue of progress in particular international theories, in other words, is often not linked to the broader issue of disciplinary well-being, an odd oversight given the much solemnized infirmity of the discipline. This sense of detachment from meta-theoretical reality is particularly strong in debates among and between neorealists and neoliberals. Chapter three wades into this debate with a
view to connecting it to the more general problem of discipline in international relations introduced above, and discussed more fully in subsequent chapters.
CHAPTER THREE

REALISM AND THE "NEW" FACTS OF INTERNATIONAL THEORY AND POLITICS

Introduction

Thus far the thesis has assessed the issue of theoretical turmoil in international relations with little explicit reference to the facts of world politics. This is because the facts of international politics tend to be less important in determining the status of international theory than conceptions of international theory are instrumental in determining what facts to study or, perhaps more accurately, what facts to construct. This observation, while not derivative of, or sympathetic to, the radically relativistic knowledge claims of the post-positivists, is premised on the conviction that evaluation of the philosophical bases of theorizing in international politics is instrumental in understanding the field's perennial bouts of crisis.

Theoretical innovation and debate do not arise ex nihilo, though a penchant for faddism in international politics might lead us to suspect otherwise. Rather, the ideas, concepts, and facts of international politics seem new because they threaten existing interpretations of reality. They do so because international thought is formed invariably in a changing historical, normative, and intellectual context. But, as E. H. Carr suggests, this does not mean that we are condemned to see the world in a multiplicity of ways, so much as we must constantly struggle to balance what is desirable normatively against that which is feasible practically and politically. By no means does the perennial advent of "new" facts challenge axiomatically the broad foundation and purpose of our enterprise: "to illuminate the concrete empirical
problems of the field."\(^1\) What is threatened is the "utopia of a general theory of international politics," and not the discipline as a whole.\(^2\)

This chapter reviews briefly the supposed "new" facts of international relations, and explores dominant debates and conceptual responses to these developments. These debates are seldom connected explicitly by their participants to the sort of epistemological concerns identified above, but are propounded as though they belonged to a discrete realm of contention. The issue of progress in particular international theories, in other words, is often not linked to the wider issue of disciplinary well-being, an odd oversight given the much lamented state of the discipline. This sense of detachment from meta-theoretical reality is particularly strong in debates among and between neorealists and neoliberals, a set of disputes centering on the paradigmatic competence of neorealism, and the prospects for a neoliberal approach to revitalize and/or supplant it. Because the emergent perspective of neoliberalism is treated widely as the only credible heir to the Realist tradition, this chapter focuses primarily on the former perspective and its cognate approaches. The main objectives of this chapter are to introduce neoliberal arguments about international change, and to assess neoliberalism's impact and place in international political theory. It is premised on the belief that neoliberalism neither challenges nor extends Realist analyses, but most of my substantive criticisms on this score are saved for chapter four. I want to emphasize here, however, that both chapters three and four wade into the neorealist/neoliberal


debate with a view to connecting it to the more general problem of discipline in international relations introduced above, and discussed more fully in chapter five.

The "New" Facts

It has been suggested that "many of today's most pressing international issues have little to do with the relative military security of states, with their relative coercive power, with their territoriality, or even with the ideology of their regimes." This is neither the first nor last inscription on the Realist tomb, but it is one of the most concise and definitive epitaphs offered to date. Yet proclamations of change in international politics have been as common as they are difficult to sustain. Persistent patterns of behaviour have of course emerged, as the remarkable longevity of the state-centric paradigm attests. But reliable prediction has remained elusive. In international politics the claims of the diplomat, policymaker, historian, and scientist are often no more compelling than those of the soothsayer. And no one -- save perhaps the soothsayer -- could have anticipated the remarkable and ongoing changes in the contemporary international system.

Until recently international politics seemed locked eternally in ideological grid-lock, interstate competition, and sporadic crisis. The study of world politics reflected these static realities, focusing narrowly on superpower relations, issues of security, Cold War competition, periods of accommodation or detente, and diplomatic maneuvering. International theory remained the almost exclusive domain of the Realist, its texts dominated by turgid prose about the centrality of state power and, in their strategic analyses, all but resigned to a future of conventional or

nuclear war. International changes could and did occur, but it was accepted widely
that such changes constituted little more than adjustments within an enduring
structure of state power and rivalry. The vitality and competitive dynamics of the
states system was itself seldom challenged. Suddenly, we are told, these realities
have changed.

There are relatively few international theorists that would quibble with
Holsti's suggestion that sound international theory means keeping "our eyes on
what is actually happening in the world and on the requirements of reliable
knowledge."\(^4\) International theory, though it requires inevitably some degree of
abstraction from the "real world," is inescapably empirical. Unless it is to be
understood as something purely intellectual and grotesque, international theory
must offer some account of, and pay some measure of attention to, the facts and
events via which it tends to be defined. The facts of international relations have
been defined as its "actors, persisting patterns of behaviour, trends, institutions,
structures, and processes."\(^5\) Again, few international texts would dispute this
rendering of international facts, or deny the desirability of a fact-based approach to
the study and understanding of international politics.\(^6\)

If international theory were only an empirical undertaking, its perpetual
incorporation of new or previously unexamined facts would offer few challenges.
International texts routinely are revised and updated to keep pace with, or at least

\(^4\) Kal Holsti, "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Which are the Fairest Theories of

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 259.

\(^6\) Generalization implies exception, and Michael Banks' approach to
international theory is one. For Banks international relations is less about facts than
it is concerned with popular ideas. See Michael Banks, "The Evolution of
International Relations Theory," in Michael Banks, ed., *Conflict in World Society*,
not altogether lose sight of, a changing world. Some of these changes are anticipated or, at least, are far from earth-shattering. The continual expansion of the membership of the GATT and other intergovernmental organizations, for example, requires updating in texts but does little to challenge prevailing assumptions about international relations. Unhappily for theorists of international relations, however, theirs is much more than an empirical undertaking: "it is not just that facts have changed, but also that existing interpretations of the international system are challenged." Theoretical turmoil derives less from new facts, than "from new and entirely different conceptualizations of the priority of problems within the field." This problem of normative priority is not new to international relations, despite decades of apparent consensus over what to study, how to study it, and why to study it. Rather, international theory has always grappled with conflicting normative impulses, even when it has seemed not to struggle with new facts. Recent scholarship, however, has given us plenty to deal with on both counts.

In what is now described popularly as its post-Cold War era (scarcely an international text misses the opportunity to incorporate this term) international relations must account for a host of changes. In keeping with the discussion above, these new facts are compelling not merely for their own sake, but because they often challenge -- and perhaps even invalidate -- existing interpretations of the international system. These developments are often condensed into a package of "highlights": the dismantling of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, the subsequent collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union itself, the unification of Germany, unprecedented progress in arms control/reduction, and the increasing


empowerment of the United Nations as witnessed in the Gulf War. Other harbingers of change include a number of developments, issues, and processes that can be lumped under the sufficiently vague rubric of complex interdependence. Resource scarcity, pollution, famine, disease, inflation, currency instability, the transnationalization of labour and capital, and rapid technological change head a long list of global challenges that seem to render the traditional Realist concept of national sovereignty obsolete. These changes are believed to underscore and to contribute to a steady erosion in the dominance of security considerations, and to reflect the increasingly collaborative character of the states system. If epochal change has been a recurring theme in world politics, its heralds have seldom had recourse to so compelling a body of evidence.

Many are ready to abandon the dominant paradigms of international relations, and others are prepared, and eager, to jettison the discipline and its theory altogether as a precept to a new world history.9 Others still are prepared to declare an end to history and find in recent international events evidence for the global triumph of a particular, distinctly American, version of liberal-democracy and market relations.10 But whether circumspect or sweeping in their pronouncements, the heralds of international change must confront the reality that change in international relations always goes much deeper than its facts. Many of the more ambitious arguments for change rely implicitly on an assumption of deep interdependence among and between the seemingly discrete changes of international politics, suggesting that structural forces are at work or that the structure of the international system is itself undergoing fundamental change.

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9 See discussion of post-positivism in Chapter Two.

Ironically, however, such arguments are apt to be undone by their own vague prognostication. It is precisely because the problem of change in international relations goes much deeper than crumbling walls and lines in the sand that its pace, intensity, and depth cannot easily be measured, and cannot glibly be described. One is left to wonder at the level of predictive confidence now exuding from theorists who only a decade ago could not foretell the momentous changes on which they are now fixated. Sound international scholarship will not announce change, or merely pronounce extant theories dead, but will explore and expose "extreme anomalies between older theoretical formulations and modern facts," and endeavour "to replace them with more appropriate constructs."

While it has become fashionable to embrace the logic, if not the label, of a "new world order" in international politics, there are serious grounds to doubt the relevance and conceptual utility of this formulation. First, it must be treated skeptically on the basis of our knowledge that "international relations seem peculiarly to inspire ideas of new eras." Whether or not the world has changed, international theorists habitually see it in different ways. Second, the phrase "new world order" is so vague that it borders on meaningless. In popular usage it tends to express the notion that the demise of the Soviet Union somehow magically transforms the rules of the game in international politics, from competition and rivalry based on the distribution of power among states, to new operating principles that are not well defined, but seem to have something to do with justice, much to do with the United Nations, and even more to do with the triumph of liberal capitalism. But the new world order, argues Joseph Nye, "did not begin with the Gulf War," and has "little to do with justice." Rather, it was "the rapid decline of the

11 Kal Holsti, "Mirror, Mirror...," p. 257.

12 Adam Roberts, p. 510.
Soviet Union (that) caused the end of the old bipolar order that had persisted for nearly half a century."13 Thus, to accept that the Cold War is over is to recognize only that a particular configuration of the distribution of capabilities among states has passed into history. This leads to a third point concerning the inadequacy of new world ordering: because bipolar competition was always of much more interest and theoretical significance to neorealists than to Realists, the latter are unlikely to find as much novelty in the present system as are the former. To recognize the passing of the Cold War is to recognize "that there may yet be other deep conflicts in the international system."14 These conflicts, moreover, extend beyond the ken of interstate rivalry, competition, and war, to include the long underrated problem of civil war, an old phenomenon hardly covered by the empty label of a "new world order."15

Hence, while it seems axiomatic that new facts should require new theories in international relations, it is not axiomatic that this a sensible creed for international theorists. Innovative concepts, while often useful and always intended to illuminate, tend to have the opposite effect when promoted in a climate of theoretical turmoil and dissensus. Of course it is under precisely these conditions that innovation and its perennial sidekick, "faddism," is most likely to prosper, and under precisely these conditions that present international debates are conducted. In text after text, new facts, issues, actors, processes, and eras are identified or proclaimed, and new or revised theories, theorems and models offered. The only


14 Roberts, p. 518.

15 Ibid., p. 514.
semblance of consensus in this otherwise diverse discourse is a disenchantment with political Realism and its theoretical offspring, neorealism.

Amid the turmoil, however, is evidence that a paradigmatic succession may be underway in international theory. The widespread conviction that Realist analysis is, at best, severely limited and, at worst, wholly anachronistic has encouraged much theoretical activity. But a substantial number of scholars remain enamored of the power of Realism to organize and render coherent the welter of facts/variables that define international politics, even while they reject or seek to modify Realism's normative claims. These scholars have generated a series of analytical perspectives and concepts that can be grouped under the label of neoliberalism, a broad perspective that: (1). accepts Realist premises about sovereign political entities; (2). embraces the neorealist conception of system structure, but; (3). explores the bases for cooperation between states and; (4). construes the scope for such collaboration more widely than Realists of either the traditional or structural variety.

The Development of Neorealism

Neoliberalism can be understood as an extension of neorealist theory which can in turn be depicted as an extension of Realism. It is part of an ongoing adaptation, a sort of scientific overhaul, of classical Realist scholarship. This at first sounds odd, as Realism, in contrast to idealism, clearly exhibited pretension to a hard-headed science of foreign policy. But however scientific their intent, Realists like Hans Morgenthau failed to separate international politics analytically from its domestic counterpart. Even while recognizing state behaviour as a function partly of its position relative to other states, Morgenthau never broke with the methodological individualism of Hobbesian political theory. State action (political behaviour)
remained grounded ultimately in — and was a function of — human nature. Neorealism by contrast builds on the idea that state action is both a cause of, and reaction to, the system of states. The state thus produces, and is in turn produced by, an international structure.

In shifting the basis of explanation from the foreign policy of the state to the level of the international system, neorealism can claim to "systematize political Realism into a rigourous, deductive systemic theory of international politics." Not everyone agrees with the characterization of this process as progressive, least of all Richard Ashley, who describes neorealism's scientific "redemption" of Realist scholarship as ironically inferior to the subtle, interpretive, and self-reflective tradition of classical Realism that it seeks to displace. Nevertheless, there are many positivistically-minded scholars that, while critical of neorealism, share its interest in the development of a parsimonious international theory. Robert Keohane, who eschews the neorealist tag, typifies a burgeoning scholarship that is in sympathy with its theoretical objectives: "I admire the clarity and parsimony of Kenneth Waltz's systemic theory (neorealism) without subscribing to many of the inferences that he draws from it." Indeed, it is taken largely for granted in


19 Keohane, "Realism, Neorealism and the Study of World Politics," in Neorealism and its Critics, p. 25-26, ftn. 7.
mainstream international theory that neorealism extends, and improves, the classical tradition of Realist scholarship.

Sympathy with neorealism's broad theoretical objectives does not always translate into support for its inferences. But that which makes neorealism attractive to scholars of international politics is also that which makes them reluctant ultimately to embrace it, as the strengths and weaknesses of neorealism seem alike to derive from its "clarity and parsimony." Neorealism, while satisfying a perceived need for scientific rigour, obtains its impressive explanatory and predictive power at the expense of "real-world" description. It satisfies a felt need to come to terms with complexity, and to discern pattern and meaning in the seemingly chaotic realm of world politics. But, by definition and design, neorealism cannot satisfy the need for contextual subtlety, interpretation, and detail. The systematization of the insights of classical Realism seems paradoxically to cement the scientific status of international politics while simultaneously precluding detailed analysis of its substantive political issues.

It is only natural that, once in doubt, the process of Realist adaptation begun by neorealism should itself give way to another set of "improvements" -- to another "new" approach. But the cardinal flaw of neorealism is perceived widely to be its excessive parsimony, and there are many logically discrepant forms that improvement on a generic weakness can take. The specific analytical gaps in neorealism may be many and varied, as Keohane's widely read collection of critical assessments on the perspective attests. Nevertheless disenchantment with

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20 The "charge," as Buzan puts it, "is not that Waltz's theory is wholly wrong (though bits of it are disputed) but that it is incomplete." Barry Buzan, Charles Jones, and Richard Little, ed., The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism Reconsidered, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 7.

21 The reference is of course to Neorealism and its Critics. To its most strident critics, however, neorealism is congenitally flawed, and its only constructive impact on international scholarship is exemplary: how not to do international theory.
neorealism can be linked increasingly to its inability to account adequately for, or to take account of, two broad sets of changes or "new" facts in international relations: (1) the rise of complex interdependence, and; (2). the rise, and increasing prominence, of international regimes.22

These approaches together form the core of neoliberalism, regarded by many as a successor paradigm to Realism/neorealism. But these concepts, while employed widely to supplement Realist international theory, cannot be understood simply as a reaction to it ex post facto. Complex interdependence in fact predates neorealism as an explicit analytical framework, though it arose principally in response to the challenge of classical Realism.23 Also, while distinct analytically from Realism, these concepts are compatible with it, a fact not lost on neoliberals, some of whom seek to marry the insights of the former with those of its rival perspectives.24 On balance, however -- and with some simplification -- neoliberalism challenges key Realist assumptions, attempts to transcend neorealism's static categories, and emphasizes the increasingly cooperative character of world politics, stressing the role of new processes, institutions, and actors in that process.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism, like most broad terms, has become a confusing designation. Theoretical labels are deceptive at the best of times, but especially troublesome in an


23 Ibid.

atmosphere of profound division, which is precisely the condition in which neologisms tend to proliferate. One difficulty with "neoliberalism" is that the term is not employed consistently, even by its author,25 but is used synonymously with terms like the "new liberal institutionalism," "neoliberal systemic theory," or "modified neorealist theory."26 This problem derives partly from neoliberalism's dubious paradigmatic status, partly from its diverse intellectual heritage, and partly from its incorporation of three distinct analytical approaches: complex interdependence, international regimes, and hegemonic stability theory. Compounding the problem is some ambiguity over neoliberalism's status vis-à-vis other perspectives or paradigms. Joseph Grieco, for example, defines neoliberalism as the latest in a series of "major" liberal-inspired challenges to Realism, listed chronologically as: (1). functionalist integration theory (1940s-1950s); (2). neofunctionalist regional integration theory (1950s-1960s); (3). interdependence theory (1970s) and; (4). neoliberalism (1980s-present).27 But it is far from clear that neoliberals, whatever their indebtedness to existing theoretical traditions, see themselves as attempting to challenge Realism. On the contrary, the theorists described by Grieco as neoliberal do not challenge neorealism so much as they seek to demonstrate that neorealism is, on its own terms, compatible with a significant degree of international cooperation. While Grieco regards neoliberalism as rooted in the general and evolving tradition of liberalism, others seem justified in describing


27 Grieco, pp. 485-486.
neoliberalism as a "variant of Realism."\textsuperscript{28} It is thus not always clear who or what a neoliberal is, or to what extent a neoliberal approach is different from a liberal or Realist orientation.

Like its related concepts of complex interdependence and international regimes, neoliberalism defies precise definition, but clearly occupies an intellectual space somewhere between neorealism and liberal institutionalism. While a slippery designation, it can be described as a set of propositions that: (1). retains major neorealist premises about international politics, including the belief "that anarchy constrains the willingness of states to cooperate," but; (2). shifts neorealism's analytical focus from inter-state conflict toward genuinely cooperative patterns in inter-state behaviour.\textsuperscript{29}

Related Concepts: Complex Interdependence

Interdependence tends to be defined as a process over which states have little or no control, though it is in large measure a product of their own making -- an unintended consequence of policy measures undertaken individually, but that effect the states system as a whole. Though such consequences may consist only of mutual sensitivities, interdependence is employed widely as a way of describing what occurs when rational self-interested behaviour by individual actors has a destructive


\textsuperscript{29} Grieco, p. 486.
collective impact. It is postulated that the existence of interdependency dynamics in a widening range of functional issue-areas does not merely constrain the policy efficacy of states, but forces them to pursue collective responses to these collective problems. Hence, while the term lacks precise definition, interdependence refers widely to a range of transnational policy problems that are beyond the control of any single actor.

Because interdependence seems severely to challenge the ability of states to exercise meaningful control over their fates, it also tends to undermine Realist explanations of, and expectations, for international relations. Such a conclusion is supported by numerous analyses of "the dynamics of interdependence," and is especially strong in the work of Andrew Scott. Scott views states as congenitally unresponsive to the "new" phenomena of interdependence, blinded by their habitual preoccupation with national interests to the realities of a tightly interconnected world. In what he terms, curiously, the "pre-interdependent world," states were more or less free to pursue their national self-interest with little regard for global outcomes: "because global problems were uncommon in earlier centuries, and then usually went unrecognized, analysts had little experience in thinking about them." Hence, the explosion of technological, scientific, and other changes fueling the dynamics of modern interdependence calls for "a rate of adaptation on

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30 This version of vulnerability interdependence, for example, is well developed in issues of ecology, where it is termed the "tragedy of the commons." See Kegley and Wittkopf, p. 587 and, for an in depth discussion of the concept, Marvin S. Soroos, "The Tragedy of the Commons in Global Perspective," in Charles W. Kegley and Eugene R. Wittkopf, The Global Agenda: Issues and Perspectives, 3rd. ed., (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1992), pp. 388-401.


32 Ibid., p. ix.
the part of societies, institutions, and individuals that cannot be satisfied."33 For Scott, interdependence confronts the states system, and humanity, with a seemingly intractable dilemma: it forces us to come to terms with new global requisites, even while we have little comprehension of their dynamics, and no administrative/policy instruments suitable to such a world.

But interdependence need not be treated as a recipe for systemic crisis and collapse. While Scott offers no way out of the policy dilemmas that interdependence raises for states, it is more commonly argued that "the pressures of interdependence may propel the creation of regimes in widening areas of international conduct to facilitate states' control over their common fates."34 This neoliberal argument rests on the assumption that the dynamics of interdependence -- while they do constrain traditional state behaviour -- do not inhibit, but rather encourage, new intellectual and institutional responses.

Interdependence is also an old international concept that can be traced to Adam Smith, Rousseau, and Machiavelli. In its traditional usage, it tended to refer to "international relationships that would be costly to break."35 Interdependence in this sense referred to mutual vulnerabilities, and was developed theoretically only as an adjunct to broader perspectives. From the late 1960s onward the meaning and theoretical status of the concept has undergone considerable change, and the traditional notion of vulnerability interdependence has had to vie with that of "sensitivity" interdependence, an orientation that stresses "mutual effects" over vulnerabilities, and is accompanied typically by the assumption that "social

33 Ibid., pp. 62-63.

34 Kegley and Wittkopf, World Politics, p. 33.

transactions . . . are essentially harmonious and will likely lead to better state relations." These different usages are consistent with the traditional realist and idealist cleavage that defines international scholarship, demonstrating that interdependence is not the exclusive conceptual property of either perspective.

But by the early 1970s the notion of interdependence was emerging as a distinct analytical perspective on international relations, though adequately defining it continued to be hampered by its vulnerability and sensitivity manifestations, and by wider debates about the status of the discipline. Nevertheless, it is now necessary to distinguish interdependence in its ordinary usage from its deployment in a "new" approach to international relations. The principal author's and expositors of "complex interdependence," Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, employed the concept for identifying and addressing perceived weaknesses in a Realist understanding of international politics. But, like the general orientation of neoliberalism into which it would evolve, complex interdependence was based not on a rejection of Realism, but on an exploration of "the conditions under which (the) assumptions of Realism were sufficient or needed to be supplemented by a more complex model of change."  

36 Ibid., p. 491.

37 It has been suggested that, in recent years, interdependence has been developed to provide it the "analytical utility and conceptual content useful for the development of international relations theory." Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi, eds., *International Relations Theory*, (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p. 209.


Charles Kegley and Eugene Wittkopf reduce interdependence to three primary intellectual contributions and challenges to international theory. First, while often accepting implicitly or explicitly that states remain key units of international theory, they are subject to "penetration" from a host of processes and developments beyond the scope of foreign-economic policy, and must vie for power and influence with other (nonstate) actors. Second, interdependence blurs the conventional Realist distinctions between both "high" and "low," and foreign and domestic, policy issues, casting doubt on the salience of Realism's security dominant issue-hierarchy. Put glibly, "guns" and "butter" are no longer separated, or traded, easily. Third, military force is an increasingly "irrelevant or unimportant" policy instrument.40 So constituted, interdependence has an obvious affinity and intellectual debt to liberal institutionalism, as its increasingly close association with international organizations and regimes attests. It is thus misleading to suggest that interdependence is a neoliberall concept, and more appropriate to view neoliberalism as an elaborated form of complex interdependence.

Despite its paradigmatic pretensions, however, complex interdependence seemed less a credible successor to Realism than a set of new observations on some old problems.41 If interdependence marked a new paradigm, it did so only because the inter-paradigm debate had so watered down the term that it had come to represent little more than a synonym for perspective or approach. It is only in recent years, and with benefit of hindsight, that interdependence has seemed to find a paradigmatic home -- or at least half way house -- in neoliberalism. But interdependence, like neoliberalism's other constitutive concepts, remains contested, or rather its implications continue to be a matter of debate, with the

40 Kegley and Wittkopf, World Politics, pp. 31-32.

41 See Holsti, The Dividing Discipline, p. 4.
disputants divided now, as always, over whether increased interdependence can be expected to issue in more or less cooperation. Yet the very asking of this question marks an important thematic shift for international relations, and complex interdependence has been instrumental in raising issues of cooperation to theoretical prominence. As such, interdependence is but a variation on old themes in international scholarship.

It is beyond the scope and purpose of this thesis to undertake a detailed examination of the internally diverse tradition of liberal international theory. The gist of the thesis at any rate is to demonstrate the perennial expression of wide and irreconcilable philosophical differences in international scholarship. It is my specific intent to reconceptualize and/or recapture a simple but profound antithesis in international thought, and to avoid becoming mired in an inter-paradigm debate. Just how many paradigms are at work in international relations seems a pointless question, and one that is unlikely ever conclusively to be answered.42 Proceeding in this general fashion, liberalism is in close affinity to the precepts of classical idealism, and interdependence -- despite its paradigmatic pretensions and its associations with Realism -- continues in this idealist vane.43 The notion of complex interdependence is taken to heart by liberal scholars precisely because its speaks their idealist language, and "captures much of the essence of their view of world politics."44


43 Please note that I am here referring to interdependence as a distinct analytical orientation and not in its ordinary usage. Interdependence, in the sense of mutual vulnerabilities, is of course very much a part of Realist scholarship.

44 Viotti and Kauppi, p. 209.
Because neoliberal interpretations of international politics have deliberately obscured the conceptual boundaries of Realism and liberalism, the above point might be disputed. Neoliberalism has not merely embraced the concept, but has done much to popularize and shape it. But despite its neoliberal and (some might suggest) corrupted adolescence, interdependence was born of classical liberal arguments about comparative advantage, economic specialization, and exchange, and spent its formative years in the distinctively liberal milieu of integration theory.45 While linked often to "new types of phenomena in international politics,"46 and itself viewed as a novel fact of international life, interdependence is a relatively old idea, if one whose time may finally have come.

Current concern with interdependence is especially indebted to the earlier attempt of integration theorists to describe and explain political unification among states. Indeed, integration theory has played a decisive role in the development of liberal international theory generally, and traces of it echo clearly in neoliberalism and its cognate approaches. As Donald Puchala puts it: "... integration studies were precursors to transnational and transgovernmental relations, to interdependence studies, and to the revitalization of the study of international organization presently so apparent."47 Again, however, neoliberalism is a corruption of the functionalist, neofunctionalist, and world federalist streams that together constitute integration theory. Neoliberalism retains the integrative convictions and logic of the latter


46 Holsti, The Dividing Discipline, p. 4.

47 Puchala, "Integration Theory....," p. 150.
approach but, prior to the recent acceleration of integrative forces in Europe at least, has emphasized less dramatic and politically ambitious forms of interstate cooperation. 48 But neoliberalism, as the term suggests, has become the chief repository of liberal arguments about interdependence, and shares the idealist conviction of both the classical economists and the integrationists, that conflicts of interest between states tend to be reduced by greater levels of interaction. The validity of this assertion needs to be explored.

Related Concepts: International regimes

The primary, but by no means exclusive, collective response by states to the challenge of interdependence has been the creation of international regimes. As a result, the interdependence and regime literatures have tended to overlap. The creation of regimes is also associated widely with the presence and active encouragement of a hegemonic power, adding theories of hegemonic stability to the lexicon of neoliberalism. Because these inter-related terms remain linked to analytically distinct approaches to international relations, some confusion inevitably attaches to deployment of the neoliberal label. In recent years, however, regime analysis has become the theoretical flagship of neoliberalism, and neoliberal assessments of regime creation, maintenance, and dynamics have all but eclipsed

48 Not surprisingly, the depth and pace of economic integration in Europe, and the prospect for fundamental political integration, has rekindled interest in functionalist and neofunctionalist theories, leading some to suggest that these were never exaggerated in their inferences, but premature in their expectations. See David Long, "From World Peace to International Organization: The Development of Functionalism as a Theory of International Relations," Paper Presented to the Canadian Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Carleton University, Ottawa, 6-8 June 1993, pp. 1-25.
rival understandings of the concept.\textsuperscript{49} In this sense regime, while one of several defining approaches within the rubric of neoliberalism, is a concept \textit{primus inter pares}.

The rise of regimes seems directly to challenge the Realist assumption that "international institutions are unable to mitigate anarchy's constraining effects on interstate cooperation."\textsuperscript{50} Waltz's neorealist assessment of the role of international institutions in world politics is as follows:

International organizations do exist, and in ever-growing numbers. Supranational agents able to act effectively, however, either themselves acquire some of the attributes and capabilities of states ... or they soon reveal their inability to act in important ways except with the support, or at least the acquiescence, of the principal states concerned with the matters at hand.\textsuperscript{51}

Absent in this conception of international institutions is any scope for their ability to act as autonomous or semi-autonomous agents in world politics. The proliferation, and seeming empowerment, of international institutions and regimes

\textsuperscript{49} Regimes can be accommodated within a Realist model of international politics. They can, for example, be imposed by states powerful and determined enough to sustain them, and compliance with regimes may likewise serve the interests of a 'lesser' power. Robert O. Keohane, \textit{After Hegemony}, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 71. But the definition of regime popularized by Krasner, while leaving considerable "room for amplification and interpretation," states explicitly that the mere presence of norms in international politics is not sufficient grounds for invoking the regime concept; actor expectations must "converge" if we are to suspect the 'presence' of a regime. Jock A. Finlayson and Mark W. Zacher, "The GATT and the regulation of trade barriers: regime dynamics and functions," in \textit{International Regimes}, p. 275.

\textsuperscript{50} Grieco, p. 485.

in recent years -- along with moderate levels of inter-state cooperation -- has thus enlivened existing critiques of Realism.

There have been a number of attempts to formulate a definition of regime, but none has been more widely endorsed than that offered by Stephen Krasner: "principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actor's expectations converge in a given issue-area."52 This "new" approach to the old problem of interstate cooperation is justified on the grounds that conventional theories cannot apprehend the increasingly complex and subtle realities of international organization. The institutionalization of world politics is in fact a well established theme in international theory and can be traced to the assumptions, goals, and ideals of both the classical liberal and Grotian traditions.53 Nevertheless, the regime approach is predicated on two basic assumptions: (1) that existing theories (usually read Realism) understate greatly the extent to which international behaviour is institutionalized, and; (2) that the prevailing understandings of international organization lack "any systematic conception" of the core problem of international governance.54 Realism, in particular, sets up an exaggerated dichotomy between the competitive zero-sum realm of international anarchy, and the authoritative realm of domestic politics; this model seems "overdrawn in explaining cooperative behavior among the advanced industrial states" and leads to an understanding of international cooperation tied too closely to the study of "formal organizations." What international theory is missing, and what regime


theory purports to supply, is an analysis of state behaviour that is "regulated or
organized in a broader sense."

But the regime concept, and thus the neoliberal approach that it so deeply
informs, defies precise definition. Clearly it refers to institutionalized patterns or
habits of cooperation in given issue-areas, but the term tends to be used very loosely.
As Arthur Stein puts it, "scholars have fallen into using the term "regime" so
disparately and with such little precision that it ranges from an umbrella for all
international relations to little more than a synonym for international
organizations." Indeed, Krasner's emphasis on "principles, norms, rules, and
decision-making procedures" conflates conceptually and definitionally distinct --
and even contested -- terms into a single concept or definition. Regimes have thus
been described as "everything from a patterned set of interactions... to any form of
multilateral coordination, cooperation, or collaboration ... to formal machinery...."
The concept, as Susan Strange puts it, "is a fertile source of discussion simply
because people mean different things when they use it." Hence, in an important
sense, regime identification is less a function of empirical work -- though numerous
regime studies exist -- than a function of definition. The upshot is that regimes are

55 Stephan Haggard and Beth A. Simmons, "Theories of International

56 Arthur A. Stein, "Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic
World," in International Regimes, p. 115.

57 Martin Rochester as cited in Katzenstein, p. 15. Oran Young describes
regimes vaguely as "social institutions" and suggests that they need not be
accompanied by "explicit organizational arrangements." More vaguely still he
describes regimes as "patterns of behavior or practice around which expectations
converge." Oran R. Young, "Regime Dynamics: the Rise and Fall of International
Regimes," in International Regimes, p. 93.

58 Susan Strange, "Cave! Hie Dragones: A Critique of Regime Analysis," in
International Regimes, pp. 342-343.
defined vaguely as occupying an "ontological space somewhere between the level of formal institutions ... and systemic factors," and neoliberalism is defined vaguely as occupying an intellectual space somewhere between neorealism and liberal institutionalism.

The relationship between neoliberalism and Realism is ambiguous, and the majority of regime analyses to date has done little to clarify, and much to muddy, the issue. Is regime theory an adjunct of Realism? Many regime proponents embrace a structural theory of international politics (a euphemism for neorealism), but emphasize a range of issues and institutions that fit uneasily into a Realist framework. This leads Krasner to coin the curious and ungainly label of "modified structural Realist regime theory," which he then applies -- with varying degrees of modification! -- to the analyses of numerous regime theorists. Things get murkier still when Krasner employs the label Grotian as a synonym for liberal, and fails adequately to distinguish a Grotian orientation to international politics from a "modified structural" approach. Indeed, the former term is misused, and the latter label seems wholly redundant; Grotianism is a distinct orientation to international politics precisely because it is a theoretical via media to the Realist world of discord, and the liberal world of collaboration. Regime theory does appear to have a strong intellectual affinity to Grotianism, striving as it does to conceptualize the bases for,

59 Kratochwil and Ruggie, p. 760. Haggard and Simmons put the same point somewhat differently, suggesting that regime theory is an attempt to reconcile idealist and Realist perspectives on international relations.

60 Krasner, for example, views his assessment of regime creation, change, and impact as compatible with a Realist explanation of international politics. He attributes a similar orientation to Robert Keohane, Arthur Stein, Robert Jervis, John Ruggie, Charles Lipson, and Benjamin Cohen. Stephen Krasner, "Structural Causes...," pp. 1-2.

61 Ibid., p. viii.
and to understand the dynamics of cooperation under anarchic conditions. Realism, on the other hand, offers little in the way of a theory of regimes, but does provide a means to explain them away. If "interests in a given-issue area" can be deduced consistently from "power and situational constraints," Realism is vindicated and regime theory is largely irrelevant. But if this is so only infrequently, Realism is challenged by, and compares poorly to, a theoretical orientation that stresses cooperation over conflict. What then is the logic or utility of a "modified Realist" theory of regimes?

The "modified Realist" tag derives from an assumption, pervasive in the regime literature, that Realists can explain regime creation, but -- once created -- cannot account adequately for regime behaviour, nor do they anticipate the growth of regimes into autonomous or semi-autonomous actors in international politics. Regimes may thus "assume a life of their own," outlasting and impacting the national power attributes to which they owe their creation. But, as Krasner observes, most of the authors that exhibit this "modified Realist" approach to regimes are "skeptical of the extent to which regimes can persist in the face of alterations in underlying national power capabilities." A "modified Realist" apparently views regimes as, at best, one small step removed from what Krasner describes as the basic causal variable of international politics: state power. The term "modified Realist" does not, therefore, add anything to our understanding of regime theory, and might better apply to the set of authors described by Krasner as Grotian.

62 Haggard and Simmons, pp. 512-513.

63 Krasner, "Structural Causes...," passim.

64 Krasner, Preface to International Regimes, p. viii.
Related Concepts: Hegemonic Stability

It is ironic that regimes, understood popularly as one of the "new facts" of international politics that has made life for Realists uncomfortable, are linked closely to factors long considered significant by Realists, and more closely still to the concept of international system structure cherished by the neorealists. The most parsimonious, common, and explicitly Realist explanation of regime creation is the theory of hegemonic stability. Proponents of this view argue that the presence of a hegemon or dominant power may be sufficient to explain the degree of order, stability, and security often discernible in an anarchic state system. Regime creation and maintenance is thus linked "to a dominant power's existence and the weakening of regimes to a waning hegemon."65

Hegemonic leadership may be coercive and based wholly on a self-interested concern for security, or the hegemon may have "an independent interest in supplying public goods regardless of the contributions of others."66 The Bretton-Woods system of regimes in the postwar era, for instance, is acknowledged widely as the result of US attempts "to mold the international order to suit (its) interest and purpose."67 Hence, international regimes can be seen as embedded within a

65 Haggard and Simmons., p. 500.

66 It is, as Kindleberger suggests, "often difficult to distinguish dominance from leadership in international economic relations." Charles Kindleberger, "Dominance and Leadership in the International Economy," International Studies Quarterly, 25, No. 2 (June 1991), p. 1. See Haggard and Simmons (pp. 502-503 in particular) for a fuller discussion of the distinction between the malign and benign versions of the hegemonic stability thesis.

structure of state power consistent fully with Realist explanations. This follows even if we accept the proposition that regimes might assume a "life of their own" and, thus, "express only incompletely the interests and purposes of the hegemonic power"; contrary to Krasner's suggestion that such a development challenges a Realist or neorealist explanation of regimes, "this internal dynamic of international regimes makes it possible for the static categories of structural Realist analysis to engage the changes that are occurring in different issue areas and geographical arenas in world politics."68

Hegemonic stability theory does not seem to have taken us much beyond Waltz's neorealist claim that "supranational agents" matter only when they receive "the support, or... acquiescence, of the principal states concerned with the matters at hand."69 Why then has it become an integral part of what some now define as the neoliberal paradigm? Are interdependence, regime theory, and hegemonic stability not simply auxiliary Realist concepts, cobbled together under the new banner of neoliberalism? The only thing liberal about this "new" perspective seems to be its title. None of the concepts associated with neoliberalism is novel or exclusively Realist, but their almost exclusive association with this Realist successor paradigm has tended to eclipse and/or homogenize other orientations. Ironically, the primary intellectual casualty of neoliberalism is a genuinely liberal understanding of international politics. The term liberalism has all but disappeared from international texts, with those aspects of this internally diverse tradition most compatible with Realism siphoned off by the neoliberals, and its most distinct elements renamed Grotian.

68 Katzenstein, p. 15.

69 See footnote 51 above and corresponding block quotation by Waltz.
Neoliberalism and International Theory

There is in neoliberalism an implicit and explicit agenda to reconcile liberal and Realist international theory. This goal is very much in evidence in Realist-inspired regime theory. Since the logic of this synthetic orientation is assessed in the remaining chapters, what remains of the present chapter will concentrate on neoliberalism's general impact on international political theory. Overall, this impact can be described as negative.

Neoliberalism all but usurps liberal international theory, dressing it up in Realist garb, and playing down its essential progressivism for the sake of verisimilitude. And neoliberalism, embracing Realism only half-heartedly, does not marshal fully the theoretical powers of Realism to which it is indebted and attracted. The upshot is that both perspectives are eviscerated by this "new paradigm," to the general detriment of international political theory. But, because international theory is so much more than a battle over paradigms, neoliberalism's greatest damage to the enterprise resides in its blurring of the field's distinctive traditional perspectives. Realism and liberalism are not merely discrete orientations, but, respectively, theoretical approximations of the field's foundational antithesis of realism and idealism.

The term neoliberal is, in deference to its twin muses, a confluence of the terms neorealist and liberal. But practitioners of this new approach have tended to rely more on its "neo" aspects than its "liberal" ones, merely adding normative emphases culled from the latter to the theoretical framework of the former. This is unsurprising given the long-standing theoretical centrality of Realism, the parsimony of neorealism, and an enduring -- if shaken -- belief in the necessity and power of paradigms. Assuming for the sake of argument that international theory
can and should be conceived as a positivist social science, liberalism seems an unpromising place to start and might, in modern parlance, be described as paradigmatically-challenged. Precisely because it is a rich, protean intellectual tradition, liberalism has not received "systematic presentation" in international texts. Impatience with liberalism's generic qualities thus accounts for neoliberalism's embrace of neorealism, while impatience with neorealism's normative prescriptions and inferences accounts for the incorporation of some liberal insights. Hence, the inauspicious point of departure for neoliberalism is its ingestion of two suspect perspectives.

Having imbued their quasi-liberal orientation with the powers of a comprehensive structural theory, the neoliberals seem better able than orthodox liberals, Realists, or neorealists to conceptualize and explain the increasingly collaborative character of world politics. But neoliberal analyses, and those concerning the core concept of regime in particular, are curiously one-sided, and depend almost wholly on hegemonic governance as the structural determinant of the creation and maintenance of institutionalized systems of cooperation. While most empirical studies suggest that regimes are more "easily established by hegemons," regime creation might simply be a product of coordination among a small group of states, and can be linked to structural characteristics other than hegemony. Indeed, neoliberals all but ignore the structural characteristic of bipolarity as a possible contributing or permissive cause of regime formation. Regime analyses seldom acknowledge the theoretical significance of bipolarity.

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71 Katzenstein, p. 16.
despite the distinctly intra-alliance character of many international regimes. The proliferation of international institutions in the immediate postwar period -- the empirical staple of regime theory and neoliberalism -- has been "guided" by, and reflective of, Anglo-American values and interests, and has been bolstered by an unusually high degree of ideological convergence and a predisposition to cooperation. The essential causes for this now lapsed historical peculiarity were: (1). an almost universal belief among advanced industrial states that illiberal economic policies had helped lead to the Second World War, and; (2). the palpable military and ideological threat that emanated from the Soviet Union in the aftermath of that conflict. Nevertheless, all but the most recent developments in modern international politics and theory have been influenced by the immediate postwar structure of the international system.

Because the historical frame of reference for modern international theory has been dominated by the pax britannica and the pax americana, the substantive core of most regime studies has been limited to economic relations between states within

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these hegemonic structures. Theories of collaboration under anarchy have thus often been denied access to empirical test, as cooperation -- between advanced industrial states at least -- has largely been a functional or pragmatic problem of coordination between broadly like-minded actors. These historical realities have tended to imbue regime theory with an essentially voluntarist logic of interstate collaboration, and to mask less consensual aspects of international "cooperation." This blindspot is hardly surprising, as the liberal tradition that most regime analyses seek consciously to extend has never sought to concern itself with "what sustains coercion, exploitation, and injustice." But, unless it is to be understood as a partial theory of international politics -- concerned solely with how to foster harmony and progress -- a genuinely liberal theory must concern itself with all dimensions of international politics. To date, neoliberal analyses have done little to demonstrate that the new facts of international politics are not embedded in enduring and familiar politico-military structures.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced neoliberalism and its cognate approaches, situating it in recent debate about the utility of Realist international theory in light of allegedly threatening "new" facts. The debate between neorealists and neoliberals is conducted in almost blithe disregard of the philosophical differences that I have argued above differentiate genuine Realist and liberal approaches to international politics. Also, while neoliberalism has attempted to shore up its credentials as a

73 Zacher and Matthew, p. 140.

74 Ibid. See also James Keeley, "Toward a Foucauldian Analysis of Regimes," International Organization, 44 (1) (Winter 1990), p. 48 and passim.
successor paradigm to Realism, the concepts of international regimes, hegemonic stability, and interdependence that define this emergent perspective are not its exclusive preserve.

The following chapter, focusing narrowly on the concept of regime and its use in self-described neoliberal analyses of world politics, argues that neoliberals tend to blur distinctions between Realists, neorealists, neoliberals, and liberals; miss unequivocal philosophical differences in genuinely liberal and Realist approaches; and fail on their own theoretical terms to "progressively modify" neorealism.75

75 The concept of "progressive modification" is Keohane's, and derives from his understanding and attempted application of Lakatosian principles for progressive analytical shifts to the perspective of neorealism. It is a conception of progress that implicitly links the viability of international relations as a discipline to its ability to usher forth strong and adaptable scientific paradigms, and stands in marked contrast to the conception of discipline that I wish to develop in this thesis.
CHAPTER FOUR
IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES: NEOLIBERALISM, REGIMES, AND THE DUBIOUS LOGIC OF SYNTHESIS

Introduction

This chapter both presupposes and argues that intelligible discussion of the status of international theory's contending perspectives cannot be divorced from irreconcilable differences regarding the proximate purpose of international theory, and that the perennial tension between idealist and realist versions of thought are alive and well in the seemingly technical discourse of much recent scholarship. By this I do not mean à la Stanley Hoffmann, Hans Morgenthau, K. J. Holsti, and others that theoretical debates are meaningless in the absence of a general theory of international politics, but that arcane debates are in some sense inevitable in the absence of a disciplinary overseer with clear and undisputed jurisdiction.

The chapter focuses on representative neoliberal theorists, examining critically their attempt to "progressively modify" Kenneth Waltz's neorealist theory of international politics. It argues that this project is misguided not merely in terms of the irreconcilable differences described in chapter two, but is also misguided on its own theoretical terms.
Problems in the "Disciplining" and Classification of International Theory: The "New" Liberal Approaches

As David Long notes, "many of the theories of international relations originate before the advent of the discipline of international relations."¹ Thus, when we adopt a tradition as a theory of international relations, invariably we also appropriate and change it. As aspiring value-neutral scientists, for example, we might aim to expunge ideological overtones, to remove vestiges of superstition, and to eschew naive presuppositions in favour of "hard facts." The attempt to harness political philosophies, historical treatises, and other "pre-theoretical" works to the yoke of discipline also cannot avoid simplification. The "disciplining" of international theories, as Long puts it, demands an analytical rigour that exacts as its price the subtlety, richness, and breadth of our ancestral works.²

While the simplification, and appropriation, of traditional international scholarship seems a necessary precursor to a discipline of international theory (in the usual scientific sense), not everyone agrees that it is desirable intellectually. Richard Ashley, for example, castigates modern Realists on the grounds that their attempt progressively to adapt their foundational tradition issues perversely in the loss of "classical Realism's rich insights into international political practice...."³ But Realists are merely the most visible and influential of the theoretical pruners at


² Ibid., p. 2.

work in modern international scholarship. Arguably, they are more adept at this craft than others, but this is probably a function of Realism's traditional parsimony. The point is that while Realism may be better suited to analytical streamlining than its traditional counterparts, its intellectual rivals have proven to be no less enamoured of the power of scientific rigour.

As a general proposition, liberals have had more difficulty than Realists in distilling their very broad intellectual tradition into a theory of international relations. Though a liberal theory of international politics can be said to exist, it has nowhere been "set forth in a systematic fashion." Nevertheless, suggest Mark Zacher and Richard Matthew, "a study of writers associated with the liberal international tradition indicates that it has several central theses":

(1). "international relations are gradually being transformed such that they promote greater human freedom by establishing conditions of peace, prosperity, and justice"

(2). "central to to the realization of greater human freedom is the growth of international cooperation"

(3). "international relations are being transformed by a process of modernization (that)... has introduced or enhanced the possibility of a dramatic improvement in the moral character and material welfare of humankind."

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4 Ferguson and Mansbach suggest, for example, that Realism is less a theory than a "self-contained syllogism." See Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach, The Elusive Quest, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), p. 79.


6 Ibid., pp. 109-110.
But these "common threads" form rather a weak criterion for a liberal taxonomy, reflecting as they do a very general set of predispositions about the desirability of material, political, and intellectual progress, while encompassing wide scope for disagreement over how these ends might be attained. Liberal international theory thus consists largely as an assemblage of "divergent strands"; it is less a theory than a collection of theories. This is hardly surprising, given that liberalism is more like an idea -- "the 'progressive outlook of any age'" -- than a scientifically acceptable and testable set of principles. This by no means precludes the development of liberal-inspired empirical theories, an array of which are canvassed and systematized by Zacher and Matthew. On balance, however, it seems that we lack a "canonical description of liberalism" simply because liberalism defies canonical description.

The internal diversity of liberalism is a double edged sword. On the one hand, it has engendered a "multifaceted" body of theories that collectively have helped to advance our understanding of world politics in a wide range of issue areas. On the other hand, however, the multiplicity of research agendas and normative concerns compassed within the broad ambit of liberalism conspires against the construction of firm taxonomic boundaries. Liberal international theory thus resembles a set of moving targets, all of which express the "progressive outlook" of liberalism, but none of which wholly captures its essence. Hence, we should not be surprised to find that some liberal orientations may be more or less amenable to analytical streamlining, and that some approaches may be more or less similar to, or compatible with, other traditions.

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7 Ibid., p. 113.

8 Michael Doyle, as cited in Ibid., p. 107.
While doubtful that philosophical and theoretical principles can be subjected to quantification, liberalism's cognate approaches are routinely judged as more or less liberal. Such measurement hinges on the extent to which scholars approximate, or depart from, the core of international liberalism, defined by Zacher and Matthew as follows:

the view that international politics is "about the changing interests of the inhabitants of states (or other entities) and that the underlying forces of change are creating opportunities for increased cooperation and a greater realization of peace, welfare, and justice." 9

This core, however, seems to derive from a tautological equation of progress to change, thus missing the more coercive aspects of world politics identified by Realists and Marxists. 10 But as Zacher and Matthew point out, a more nuanced understanding of liberalism reveals an intellectual tradition of very broad scope, and capable of housing both the sanguine observations of commentators like Bentham, Richard Cobden, Benjamin Constant, Norman Angell and Woodrow Wilson, and the relatively pessimistic insights of Locke, Rousseau, and Kant. 11 This characterization is consistent with, but arguably less broad, than K. J. Holsti's depiction of a classical tradition in international theory. 12 Nevertheless, precisely because of its breadth, the liberal tradition is a dubious candidate for a comprehensive and coherent theory of international politics, and remains a weak approach.

9 Ibid., p. 140.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
sister to Realism. Such at least would explain the perennial preoccupation of international scholars with the state of the Realist tradition, and the recent proliferation of approaches that attempt to adapt, extend, or build on the logic of Realism. Central to this trend are numerous liberal-inspired approaches, suggesting that the most expeditious route to analytical rigour for empirical liberal theory continues to reside in some form of *entente cordiale* with the Realists.

Zacher and Matthew describe the most recent manifestation of liberal international theory as "multifaceted." This is a generous assessment. The "divergent strands" of this scholarship may have done more to muddy the waters, and blur the boundaries, of international theory's traditional realist/liberal axis of contention than to reorient a crisis weary discipline. Though this is partly a function of the natural theoretical caprice unleashed by the inter-paradigm debates of the 1970s, innovation for innovation's sake has increasingly gripped the field. The familiar theoretical triumvirate of Realism, liberalism, and Marxism has yielded to a more exotic lexicon. Thus, in liberal-inspired scholarship alone we find a number of apparently distinct strands, grouped and labeled by Zacher and Matthew as follows: republican liberalism, interdependence liberalism (including

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13 Zacher and Matthew make the opposite argument, suggesting that "international scholars have not recognized" that liberalism is so pervasive in international scholarship that it may well be "the central theoretical paradigm that guides scholarship in their field." Zacher and Matthew, p. 140. I would suggest that this argument rests on a rather liberal (in the ordinary sense) conception of paradigm. Liberalism, by the author's own characterization, more resembles an ideology than a paradigm, and -- in this very general manifestation -- is an attribute of thought shared by many Realists and liberals alike. Or rather large-R-realists may well have small-l-liberal values. In this case, the pervasiveness of liberalism can scarcely be said to crowd out Realist explanations; indeed, it might better be conceptualized as the idealist alter-ego of the Realists.
commerical and military manifestations), cognitive liberalism, sociological liberalism, and institutional liberalism.\textsuperscript{14}

The diversity of these approaches is undoubted, but are they really variations on the same liberal theme? Under the rubric of interdependence liberalism, for example, we find -- with yet more labels -- the grotian theorists of the "English school."\textsuperscript{15} But, as the author's themselves nearly concede, the grotian tradition -- especially in the able hands of its chief modern expositor Hedley Bull -- is in essence a more nuanced version of Realist scholarship than what one typically encounters. Similarly, a number of scholars identified by Zacher and Matthew as military liberals are in fact, empirically at least, Realists. Zacher and Matthew impute elements of military liberalism to John Lewis Gaddis and Robert Jervis, for example, on the grounds that the latter scholars posit the existence of a military security regime.\textsuperscript{16} But the outcomes described by Gaddis and Jervis are related very closely to mutual deterrence, thus challenging the appropriateness of invoking the regime concept. As Jervis puts it: "the fact that neither superpower attacks the other is a form of cooperation, but not a regime."\textsuperscript{17} The longevity of stable deterrence structures seems clearly to constitute a necessary condition for the emergence of a security regime, but as for sufficient conditions, Realists tend to be silent.

Similar problems of classification are identified by Joseph Grieco, for whom the principal spokespersons of a recently revitalized liberal scholarship are Robert

\textsuperscript{14} Zacher and Matthew, p. 120. To these strands we could add "regulatory liberalism," as discussed in: Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Neorealism and Neoliberalism," \textit{World Politics}, xl, No. 2 (January 1988), p. 246.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 133.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 128.

Axelrod and Robert Keohane.\textsuperscript{18} Axelrod and Keohane are identified as "neoliberals" because they emphasize "the possibilities for international cooperation" under anarchic conditions believed by Realists to preclude all but the most rudimentary forms of collaboration.\textsuperscript{19} But even while demonstrating that Realist analyses may be unduly pessimistic about the prospects for cooperation, Axelrod and Keohane do not abandon -- and in fact embrace -- explicitly Realist premises. Like others before them, Axelrod and Keohane are able persuasively to demonstrate the extent to which Realist premises are compatible with a substantial degree of international cooperation or "society."\textsuperscript{20}

If these distinctions seem trivial, it is perhaps because the paradigmatic promiscuity characteristic of much recent scholarship has eroded our traditional


\textsuperscript{19} For Axelrod, Realism's philosophical pessimism generally is warranted but overstated. Employing the familiar logic of the prisoner's dilemma, and retaining the rationalistic assumption of "egoistic" self-interest, Axelrod believes that he can transcend the limits of Realism's "single play" and zero-sum games. Axelrod proposes instead a series of games in which the values are cumulative, thereby making the "future important" and incorporating an institutional dimension into a hitherto ahistorical model. Keohane similarly begins with an unambiguously Realist premise: "states seek power and calculate their interests accordingly." But Keohane, in contrast to Axelrod, employs the concept of regime to demonstrate the extent to which states are both linked by mutual interests and likely to find more scope for cooperation than Realism typically allows: "much as iterated prisoner's dilemma leads to very different results from the single-play version of the game, so does an analysis of a given regime in the context of others produce a different structure of incentives than considering each regime in isolation." Robert Axelrod, \textit{The Evolution of Cooperation}, (New York: Basic Books, 1984), p. 12.; Robert Axelrod, "The Emergence of Cooperation Among Egoists," \textit{American Political Science Review}, 25 (1981); Robert O. Keohane, \textit{After Hegemony}, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 155.

theoretical values. The application of generic labels like neoliberalism has been both a cause and consequence of this exaggerated sense of methodological freedom.

As noted in chapter three, neoliberalism is not merely a wide term, but a term deployed widely, in recent international scholarship. Indeed, it is unclear whether neoliberalism is a paradigm in its own right, or a sort of supra-paradigm encompassing Realist and liberal explanations. What is clear is that neoliberalism is thought to reside intellectually somewhere between a Realist and liberal tradition of international theory. To be sure, that the "recurring dialectic" between Realism and liberalism is posed too starkly forms a key presupposition for neoliberals.21 The world according to Realists is one in which state interactions are easier to explain, and more significant theoretically, than state interests. The world according to liberals is one in which a Realist "theory of interests defined solely in terms of power" is "impoverished" both intellectually and normatively.22 Neoliberals can be said to strike a balance between these approaches, accepting on the one hand the basic analytical assumptions of the Realists, while emphasizing relatively novel issues, actors, and processes in world politics that promote greater scope for international cooperation than Realists typically allow, but that is less extensive than Liberals typical hope or suggest will be the case.

Because neoliberals consciously embrace Realist and liberal premises, it is not always clear who or what a neoliberal is, or to what extent a neoliberal approach is different from a Realist or liberal theory. Zacher and Matthew, despite their attempt to systematize the strands of liberal international theory, do not appear to regard neoliberalism as a distinct strain of liberalism, but rather seem to regard it as a generic characterization for recent international scholarship of a


22 Ibid., p. 239.
liberal hue. Joseph Nye similarly employs neoliberalism as an umbrella term for what he calls the recent "revival of liberal theories."23 Grieco operates in a similarly generic vane, defining neoliberals as scholars that: (1). retain major neorealist premises about international politics, including the belief "that anarchy constrains the willingness of states to cooperate," but; (2). seek to shift neorealism's analytical focus from inter-state conflict toward genuinely cooperative patterns in inter-state behaviour.24

Attributed implicitly to neoliberals in each of these characterizations is an interest in international institutions, defined broadly as international regimes, or narrowly as international organizations. Thus, the term neoliberalism is often used interchangeably with terms like neoliberal institutionalism or the new liberal institutionalism. This is a lamentable practice, however, as liberal institutionalists often have distinctly non-Realist -- and thus distinctly non-neoliberal -- assumptions about the pervasiveness, and theoretical significance, of international institutions.25

Making these important distinctions is rendered problematic by the application of generic labels like neoliberalism. This sponge term tends to sweep distinct normative emphases under the methodological rug of positivism, in deference to the widespread conviction that Realists, neorealists, and liberals of every variety are more or less committed to the single rational standard of science.

23 Ibid., p. 245.


25 As Zacher and Matthew note, for example, the "faith in the ability of international organizations to reshape international politics" is much stronger in some institutionalists than it is in others, and is variable contextually and historically. Few would argue, for example, that David Mitrany's conception of "we-feeling" is synonymous with Hedley Bull's minimalist conception of an international society. Zacher and Matthew, pp. 133-136.
That there are similarities between these competing paradigms cannot be denied, and is scarcely surprising. In important respects, many of international relation's theory's can be said to derive initially from the common intellectual well-spring of the liberal Enlightenment. Liberal themes thus cut across the contending approaches of international relations precisely because ideas cannot be boxed up in paradigms. But the normative core of Realism and liberalism remain distinct, despite boundary problems, occasional border incursions, and outright intellectual poaching. The messy nomenclature of recent years has tended to mask enduring, and sometimes subtle, philosophical differences that are manifested not merely as disputes between individual international theorists and traditions, but as tensions within the scholarship of individual theorists as well.

Neoliberalism: An Operational Definition

Neoliberal institutionalism, as the term is meant to suggest, rekindles the traditional liberal interest in international institutions and their roles in furthering cooperation between states. But in contrast to earlier manifestations of liberal institutionalism, neoliberals claim to accept Realist arguments that states are the major actors in world affairs and are unitary-rational agents. Neoliberals also tend to see international relations as more deeply institutionalized than traditional scholars of either the Realist or liberal variety, adding broader forms of cooperation like "transnational values," "beliefs systems," and international regimes to the theoretical stock of formal international organizations.

26 Grieco., p. 492.

In international theory generally, and in regime analyses in particular, the often generic employment of the term neoliberalism has made criterion for membership in the neoliberal guild difficult to establish. Given the propensity of many recent scholars to smooth over differences between Realist and liberal orientations, these classification difficulties may be perceived less as a lamentable outcome than a premeditated, and welcome, development. Nevertheless, for the purpose of analysis and comparison, a tightly circumscribed definition of neoliberalism is desirable.

A unifying theme, and key distinguishing feature, among neoliberal scholars is their claim progressively to adapt a Realist, and more to the point, neorealist understanding of international politics. For our purposes, then, a neoliberal attempts "to construct theories that draw on Realism's strengths without partaking fully of its weaknesses." \(^{28}\) The neoliberal approach is premised on the conviction that neorealism is a useful, but unduly sparse, international theory. Thus defined, prominent neoliberals include Robert Keohane, Robert Axelrod, Barry Buzan, Joseph Nye, and Stephen Krasner. I will focus on Keohane, Axelrod, and Buzan for the sake of brevity, and because I regard them as the most forceful representatives of neoliberalism as I have defined it above. My comments and examples in the latter parts of this chapter, however, will be more wide ranging.

Keohane captures the spirit and method of neoliberal scholarship nicely:

structural Realism helps us to understand world politics as in part a systemic phenomenon, and provides us with a logically coherent theory that establishes the context for state action. This theory, because it is relatively simple and clear, can be modified progressively to attain closer correspondence with reality.... To do this we need a multidimensional approach to world

politics that incorporates several analytical frameworks or research programs.29

This approach allows neoliberals to embrace the neorealist "virtues of parsimony and clarity" not as ends in themselves but as the theoretical foundation for ultimately richer, and more descriptively precise, accounts of the multiple realities of international politics.

Substantively, Keohane is concerned to demonstrate "the possibilities for international cooperation" under anarchic conditions believed by Realists to preclude all but the most rudimentary forms of collaboration. Axelrod, similarly, seeks to demonstrate that Realist analyses may be unduly pessimistic about the prospects for cooperation. For Axelrod, Realism's philosophical pessimism generally is warranted but overstated. Employing the familiar logic of the prisoner's dilemma, and retaining the rationalistic assumption of "egoistic" self-interest, Axelrod believes that he can transcend the limits of Realism's "single play" and zero-sum games. Axelrod proposes instead a series of games in which the values are cumulative, thereby making the "future important" and incorporating an institutional dimension into a hitherto ahistorical model.30

Keohane also begins with an unambiguously Realist premise: "states seek power and calculate their interests accordingly."31 Like Axelrod, Keohane views Realism as unduly pessimistic about the prospects for cooperation, largely because it ignores or downplays the institutional context of international politics. Retaining

29 Ibid.

30 Axelrod., The Evolution of Cooperation, p. 12.

31 Keohane., After Hegemony, p. 155.
the rationality assumption (though he sometimes "relaxes" it) Keohane suggests that:

(under different systemic conditions states will define their self-interests differently ... where the environment is relatively benign energies will also be directed to fulfilling other goals.32

But Keohane, in contrast to Axelrod, employs the concept of regime to demonstrate the extent to which states are both linked by mutual interests, and likely to find more scope for cooperation than Realism typically allows: "much as iterated prisoner's dilemma leads to very different results from the single-play version of the game, so does an analysis of a given regime in the context of others produce a different structure of incentives than considering each regime in isolation.33

Barry Buzan, while nowhere embracing the label of neoliberalism, engages in a very similar project to Keohane and Axelrod, and a brief summary of his argument rounds out my representative sample of neoliberal scholarship. Again, Buzan joins many of the critics of Realism in remaining committed broadly to a Realist conception of theory. Like Keohane, Buzan focuses narrowly on neorealism, believing that he can adapt, broaden, and improve Kenneth Waltz's methodologically sparse framework. The "charge," as Buzan puts it, "is not that Waltz's theory is wholly wrong (though bits of it are disputed) but that it is incomplete.34

There are for Buzan two principal ways in which Waltzian neorealism is incomplete: (1). its analysis is confined to the international political system and; (2). its definition of structure is unduly sparse. Taken together "these two restrictions exclude, or marginalise, a range of factors that others see as being: (1). 'structural', (2). important to outcomes, and/or (3). lying both beyond a strictly Realist domain, and above a strictly unit level of analysis."35 While Buzan encapsulates nicely the most common grounds for objection to Waltzian neorealism, he is in clear sympathy and agreement with Waltz's understanding of the theoretical enterprise in international politics; Buzan's largely technical discussion and reconstruction of neorealism is aimed explicitly at enhancing the usefulness of Waltz's theory. He accepts the proposition that the analytical scope of neorealism can and should be broadened, but there is no inkling that Buzan: (1). views neorealism's normative message as suspect; (2). wishes to stress fundamentally different or new normative problems, or; (3). sees neorealism's alleged philosophical pessimism as linked to its theoretical premises.

Like others before them, Axelrod, Keohane, and Buzan are able persuasively to demonstrate the extent to which Realist premises are compatible with a substantial degree of international cooperation or "society."36 These theorists do not abandon -- and in fact embrace -- explicitly Realist premises. Hence, neoliberalism is a not a new paradigm of international relations, so much as a new manifestation of Realist international theory. Nor is it a genuinely liberal international theory; on the contrary, it is in essence a selected Realist appropriation of liberal concepts. As I argue below, however, the neoliberals also

35 Ibid., p. 5.

fail on their own explicitly Realist terms to progressively adapt Waltz's neorealist theory.

Recent Scholarship and the Carr Problem

In chapter two I identified Realist and liberal international theory as theoretical approximations of a deep and enduring antinomy in international scholarship between realist and idealist attributes of thought. In making this argument I relied largely on E. H. Carr's description of international thought as a recurring dialectic between that which is desirable normatively (idealism) and that which is feasible politically (realism). As recent scholarship attests, Realist and liberal international theory are increasingly tenuous approximations of Carr's antinomy, but this does more to raise Carr's intellectual stock than to diminish it. Idealism and realism à la Carr are theoretical ideal-types, and not taxonomic ordering devices. As such, idealism and realism are not paradigms, perspectives or approaches, but attributes of thought that deeply and invariably suffuse international theory. The "disciplining" of Carr has shorn his theory of its rich insight regarding the irreconcilability of distinct orientations to international theory, an outcome that has helped to expose the discipline to the equally destructive impulses of paradigmatic faddism and epistemological wrangling. In this sense, disciplinary progress hinges not on the resuscitation or reconstruction of old paradigms, or the endless addition of new approaches, but in the recognition of timeless theoretical realities.

The problem with Carr's orientation to international theory is that, if taken too far, it can undermine our aspirations for a discipline of international politics. But if we ignore issues of epistemology, or go about our business as if such things do not matter, the consequences for the discipline will be equally lamentable. Carr's notion of competing conceptions of theory in international politics remains valid,
and the dualism he describes is in my view the source of numerous tensions, and logical problems, in recent scholarship. These problems are especially evident in international theory's flagship debate between and among Realists, neorealists, and neoliberals, to which I will later turn and explore via an exposition of the literature on international regimes.

We should not expect to find Carr's idealist-realistic antinomy represented along paradigmatic lines though, as noted earlier, the "recurring dialectic" of Realism and liberalism within the broad parameters of the classical tradition stands historically as a rough pseudo-paradigmatic representation of Carr's dualism. Again, however, attributes of thought -- precisely because they are ideational -- cannot be chopped and channeled with paradigmatic precision. Rather, they spill across the boundaries that we construct for analytical convenience, reminding us that the world of international politics is far more complex than we try to make it seem. To return to the conception of small-r-realism introduced in chapter two, realism simply describes the attempt of all international theorists to square certain parts..." of their dogma "with a sluggish and recalcitrant political reality," while the idealist places ideals before practical political considerations.

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37 Carr was not alone in recognizing the existence of mutually exclusive theoretical undertones in international scholarship. See for example Stanley Hoffmann, The State of War, (New York: Praeger, 1966), pp. 3-21. In a more recent work, Charles Reynolds puts the problem of irreconcilable differences even more strongly than Carr, suggesting that international theory contains a deep and ineradicable "schizophrenia" regarding its appropriate purpose and modes of knowledge. Charles Reynolds, Theory and Explanation in International Politics, (London: Martin Robertson, 1973), p. vii.


As Carr suggests, the characteristic weakness of the realists is cynicism, while
the characteristic weakness of the idealists is a "failure to understand existing
reality and the way in which their own standards are rooted in it." Because
individual theorists and practitioners of international politics invariably exhibit
elements of both realism and idealism, it might be tempting to dismiss Carr's
dichotomy as little more than a set of interesting ideal-types bearing no
resemblance to reality, and having no utility for international theory. When Carr
suggests that "sound political thought" must contain elements of both "utopia and
reality," for example, clearly he is not offering a criterion for a taxonomy for
theories of international relations, but an observation on our engagement with theoritical thought as a whole. Nevertheless, Carr clearly perceived and described
respectively the existence of Realist and idealist intellectual and political traditions.
The utopians were liberal in the broadest philosophical sense, including for
example Marxists, utilitarians, laissez-faire economists and moral philosophers,
and Wilsonian idealists. Among their realist counter-parts Machiavelli looms
large, though the historical record is rich in realist scholarship. If Carr's typologies
seem antiquated now, they do so only because the advent of the modern discipline
of international relations has popularized a standard of objective science that has
tended to extirpate musings of an idealist nature. The disciplining of realism, and
the attempt to systematize and discipline the more recalcitrant tradition of
liberalism, has thus worked to homogenize deeply rooted philosophical
differences. Idealism obviously has suffered disproportionately to realism, thanks
largely to Carr himself. But idealism, however consciously suppressed for the sake

41 Ibid., pp. 22-62.
of scientific precision, remains a fundamental constitutive feature of international scholarship.

To find expression of Carr's realist-idealist antinomy today we need look no further than Zacher and Matthew. These author's are apparently concerned with paradigmatic problems. A rhetorical question implicit in their essay, for example, is *where have all the Realists gone?* But, while Zacher and Matthew skim the ruffled and sometimes turbulent surface of inter-paradigmatic issues, ultimately these problems derive from deeper philosophical currents in international theory. That this is so is implicit, but never fully evident, in their argument. And yet Zacher and Matthew do define liberalism ultimately in terms of a philosophical core that is distinct intellectually from that of realism. The problem of international theory for Carr is identical to the problem of international theory for Zacher and Matthew: the need to accommodate that which is inevitable politically ("the diminishing but ineradicable relevance of power relations") to that which is desirable normatively ("solving concretely the problems" of "any age").42 Zacher and Matthew do regard idealism both as something to be shunned, and as a sort of diminishing aspect of liberal international theory. Again, part of the disciplining of a tradition requires the shedding of non-empirical attributes. Two points can be made here: (1). the authors exhibit the customary but mistaken view that idealism is a mere synonym for naivete,43 and; (2). the authors clearly recognize that idealist elements remain strong in liberal international theory: "international liberals are prone to see the

42 Zacher and Matthew, pp. 112-114.

43 Zacher and Matthew, for example, foretell the emergence of a less utopian, and thus better, form of liberalism with their observation that "an embryonic reevaluation of progress (is) taking shape within the liberal camp that can be labeled post-Enlightenment liberalism" (Parenthetical addition mine). Ibid., p. 138.
situations that will mitigate against the use of coercive diplomacy as emerging faster and more strongly than is, in fact, often the case."\textsuperscript{44}

To sum up, the attempt to render broad philosophical traditions into a serviceable empirical international theory does not come without a price. Analytically, it may well be worth that price, but it behooves us nevertheless to remember that what we call international relations theory originates "before the advent of the discipline of international relations."\textsuperscript{45} Because differences over the uses and limits of knowledge long predate our discipline, we cannot sacrifice them on the altar of a single epistemological standard without serious intellectual distortion. Nor should we conduct our debates about contending and/or compatible approaches to international politics without due regard for their distinct intellectual biographies. Admittedly, developments and debates in recent international theory do not necessarily reflect deep philosophical and epistemological differences, but they are conducted in an environment that both denies the relevance of such issues, and makes their exploration difficult. As Carr knew well, and as Charles Reynolds forcefully reminds us, international theory contains ineradicable differences over theory; it is a "beast with a... positivist body and an idealist tail."\textsuperscript{46} I return to this theme later in the chapter, in the context of a discussion of international regimes, an ecumenical concept that, nevertheless, is aligned closely with neoliberalism.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 120.

\textsuperscript{45} Long., p. 1.

\textsuperscript{46} Reynolds, p. vii.
Chapter three argued that the advent of "new" or previously unexamined facts in international politics have prompted widespread re-evaluation of the analytical dominance, strength, and relevance of Realist-inspired approaches. At the centre of this debate is Waltz's neorealist theory of international politics. Many of the objections to neorealism are well known and, while varied, have tended to focus on a single and allegedly fundamental weakness in his theory: its self-limiting reliance on the distribution of capabilities among states or -- in the prevailing parlance -- its excessive parsimony. This is certainly true of the authors defined above as neoliberal.

In Waltz we find the embodiment of the deductive theorist described by Stanley Hoffmann: a theorist "eager to provide us with a few highly general abstract propositions, from which predictions could be derived."47 Such a theorist aims to rise above an historical emphasis on observation and experience. The facts of international politics, while important, do not "contain or conclusively suggest their own explanation."48 International theory thus depends on inductive and deductive methods alike -- on facts and ideas -- on intellectual playfulness and a willingness to abstract from reality. As Waltz puts it:


A theory can be written only by leaving out most matters that are of practical interest. To believe that listing the omissions of a theory constitutes a valid criticism is to misconstrue the theoretical enterprise.49

The first deductive premise for international theory, suggests Waltz, is "the idea that international politics can be thought of as a system with a precisely defined structure."50 Waltz, in contrast to Hans Morgenthau, avoids recourse to human nature, and builds on the idea that state action is both a cause of, and reaction to, the system of states.51 The state thus produces, and is in turn produced by, an international structure. It is this realization, argues Waltz, that allows scope for a genuinely international theory of politics.

Waltz's theory of international politics can not of course be treated as the theory of international politics. Reactions to Waltz have been deeply ambiguous. On the one hand neorealist analysis is embraced as progressive. Neorealism transcends classical Realism's largely intuitive appeal to power as an end in itself and argues instead for an understanding of state power based on the seemingly objective criteria of its position relative to other states in the system. But, rendered functionally similar by the structural constraints of anarchy, expectations for state behaviour do not differ markedly from those of the Realists. What is significant, however, is that power for Waltz is not an end sought for its own sake, but a "possibly useful means" to security.52 On the other hand, there are strong grounds

49 Ibid., p. 31. See also Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics, (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979), especially chapter 2, "Laws and Theories."

50 Waltz, op. cit., p. 30.

51 For a more detailed discussion of specific differences see chapter three.

52 Waltz, "Realist Thought..." p. 36. Waltz recognizes the existence of ends other than security, but views security as an ultimate objective or end.
to doubt both the normative and intellectual advances attributed by Waltz to neorealism. First, Waltz seems merely to have replaced one set of constraints for another. Neorealism rescues Realist theory from its precarious reliance on the "metaphysics of fallen man" only to reconceptualize and reaffirm a Realist power politics, rooted this time "securely in the scientifically defensible terrain of objective necessity." Human nature is out, structure is in, but the human predicament is unchanged. Second, Waltz's structural theory abstracts from -- and thus tells us little about -- particular events or facts. Neorealism is thereby exposed to the paradoxical charge that its scientific status is purchased at the expense of actual research and empirical analysis.

Whatever its limits, the advent of Waltzian neorealism has galvanized not merely the neoliberals, but virtually all subsequent theoretical discussion of world politics. Moreover, Waltz's notion of theory either echoes -- or itself is echoed -- throughout the discourse. James Rosenau, for example, suggests that "to think theoretically one must be ready to appreciate and accept the need to sacrifice detailed descriptions for broad observations." More telling, perhaps, is the extent to which Waltz's neoliberal critics seem committed to an essentially Waltzian conception of international theory. Buzan, for example, reveals a sense of the theoretical enterprise in international politics that resonates clearly with that of


Waltz: "theory is nothing more than an abstract construct imposed on a select body of things, events, and processes."56 Robert Keohane likewise seems comfortable with the proposition that "to develop a systemic analysis... one has to avoid being distracted by the details and vagaries of domestic politics and other variables at the level of the acting unit."57 Indeed, even anti-positivist and post-positivist critics have been known to stress new theoretical approaches as "adjuncts" to Realism, rather than alternatives.58

The Reconstruction of Waltz

As a general proposition, theoretical innovation in international relations has taken the form of correcting, rather than rejecting, existing theories. This trend has been particularly evident in neoliberal responses to Waltz. It has already been noted that these responses have tended to be ambivalent. Waltz's theory, while satisfying the perceived need for scientific rigour, obtains its impressive explanatory and predictive power at the expense of real-world description. He thus gives range to one theoretical impulse -- the need to come to terms with complexity and to discern pattern and meaning in the otherwise chaotic. But Waltz's structural theory cannot satisfy the need for contextual subtlety, interpretation, and detail; his attempt to systematize the insights of classical Realism seems paradoxically to have


58 Mark Neufeld, for example, suggests that "an interpretive approach can provide a welcome antidote to Realist-inspired pessimism about the possibility for progress." Mark Neufeld, "Interpretation and the 'Science' of International Relations," Review of International Studies, 19, (1993), p. 57.
cemented the scientific status of international politics while simultaneously precluding analysis of substantive political issues. Like most revolutionaries, Waltz stands accused of going too far.

As noted above, neoliberals are in sympathy and agreement with Waltz's understanding of the theoretical enterprise in international politics; their largely technical discussion and reconstruction of neorealism is aimed explicitly at enhancing the usefulness of the theory. Buzan's "sensitive and insightful" attempt to reconstruct neorealism, for example, displays little of the urgency, and none of the disillusionment, of many of Waltz's critics. The limits of Waltz's "necessarily slender" theory, however, are rendered more obvious by seemingly fundamental changes in the international system. The end of the Cold War and its attendant changes seem especially to constitute a "crucial test for the explanation of change provided by the established paradigm of international politics." This is because Waltz attributes great theoretical significance to "long-lived structures" and to bipolarity in particular, emphasizing questions of structural "effect" at the expense of structural "change." There remains, however, no definitive way to adduce the irrelevance of neorealism, as fundamental change is a matter ultimately of perception. Realists, for example, acknowledge international changes, but view them in terms of realignment or change within an enduring structure of state power. Also, the deductive and ahistorical method of neorealism demands that it

59 Waltz, "Realist Thought...," p. 30.

60 Kratochwil, "The embarrassment...," p. 63.

61 As Ruggie puts it: "Waltz's theory of 'society' contains only a reproductive logic, but no transformational logic." John Gerard Ruggie, "Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity," in Neorealism and its Critics, p. 152. Buzan even suggests that Waltz's "deep structure is so durable that it does not seem to be a good use of one's time to be concerned with change on that level." Buzan, The Logic of Anarchy, p. 7.
adherents abstract from the messy realities of social relations, thereby minimizing the impact of dramatic international developments. Thus, Friedrich Kratochwil suggests, neorealists are free to dismiss seemingly epochal changes as unimportant in that "theories are not supposed to explain single events." But while the resilience of Realism can hardly be disputed, it is increasingly evident that the "embarrassment of changes" is forcing Realist or Realist-inspired theorists to try to transcend neorealism's static categories.

The specific analytical gaps in neorealism are varied, but there has been a strong desire in recent international scholarship -- inspired by the seemingly growing importance of international cooperation and the apparent role of international institutions and regimes in that process -- to supplement what is thought to be neorealism's very rudimentary conception of international cooperation. More pointedly, the rise of international regimes, for neoliberals, seems directly to challenge the Realist assumption that "international institutions are unable to mitigate anarchy's constraining effects on interstate cooperation." Waltz's own position on international institutions, it will be recalled, is that:

International organizations do exist, and in ever-growing numbers. Supranational agents able to act effectively, however, either themselves acquire some of the attributes and capabilities of states ... or they soon reveal their inability to act in important ways except with the support, or at least the acquiescence, of the principal states concerned with the matters at hand.

62 Kratochwil, "The embarrassment...", p. 66.


64 Waltz., "Laws and Theories," in Neorealism and its Critics, p. 81. See also p.117 of preceding chapter.
Absent in Waltz is any conception of international institutions as autonomous or semi-autonomous actors or agents in world politics. Hence, the proliferation of international institutions or regimes in recent years, along with moderate levels of inter-state cooperation, has enlivened existing critiques of neorealism, and forms the prime thrust of the neoliberal critique.

For Waltz, states are not constrained by regimes or, for that matter, anything short of "their interaction with other states in the system." Neorealism denies explicitly the sort of causal schema suspected by regime theorists and modeled by Krasner as follows:

\[
\text{basic causal variables} \rightarrow \text{regimes} \rightarrow \text{related behaviour/outcomes}
\]

\[\text{(state power \\& interests)}\]

As Krasner suggests, "regimes for Waltz can only be one small step removed from the underlying power capabilities that sustain them." But to many of Waltz's otherwise sympathetic critics, regimes, while not ubiquitous features of the international system, can be viewed as variables that sometimes intervene between the basic causal variable of state power and its related outcomes (see above model). Krasner, for example, suggests that regimes "do not arise of their own accord" and matter "only when independent decision making leads to undesired outcomes." Neoliberal versions of regime theory are thus based on an acceptance of the basic analytic premises of neorealism, but on a rejection of the Waltzian assumption that


66 Ibid. See also Waltz, Theory of International Politics, p. 118.

"international institutions are unable to mitigate anarchy's constraining effects on interstate cooperation."68

It is Grieco's contention that the neoliberal challenge to neorealism fails ultimately because of the inability of neoliberals to grasp an important distinction between problems of relative and absolute gains:

Realism... finds that there are at least two major barriers to international cooperation: state concerns about cheating and state concerns about relative achievements of gains. Neoliberal institutionalism pays attention exclusively to the former, and is unable to identify, analyze, or account for the latter.69

While Realists "understand that states seek absolute gains and worry about compliance," Realists likewise "find that states are positional, not atomistic in character."70 In short, states will always worry that their partners will gain more than they do from cooperation. Grieco is led to conclude that Realist and neoliberal positions display profound differences, and to argue that Realism "provides a more complete understanding of cooperation" than its challenger.71 This conclusion may well be warranted, but Grieco is wrong to suggest that "neoliberal institutionalism is not based on Realist theory."72 The problem of relative versus absolute gains is germane to debates between liberals and Realists, but neoliberals are not genuine liberals. Indeed, it is precisely the Realist problem of relative gains that neoliberals -- through reference to regimes -- believe that they can solve. In

69 Ibid., p. 487.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., p. 495.
72 Ibid., p. 503.
asserting that "Realist and neoliberal perspectives on states and anarchy differ profoundly," Grieco is blinded by his own liberal label, and overlooks the extent to which neoliberals view themselves as engaged in adapting neorealism from within. The limits of neoliberalism thus do not derive from limits inherent in liberal institutional theories of international relations, but from limits inherent in the neorealist logic that they embrace explicitly. I will return to this argument below, following the discussion of international regimes.

The essence of neoliberalism is its belief that neorealists, in their excessive zeal for parsimony, preclude analysis of a fundamental political problem: "how states define their interests, and how their interests change." Neoliberals, in order to get at the problem of interests, must reassess neorealism's allegedly strict issue hierarchy. Neorealism's security-dominant logic is parsimonious but, argues Joseph Nye, reduces state interest to state power: national interest is derived "on the basis of rational calculation" and from "the external position of states." Neoliberals seek, therefore, to supplement neorealism by asking how "transnational and interstate interactions and norms" might "lead to new definitions of interests." In the case of Axelrod, discussed above, this leads to game-theoretic attempts to demonstrate a broader form of cooperation than neorealist analysis typically allows or admits. On balance, however, neoliberals

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73 This, as Nye suggests, has always been a weak area in Realist theory." Nye, "Neorealism and Neoliberalism," p. 238.

74 Waltz, assuming the functional similarity of states, concocts a notion of interest defined in terms of power: "at a minimum (states) seek there own preservation, and at a maximum, drive for universal domination." Waltz as cited by Keohane, "Theory of world politics," in Neorealism and its Critics, pp. 172-173 and p. 191.

75 Ibid.
have tended to build their case for the analytical expansion of neorealism on the concept of international regimes.

Neoliberal Regime Theory: Definitional Problems

The problem of identifying regimes empirically is, in important respects, a problem of definition. As Susan Strange puts it, rather impolitely, the "woolly" concept of regime "is a fertile source of discussion simply because people mean different things when they use it."\textsuperscript{76} This persuasive charge is supported both by other regime critics, and by the way in which the term regime is employed by its many practitioners. In a more methodological vane, Kratochwil and Ruggie argue that regime theorists may be hampered by an inability or unwillingness to recognize the tension that exists between the largely social scientific enterprise of regime identification, and the intersubjective character of regimes. Regime scholars fail to match epistemology with ontology, and regime theory issues in "woolly-ness" because it stretches the limits of a positivist methodology.\textsuperscript{77} But this critique, like Strange's, is not indicative of mainstream thinking on regimes. Most regime scholars believe that regimes can be incorporated within a positivist framework and trace its problems to relatively minor disputes over terminology, an occupational hazard for ecumenical concepts. Oran Young is thus able to define regimes vaguely as "social institutions" and "patterns of behaviour,"-- entities that need not be accompanied by "explicit organizational arrangements" -- while others use regime as a synonym for international organization.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{76} Susan Strange, "Cave! Hie Dragones," in \textit{International Regimes}, pp. 342-343.

\textsuperscript{77} Kratochwil and Ruggie, "International Organization...," pp. 764-765.

The definitional and epistemological aspects of the regime concept cannot be separated, and I will turn to the latter issue next, within the framework of the idealist and realist antinomy established above. For the moment, however, I will focus on the practical implications of the problem of definition. The most striking implication in this regard is that the popularity of the Krasner definition of regime ("principles, norms, rules, and decisionmaking procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue-area of international politics") seems to be correlated directly to its lack of analytical precision. It is because this definition can accommodate a variety understandings of regime that it is employed widely; "principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures" are conceptually distinct terms conflated, for the sake of expediency, into the umbrella concept or definition of regime. This allows some scholars to interpret regimes narrowly -- insisting perhaps on explicit and codified procedures -- while others find scope for a conception of regime broad enough "to mean almost any fairly stable distribution of the power to influence outcomes."79 This is because principles, norms, rules, and decisionmaking procedures are, in turn, subject to alternately narrow or wide interpretations. A norm, for instance, implies anything from an authoritative standard or model of behaviour, to, in its looser sense, a pattern or trait taken to be typical in the behaviour of a social group. While Krasner defines norms as "standards of behavior," it is not clear in much of the regime literature which, if either, notion of norm is being implied.80 It is thus common practice for regime enthusiasts to stress one component of the Krasner equation at the expense of another.

79 Strange, p. 343.

It is not surprising that what I have termed the Krasner definition is the most frequently endorsed characterization of regime. Because the concept was forged in 1980 at a Los Angeles conference on international cooperation, it was itself the product of the convergent expectations of numerous scholars, guaranteeing from birth a widely acceptable definition. It thus suffers, ironically, from an affliction common in the attempt to foster multilateral agreement and cooperation in international politics: the wider the membership one hopes to attract, the more general must be the proposition one hopes to advance. This phenomenon is exemplified nicely in the attempt to discern evidence for an emerging regime in investment and multinational corporations. Specific and binding "codes of conduct" for MNCs have proven consistently unrealistic, while vague and nonbinding pronouncements about acceptable/unacceptable MNC behaviour have often been endorsed universally, and even enthusiastically. Such "codes" typify, for example, the sorts of arrangements negotiated successfully under the auspices of the United Nations, laying the groundwork for its establishment of The Commission on Transnational Corporations. If these developments are part of an evolving international investment regime, it is to date a very weak and permissive institution. Similarly, regime tends to be a very weak and permissive concept.

81 Properly speaking, this definition is not Krasner's, but that of a broad body of scholars whose analyses make up the bulk of the regime literature.

82 Finlayson and Zacher, p. 275.


84 Ibid.
The notion of international regimes hammered out in California and promulgated in Krasner's eponymous volume is not, of course, the only way to conceptualize international collaboration, nor is its definition always embraced without qualification. But *International Regimes* is by design a sort of intellectual forced collectivization of scholarship related to issues of international cooperation, and where it has not succeeded in mainstreaming everyone its has brought much of the literature on international political economy under its thrall. It has done so not through coercion but seduction -- through its ability to accommodate a variety of intellectual predilections. But the built-in interpretative character of regime renders it a sort of non-definition; the attempt to make it analytically useful is thwarted by the desire to give it wide appeal.

Thus, while there is no unified regime "school," most regime theorists accept the "basic analytic assumptions of structural Realist approaches, which posit an international system of functionally symmetrical, power-maximizing states acting in an anarchic environment." From the perspective of regime theory, however, political Realism is no longer a sufficient analytical framework for confronting the new realities of international politics. There is thus an almost natural affinity between neoliberals and regime theorists though, it should be stressed again, regime is a deliberately ecumenical construct. Hence, rather than merely stressing old things in new ways -- the heart of Susan Strange's critique -- regime theorists also stress the need to adapt old ways (Realist and neorealist theory) to new things.

85 Oran Young, for example, accepts but modifies the Krasner definition. Young, p. 93.

Precise specification of the definitional parameters for regimes is rendered difficult by the deliberate ambiguity of Krasner's widely invoked construct. That regimes do name substantive phenomena in international politics is undeniable, but it remains difficult to establish whether regimes are pervasive, or relatively exceptional, aspects of international relations. On the one hand, the steady emergence of international institutions justifies increased attention to cooperative dynamics, whether narrowly or broadly defined. On the other hand, however, the term regime is employed so widely -- and invoked so readily -- in recent scholarship that it threatens to become meaningless. For example, the term has been used to describe individual international organizations, clusters of international organizations, treaties, collections of treaties and/or other agreements, regularized procedures, conventions, stable mutual expectations, rules of the road, and virtually any set of explicit or implicit arrangements around which the expectations of states tend to converge. Regimes may also refer to established organizations with codified, formal procedural arrangements, or their "existence" may be purely tacit. At times, regimes are even defined tautologically. For example, the liberal international economic order characteristic of postwar international relations is sometimes described as a regime on the grounds that it contains monetary, trade, and financial regimes.87

Ultimately, however, problems of definitional precision may be relatively unimportant, if only because some measure of imprecision is inevitable. The challenge and advantage of a regime approach is to build a framework within which the concept of norm-governed behaviour in international politics can be developed, rather than to establish a precise and exhaustive inventory of

regimes. The issue of relevance pertains more to the function of a definition than to its exactitude. As Stanley Hoffmann notes, the "function" of a definition is "to indicate proper areas of inquiry, not to reveal the essence of the subject. How could one agree once and for all upon the definition of a field whose scope is in constant flux, indeed a field whose fluctuation is one of its principal characteristics?" The problem with the Krasner definition is that it does not indicate particular areas of inquiry, so much as it defines any and every aspect of international cooperation, coordination, collaboration, and convergent expectations as a regime. As numerous scholars have indicated, many of whom are committed generally to the utility of regime analysis, cooperation is a very broad phenomenon, and important distinctions exist with regard to its limits and scope, as well as actor motives, incentives, and disincentives.

Another problem raised by Strange is that both the term regime, and its definition, is "value-loaded": "not only does using this word regime distort reality by implying an exaggerated measure of predictability and order in the system as it is, it is also value-loaded in that it takes for granted that what everyone wants is more and better regimes, that greater order and managed interdependence should be the collective goal." Regime thinking may thus be ideology masquerading as a reality.

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90 On the distinction between coordination and collaboration see Arthur Stein, "Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic World," in International Regimes, pp. 115-140. See also Raymond Cohen, "Rules of the Game in International Politics," pp. 129-150, and; Stephan Haggard and Beth A. Simmons, "Theories of International Regimes," International Organization, 41, No. 3 (Summer 1988), pp. 493-496.

91 Strange, p. 345.
necessary truth. This has massive implications for our attempt to construct definitional parameters for regimes because, as James Keeley observes, "the treatment of disputes over definition, character, and legitimacy of regimes" may be "fundamental to the concept itself." Or, as Reynolds puts it with reference to international organization, but with clear relevance for regimes, "it is necessary to examine not only their political antecedents and contexts, but also the ideas which influenced their constitutions, and which are embodied in them; ... in doing this it is difficult to avoid accepting, albeit unconsciously, the values expressed in their foundations, and using them as the criteria for critical analysis." 

The upshot then is that Krasner's seemingly neutral definition is in essence the expression of interests derived in reference to a particular intellectual and historical context. Regimes become a rationalization of current policies, and tend to enshrine and codify prevailing practices. There is thus a strong ideological element in regime theory. Regime theorists exhibit what Carr terms the weakness characteristic of all idealists: a "failure to understand" the way in which "their own standards" are rooted in existing reality. The suggestion that an ostensibly Realist orientation to international theory should wind up exhibiting the signature failing of idealism seems counter-intuitive only if we fail to recognize the distinction between paradigms of international theory, and attributes of international thought.


93 Reynolds, pp. 268-269.


95 My distinction between thought and theory in international politics is somewhat analogous to that of Waltz. See for example Kenneth Waltz, "Realist
There is little doubt that parochialism is a problem in international theory, but it is more an occupational hazard than a reflection of an intellectual conspiracy designed consciously to protect vested interests. Theory is a richly contextual enterprise that reflects inevitably the issues relevant to human welfare at any given juncture.96 And, as Cohen puts it, advancing human interests is "surely what the study of international relations is all about.97 Nevertheless, the human interests are varied, despite the temptation to view them as derivative solely of the problem of keeping the peace, or avoiding war, between states.98 Such issues include wealth, poverty, liberty, oppression, justice (procedural or redistributive), coercion, efficiency, legitimacy, security/insecurity (in its broadest and narrowest manifestations), and a variety of moral values.99

These issues are often theorized out of international relations by Realists, not for ideological, so much as for analytical, reasons. Holsti for example, while not declaring himself a Realist, consigns issues not related to, or derivative of, the problem of war to the margins of international theory. These "other" approaches include normative problems and constructs like the "compradour bourgeoisie, the global commons, centre and periphery, and international feudal hierarchies."100


97 Cohen, p. 149.


100 Holsti, The Dividing..., p. 12.
But if these, and the other issues listed above, are not part of the "vocabulary of the classical tradition," they are legitimately part of the vocabulary and substance of international relations.

Taxonomic convention in international theory has tended to side with Holsti, thus funneling scholarship in ostensibly Realist directions. The regime literature is arguably a case in point, as its strong "value-bias" toward order -- as opposed to justice for example -- attests.101 Thus far we have said nothing more damning, or surprising, than that international theorists are shaped invariably by their social, political, historical, and intellectual climate. The point, however, is that while theory must and should reflect human interests as they tend to be defined at a given juncture, international theorists may be more or less sensitive and attentive to issues of context. The issue of relevance is not whether regimes exist; clearly they do, despite doubts about the conceptual utility of the Krasner definition. Rather, it is the tendency to define regimes as benign, genuinely voluntarist, and legitimate entities102 -- and to assume further that everyone wants them -- that is contestable.103

As Keeley notes, allegations of this sort are bound to offend "liberal sensibilities."104 A characteristic feature of liberal thought, for example, is its advocacy of different paths to progress and, in recent years, "a more general commitment to some form of international culture."105 For some commentators,

101 Strange, pp. 345-346.
102 Keeley, p. 84.
103 Strange, p. 345.
104 Keeley, p. 86.
105 Zacher and Matthew, p. 116.
the former is indicative of liberalism's intellectual multi-partisanship, while the latter is evidence of the diminishing relevance of ideology. Yet, far from signalling the end of ideology in world politics, the evolution of a liberal international culture may simply indicate that liberal parochialism now exists on an increasingly global scale.106

In contrast to the neoliberals, rationalist or grotian theorists of international society, institutions, and regimes are relatively unconcerned with theoretical parsimony, and thus have had fewer difficulties in recognizing the moral complexity of international relations.107 For grotians -- in contrast to both Realists and neoliberals -- the world is infused deeply with norms, and regimes constitute both the normal state of international affairs, and an important analytical focus. But in contrast to neoliberal regime theorists, grotians are keenly aware of ideological overtones in the formation and maintenance of international institutions. Bull, for example, was well aware that the main vulnerability of a grotian position "is that it may be a luxury available only to the strongest and most satisfied powers, which may adopt Rationalist legal and moral positions as instruments to protect acquisitions made through Realist means."108 This in my view describes precisely the principal vulnerability, and intellectual failing, of neoliberal regime analysis. The question simply is whether regimes provide order and stability in international politics so much as they reflect it. As Zacher and Matthew observe, for example, liberal values in the postwar era have tended to be achieved through, and embedded in, the construction of regimes: "the United

106 Ibid.


108 Ibid.
States, in cooperation with its European allies, was putting a clearly liberal stamp on the international institutions of the noncommunist world. "109 To restate and paraphrase Bull, this characterization describes the acquisition and protection of liberal values through Realist means. Regimes may be encoded in an ecumenical, and thus non-ideological, genre, but neutrality is largely in the eyes of the beholder, and is itself a distinctly liberal intellectual theme. 110

Neoliberal Regime Theory and the Carr Problem

The attempt to adapt Realism progressively via reference to regimes seems for neoliberals to be a relatively simple matter of expanding the analytical scope of neorealism, but founders on issues deriving from the ideological, epistemological, and ontological aspects of regime analysis.

Neoliberal regime theorists proceed from the basic analytic premises of Realism, but ultimately push both the limits of a genuinely Realist theory of international relations, and the limits of its traditionally positivistic methodology. Regimes, like international society, transnational values, and belief systems, are nebulous entities composed of intersubjective meanings. 111 This prompts Kratochwil and Ruggie to declare regimes beyond the pale of a positivistic/behavioural science. 112 At first glance, this casts doubt on the epistemological consonance of Realist and regime theories. But cannot principles,

109 Zacher and Matthew, pp. 136-137.


111 Zacher and Matthew, p. 133.

112 Kratochwil and Ruggie, pp. 764-765.
norms, and rules be seen as data? As Mark Neufeld suggests, for example, positivism is not a monolithic epistemology, but one that contains two broad orientations to theory and research: (1) strict behaviouralism, and; (2) meaning-oriented behaviouralism.113

Strict and meaning-oriented behaviouralism are not viewed typically as mutually exclusive orientations, and some theorists -- Morgenthau for example -- attempt to combine elements of both. Since meaning-oriented behaviour is an attempt to bring normative elements into the public realm, its opposition to strict behaviouralism mirrors and restates Carr's depiction of international theory as an exercise involving elements of utopia and reality. The neoliberal attempt to "progressively modify" neorealism via regimes can thus be viewed as an attempt to bring ideational elements into a largely empirical theory. But for Carr, the requirements of normative and empirical theory form the antithetic roots of international thought, while in subsequent scholarship this opposition is reconstituted with a view to its transcendence in a single empirical theory. But, however sophisticated its techniques, a positivist social science can never test "a given 'web of meaning'/social practice" against an objective standard.114 Hence, if we ask whether international regimes are new facts or new ideas we miss the point, and misapprehend the nature, of international theory. International relations is

113 For strict behaviouralists, the "domain of human consciousness" is unamenable to empirical observation, adding credence to the claims of Kratochwil and Ruggie. Meaning-oriented behaviouralists, however, are able to preserve a positivistic logic of investigation -- namely their presupposition that international politics is of a piece with natural science -- while simultaneously crafting investigative techniques "designed both to bring 'subjective meanings' into the public realm and to facilitate standardized measurements of them." Neufeld, pp. 41-42.

114 Ibid., p. 48.
not exclusively a realm of facts or ideas, but is preeminently -- and ineradicably -- a study in both.\textsuperscript{115}

Carr's orientation to international theory is mirrored strongly in Anthony Giddens' conception of a theory of structuration in contemporary sociology. Like Carr, Giddens rejects the single epistemological stances of utopia and reality -- expressed as subjectivism and positivism -- and conceives of social science "as a science with a character of its own that reflects its subject matter."\textsuperscript{116} But while Carr speaks of the problem of balancing "free will" and "determinism," Giddens deploys the sociological language of structure and agency in confronting the same problem, with allowance of course made for his different disciplinary focus. Giddens defines a theory of structuration, and its role, as follows:

In seeking to come to grips with problems of action and structure, structuration theory offers a conceptual scheme that allows one to understand both how actors are at the same time the creators of social systems yet created by them. Critics who argue either that structuration theory provides too little space for free action or, alternatively, underestimates the influence of structural constraint... miss the point. The theory of structuration is not a series of generalizations about how far 'free action' is possible in respect of 'social constraint.' Rather, it is an attempt to provide the conceptual means of analyzing the often delicate and subtle interlacings of reflexively organized action and institutional constraint.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{115} For a contrasting view see Michael Banks' suggestion that "the key to the understanding of international relations consists of ideas, not facts." Michael Banks, "The Evolution of International Relations Theory," in Michael Banks, ed., \textit{Conflict in World Society}, (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1984), p. 3.


This theory of structuration has found its way into international relations, and into the neorealist/neoliberal debate over regimes. Its most explicit application is by Alexander Wendt, who attempts to employ structuration theory in order to demonstrate that Waltz's highly influential definition of structure is underspecified and obscures the extent to which state identities and interests are constructed by knowledgeable practice. The self-help principle is for Waltz a function of anarchy, but for Wendt anarchy is itself an institution, a product of the process level of interactions between states that Waltz defines as external to international theory. Wendt also attempts to revitalize the neoliberal critique of neorealism by bridging the former with insights derived from a structurationist approach.

Structuration theory promises to change the way in which international theorists conceptualize the problem of agency and structure central to the neoliberal/neorealist debate. Because neoliberals claim that international institutions can transform state interests, an approach that stresses "the importance of intersubjective meanings and understandings and the interaction between agents and structures," should be greeted with enthusiasm. But, because the attempt to supplement neorealism is premised oddly, the attempt to draw structuration theory into that debate founders as well. To restate Giddens: "critics who argue either that structuration theory provides too little space for free action or, alternatively, underestimates the influence of structural constraint... miss the point." The structure versus agency debate implicit in neoliberal critiques of


119 Ibid., p. 322.

120 Giddens, "Structuration Theory...", p. 204.
Waltz's theory is of precisely the character described by Giddens. How then can
structuration theory, an approach that denies explicitly that units and constraints --
agents and structure -- can be separated, be used to enhance neoliberalism, an
approach that is premised on precisely such a decomposition? Structuration theory
cannot be used to supplement neoliberalism. On the contrary, a structurationist
approach exposes the synthetic logic of neoliberalism as misconceived fundamentally.

Not content with identifying neorealist and neoliberal approaches as
different perspectives in international relations, the neoliberals seem bent on
blending, synthesizing, and bridging these -- and other -- perspectives. It is to this
use that structuration theory is put by Wendt who, in his words, seeks to "build a
bridge" between the rationalist-behavioural logic of neoliberalism and the
constructivist argument of structuration theory.121 But far from a way of
enhancing, and possibly resolving, the neorealist/neoliberal debate, such a use does
not accord with the character of a structurationist approach as it is conceived by
Gidden's, its foremost author. As Giddens puts it, "structuration theory is not
intended to be a of theory of anything."122 While Giddens certainly conceives of
structuration theory as "something that can be put to use in concrete social
scientific work," he explicitly countenances against its application in "empirical
research programs."123 Encouraged by the venerable practice of employing concepts
generated in other realms of inquiry, international theorists might be forgiven for

121 Wendt, p. 394. Categorizing Wendt is problematic, since he is not expressly
involved in the neoliberal project of Realist modification, but proceeds
nevertheless from an overtly synthetic mode of argumentation.

122 Giddens, "Structuration Theory...", p. 204.

123 Ibid., p. 205.
failing to make the distinction between new investigative techniques, and new -- or rather different -- conceptions of science. Such, however, is precisely the error that Wendt seems to make, employing instrumentally a distinctly illustrative concept.

Thus, while Wendt correctly identifies liberalism and Realism as the principal "axis of contention" in international politics, he does not view it as grounded in differences of an epistemological character. Although this axis is seldom explicitly so grounded, Wendt too readily assumes that the epistemological dimension of this dispute is a non-issue. It is true that "philosophies of science are not theories of international relations," but there is less "smoke and heat," and more clarity, in epistemology than Wendt suggests. More troubling is Wendt's implicit and explicit suggestion that we have somehow put epistemology behind us, and that the latest manifestation of the Realist and liberal debate is a largely procedural dispute about the relative importance of structure(agency) and process(interaction and learning) in international politics. The terms of reference for this dispute seem, on the surface, to have little to do with Realist and liberal contentions, and much to do with controversies sparked, and framed, by Waltz's forceful presentation of neorealism.

In justifying his approach Wendt claims that "competing theories of human nature" between Realists and liberals are a relic of the past. It turns out, however, that Wendt is not really talking about Realists and liberals at all, but about neorealists and neoliberals. The latter, he suggests, are united on the level of epistemology by a "shared commitment to rationalism." What Wendt probably means is that these approaches have a shared commitment to rational actor models

124 Wendt, p. 425.
125 Ibid., p. 391.
126 Ibid.
and assumptions, something that unites them on the level of method, but that does not necessarily imply a shared philosophy of knowledge cumulation. There is no inkling, for example, that Wendt means by rationalism what Carr, Martin Wight, or Hedley Bull mean by rationalism: a conception of reason as a source of knowledge different from, and superior to, knowledge derived from sense perception. Indeed, Wendt seems to mean the opposite, since he associates "rationalism" with a "behavioral conception" of international politics, and with the "materialist individualism" of the British empiricists. Moreover, Wendt's distinction between "strong" and "weak" liberals suggests that an epistemological axis of contention might still exist between "strong" liberals and -- we can suppose -- "strong" Realists, assuming that the latter have not been wholly subsumed in what Wendt terms a "neorealist-rationalist alliance."

This is no mere semantic quibble, but a critical issue, because Wendt's construction of the Realist/liberal axis of contention mirrors and rehearses a number of pervasive and fundamental misconceptions in the evolving debate between and among Realists, neorealists, and neoliberals, the most important of which are: (1). that these discussions have nothing to do with epistemology, and; (2). that Realists, neorealists, and neoliberals are all rationalists. The growing centrality of this falsely premised, and ostensibly procedural quarrel, does not merely consign matters of philosophical concern to the margins of international theory, but forces genuine and enduring philosophical differences into a crude and unworkable theoretical synthesis. It does so because, while regime theorists belong to the rationalist tradition (as understood by Carr, Wight, and Bull), Realists and, more to the point, neorealists do not.

127 Ibid., p. 392, ftn 3.

128 Ibid., p. 425.
I do not mean to suggest that principles, norms, rules, interests, meanings, and the other data of the new perspectives cannot be incorporated in a super-positivist framework. But international theory has traditionally made the undeconstructed (i.e. unitary/rational) state its "pragmatic choice of subject matter," and owes its accomplishments to date largely to this gross analytical simplification. Interpretivist and cognitive approaches can help get at "the intersubjective meaning structures that bind actors together," but not without yielding a "necessarily... looser fit between structural constraints, interests, and choices" than international theory typically allows. This points to the mutual desirability, but irreconcilability, of positivist and interpretivist approaches; each has merit, but they are not amenable to synthesis. Epistemologies, in other words, should not be confused with methods of research. Neoliberal regime theorists, however, bring these antithetic elements together, suggesting a deficient understanding of the philosophical diversity of international theory, and a suspect understanding of the neorealist foundation on which they would build.

Pushing the Limits of Realism

The problems identified above leads us to question the core assumption, and defining characteristic, of neoliberalism: its superiority over, and continuity with, neorealist theory. Do neoliberals, via regime theory, merely shift the analytical focus of neorealist theory? Put metaphorically, do they only adjust the focus of the


130 Stephan Haggard and Beth A. Simmons, "Theories of International Regimes," International Organization, 41, No. 3 (Summer 1988), p. 499.
neorealist telescope? This may be their intent but, ironically, the attempt to adjust the neorealist eyepiece yields a more blurred picture of international relations. This is not because the telescope is defective, but because it has reached its limits as an investigative instrument. What the neoliberals seem not to realize is that in shifting the focus of neorealist analysis away from conflict and towards cooperation, they have undermined the very thing that compelled them to retain neorealism in the first place: its explanatory simplicity. The suggestion that theory can be modified progressively has rhetorical appeal, especially to those theorists that regard the study of international politics as a cumulative science. But the lense of neorealist theory, however limited its resolution, cannot be rendered better by readjustment. Indeed, the logic of Waltz's theory implies precisely the opposite. The message of the metaphor, therefore, is that telescopes are but one of a number of investigative tools. They are useful for surveying the lay of the land, but cannot visualize everything that falls within their ken.

Thus, the professed neoliberal goal of supplementing neorealism entails logically an acceptance of Waltz's theoretical presuppositions. Excessive parsimony is identified as neorealism's principal failing, leaving Waltz's critics with the relatively straightforward methodological task of expanding his theoretical agenda. But the attempt to build on neorealism's strengths "without partaking fully of its weaknesses" founders on a logical flaw: Waltz's methodological narrowness is not incidental to his theory, but integral both to his depiction of international politics and to his normative prescriptions.132 Waltz's critics cannot accept the basic

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132 It is, for example, the parsimonious assumption that states are rendered functionally similar by the structural constraints of anarchy that leads Waltz to conclusions about international politics that are no less gloomy than those of the classical Realists.
analytical premises of neorealism without accepting the pessimistic conclusions to which those premises tend to lead. That other analytic premises are as valid, or more useful, than neorealism's cannot be denied. But as Keohane himself suggests, "modified structural models" at some point logically become "too different to be considered Realist themselves."\footnote{Keohane, "Theory of World...," p. 190.} Neoliberal regime theorists likewise encounter empirical puzzles that neorealism is constructed explicitly to avoid. Regimes, while compatible with a variety of understandings, are conceived to describe a substantive reality that is suited poorly to neorealism's rationalistic theory of knowledge. Principles, norms, rules, motives, expectations, and interests do not constitute the sort of observable phenomena around which a positivist system of philosophy could readily build. This is not to suggest that these phenomena cannot be treated as data but, as Kratochwil and Ruggie suggest, the intersubjective nature of regimes seems poorly suited to the methods of positivism prevailing in numerous regime analyses: "intersubjective meaning, where it is considered at all, is inferred from behavior."\footnote{Kratochwil and Ruggie, pp. 764-765. Or, in game theoretic formulations, meanings are posited \textit{a priori}. See Axelrod, \textit{The Evolution of Cooperation}, passim. For a discussion on the role of ideas in international theory see Michael Banks, "The Evolution of International Relations Theory," passim. For a discussion on the role of ideas in the formation of regimes see Keeley, pp. 85-90, and Ernst Haas, "Words Can Hurt You," in \textit{International Regimes}, pp. 23-59.} Rules need thus to be inferred from the notoriously ambiguous realm of state action or -- even more ambiguously -- inaction.\footnote{For example Arthur Stein's discussion of "regimes of common aversion" in Arthur Stein, "Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic World," in \textit{International Regimes}, pp. 125-127.}

Serious attention to international cooperation, while long overdue, seems to entail close examination of non-statist factors; it demands attention to avenues of research that an authentically Realist understanding of international politics
precludes. It is of course just such an undertaking as this that neoliberals pursue. But without breaking explicitly from neorealism's epistemological/structural foundations, neoliberal regime theorists can no more break free of the limits of positivism than can the neorealism they seek to transcend. It is difficult to imagine, for example, how cooperation, the central problem of regime theory, can be addressed fruitfully "without reference to ideology, the values of the actors, the beliefs they hold about the interdependence of issues, and the knowledge available to them about how they can realize specific goals."\textsuperscript{136} A systemic approach sheds no light on these phenomena, while a statist and individual approach is essential. It is the latter approaches to foreign policy analysis that neorealism explicitly eschews. Thus, the attempt to apply neorealist theory to the problem of interstate cooperation tends to expose inadequacies that can only be resolved by expanding the scope of structural Realism. Ironically, the attempt to recast Waltzian theory discloses -- and even magnifies -- the analytical limits of neorealism. This is not to suggest that neorealism has no theory of cooperation. Rather, cooperation -- like other aspects of international politics -- is understood by neorealists as constrained and dictated by the distribution of capabilities in the system as a whole. While this leads to is a sparse, and perhaps normatively unappealing theory of cooperation, Waltz clearly recognizes these limitations.\textsuperscript{137}

I do not wish to suggest that statist and positivist models cannot address the issues of concern to neoliberals, nor do I wish to suggest that those who stress the limits of Realism must likewise stress the limits of positivism. As regards the first point, it is merely suggested that regimes -- to the extent that they are treated

\textsuperscript{136} Haggard and Simmons, pp. 509-510.

\textsuperscript{137} Waltz, "Realist Thought...," pp. 30-31. See also Axelrod, The Evolution of Cooperation, p. 12. Axelrod demonstrates well how an "institutional dimension" can be added to Realism's static categories.
behaviourally (as actors) -- do not seem to take us much beyond Realism's allegedly static and impenetrable categories. And as for the second point, the pervasiveness of neoliberal analyses of regime creation and behaviour itself attests to the limited influence enjoyed by the critics of positivism. Thus, while faith abounds that regimes may "alter actor's calculations of how to maximize their interests" and might even "alter interests themselves," the mechanism "through which ideas could influence outcomes" has remained obscure, forcing some regime analyses to "the limits of a Realist orientation." 138

Inverting the Neoliberal Logic

Neoliberal regime analysts, by stressing the importance of convergent expectations as a regime characteristic, tend to limit regime studies to genuinely cooperative arrangements. Because such arrangements are most common in non-security areas, the international political economy "would appear to be neoliberalism's preserve." 139 Neoliberal regime studies, because they are limited analytically to an essentially voluntaristic model of regime formation, are limited empirically to examples of hegemonic leadership based on liberal assumptions and policies toward the international political-economic order.

While regime creation is linked logically both to great power leadership and/or small groups of states, most empirical studies suggest that regime creation tends to be linked to the influence of a single great power. Thus, the historical focus of regime analysis has been confined largely to the pax britannica and the pax

138 Krasner, "Regimes and the Limits of Realism," in International Regimes, pp. 361-368.

139 Grieco, p. 504.
americana, and the substantive core of most regime studies has been limited to economic relations between states within these hegemonic structures. Relatedly, the regime stress on convergent expectations has tended to mask the less consensual aspects of international "cooperation," portraying issues of governance, authority, and rulership as functional or pragmatic problems of coordination between broadly like-minded actors. The propensity of regime analysts to rely on assumptions about hegemonic leadership, moreover, precludes analysis of other structural contributors to regime creation and maintenance. Mainstream regime theorists and proponents of neoliberalism in general appear unable or unwilling to recognize that the seemingly changing processes of international politics may be embedded in enduring and familiar politico-military structures. International regimes have after all tended to have a distinctly intra-alliance character. The proliferation of international institutions in the immediate postwar period, though "guided" by and reflective of Anglo-American values and interests, was bolstered by an unusually high degree of ideological convergence and a predisposition to cooperation. As noted in chapter three, the essential causes for this historical peculiarity were: (1). an almost universal belief among advanced industrial states that illiberal economic policies had helped lead to war and; (2). a palpable military and ideological threat emanating from the Soviet Union. While this is an admittedly extreme example of conventional security interests leading to regime creation, all but the most recent developments in postwar international politics

140 Haggard and Simmons, pp. 502-503.


have occurred in the context of a competitive and often hostile bipolar relationship. Neoliberal regime analyses, however, seldom acknowledge the theoretical significance of bipolarity. 143

Because they rely largely on explicitly structural arguments about hegemony, neoliberals all but ignore the structural characteristic of bipolarity as a potential permissive cause of regime formation. In the process they yield a model of regime creation, and regime change, that seems to reverse the causal logic of neorealism. Regimes, to the extent that they matter at all, are viewed by Waltz as expressions of state interest. Neoliberal theories of regime tend by contrast to employ a transformational logic; regimes are the product of the basic causal variables specified by Waltz but, once created, may take on a life of their own. That neorealism may be unduly pessimistic about the prospects for inter-state cooperation -- even in the security realm -- may well be true. The point, however, is that there seems to be no scope for such an evolutionary process in a genuinely neorealist understanding of regimes. Likewise, bipolarity -- the centre-piece of Waltzian Realism -- goes virtually unnoticed by theorists that purport to build on his theory.

143 Webb and Krasner, pp. 183-198.
The neoliberal notion of regime creation and change employs an embryonic logic not found in an authentically Realist orientation, and that can be illustrated roughly as follows:

**Neoliberal Model of International Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>time A</th>
<th>time B</th>
<th>time C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>security dominant</td>
<td>security dominant</td>
<td>no dominant issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basic causal variables</td>
<td>basic causal variables</td>
<td>basic causal variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state interest</td>
<td>state interest</td>
<td>state interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>security realm = conflictual</td>
<td>security realm = conflictual</td>
<td>security = non-security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-security realm = conflictual</td>
<td>non-security realm = cooperative</td>
<td>cooperation low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increased interdependence</td>
<td>complex interdependence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

clear issue hierarchy  

Realism unchallenged  

Realism unchallenged  

Realism challenged

At time A, regime creation is linked strongly to the familiar Realist causal variables of state power and interest, exercised typically by a hegemonic power but also conceivably by groups of states. The logic of neoliberal analysis suggests, however, that state power and interest is "less important for explaining regime persistence than for explaining regime creation"; once established regimes "alter actor's calculations of how to maximize their interests," and "alter interests themselves."\(^{144}\)

This seed of change is present, but not manifest, at time B. The logic of "feedback" is coupled to an unmistakable optimism that regime-induced changes in the non-security realm can and will have a contagion effect on the security relations of states -- modeled at time C. This essentially cyclical model --

\(^{144}\) Krasner., "Regimes and the Limits of Realism," in *International Regimes*, p. 359 and p. 361.
which is strongly reminiscent of neofunctionalism -- suggests that the deepening complexity and increasingly collaborative character of international relations in the economic-social realm will(Has) slowly but inexorably affect(ed) similar changes in security relations. Hence, the absence of well defined security regimes under these assumptions is cause for neither pessimism nor despair, nor does it challenge the causal logic employed by neoliberals. Again however, for reasons made obvious by the above model, the empirical focus of regime analysis has tended to be confined to issues largely ignored by Realism.

Waltz, in defense of his beleaguered theory, denies the possibility of a genuinely neorealist model of international regimes and asks rhetorically: "can one imagine how ... international institutions could be thrown into a theory?"¹⁴⁵ He does not merely defend *his* neorealist approach, but also his conception of what constitutes a theory. International scholars, suggest Waltz, too often yield to the tempting but anti-theoretical view that analysis should aim "to attain closer correspondence to reality." For Waltz theory is a means of "dealing with complexity"; "explanatory power ... is gained by moving away from 'reality,' not by staying close to it."¹⁴⁶ Hence, the much heralded deepening complexity of international politics -- often invoked as evidence of Realism's growing irrelevance -- is itself cited by Waltz as proof of the utility of parsimonious theory. As Waltz puts it, rather ironically in light of recent criticisms, "to be simple-minded" is the first rule in the construction of international theory.¹⁴⁷

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¹⁴⁵ Waltz, "Realist Thought...," p. 30.


¹⁴⁷ Waltz, "Realist Thought...," p. 27.
Neorealism's retreat from reality augments the scientific status of international theory while simultaneously limiting its capacity for empirical analysis. Hence Waltz's "scientific" recasting of Realism seems paradoxically to diminish, not enhance, the already questionable scientific credentials of political Realism. Kratochwil expresses nicely this sense of a theoretical revolution gone astray:

in empiricism, reference to 'facts' was supposed to establish the 'scientific' character of a proposition; now deductive rigour is supposed to deliver the same result single-handedly and without the complications of actual events or data. Thus issues are often discussed on a level of abstraction that defies any further detailed examination.  

Waltz acknowledges, however, that observation and experience remain an indispensable part of the theoretical process, adding the proviso that facts do not "contain or conclusively suggest their own explanation." Nevertheless, many of Waltz's critics, even while embracing his vision of theory, undertake an explicitly revisionist theoretical project aimed at reconstructing, supplementing, and progressively modifying neorealism.

But the beguilingly simple process of "progressive modification" advocated by neoliberals and put into practice in neoliberal regime studies tends to defy "the linear and additive logic of neorealist categories." Regime theory, whatever the extent of Realist and neorealist influence, entails an interpretation of actor motives, goals, and interests more subtle than conventional Realist assumptions and methods allow. Waltz's would-be redeemers thus stumble over problems his

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149 Waltz, "Realist Thought...," p. 31.

150 Katzenstein, p. 16.
theory is designed explicitly to avoid. They reveal in the process a conception of theoretical progress at odds with Waltz's model and a commitment to normative issues theorized-out of neorealism. Neoliberals begin by stressing the limits of parsimony, and end by suggesting that neorealism can and should be modified progressively and/or blended with other (principally liberal) insights to achieve a better fit with reality. But the evolutionary logic of neoliberalism, exhibited forcefully in regime analyses, is at odds with the logical and intellectual foundations of the theoretical tradition on which it seeks to build. Neoliberalism is differentiated from neorealism not merely by its distinct methodological emphases, but by a distinct set of normative and epistemological concerns as concerns as well.

Relatedly, neoliberalism is limited by a built-in bias for an understanding of regime based on genuinely voluntaristic modes of behaviour. While it is acknowledged that regimes can be imposed, analysis is dominated by broadly cooperative models of regime creation and maintenance, largely because regime studies have been limited inevitably to broadly benevolent forms of hegemony or -- more benignly -- leadership like the pax britannica and the pax americana. Thus neoliberals, while claiming to share neorealism's emphasis on structure, are indebted especially to the concept of hegemonic stability. But regime analysts have tended to divorce the notion of hegemonic stability, governance, and leadership from its association with politico-military outcomes and to confine their studies "to an analysis of the relationship between hegemonic power and the stability of the international economic order."151 The critics of neorealism thus tend both to caricature Waltz's understanding of international change as crudely simplistic and to view the utility of his analysis as limited to an overly restrictive frame of reference termed "security politics." Yet the substantive processes captured by the

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notion of regime can be viewed not as challenging the security structure of states but as deriving from, and thriving under, the stability inherent in the modern configuration of that system. Such in fact is what one would expect a genuinely neorealist understanding of international politics to explore. Hence, their intentions notwithstanding, neoliberals tend: to contradict rather than build on the model of theoretical progress articulated by Waltz, and; to overlook a viable neorealist account of regimes as embedded in politico-military structures that are not themselves cooperative.

The End of Bipolarity: Scenarios in Lieu of a Conclusion

An implicit premise in this chapter, and in this thesis, is that theory and practice in international politics cannot be separated, except of course conceptually for analytical, or pedagogical, purposes. In reality theory and practice remain inextricably fused, with developments in the former realm tending to lag behind developments in the latter realm. Thus, paradoxically, international theorists may be both unduly susceptible to the influence of changes in the world they seek to comprehend, and prone to miss, or understate, changes that challenge established orthodoxies or "favourite utopias."152

The pattern is familiar enough. In the post-World War Two era, for example, the political and intellectual climate was one conducive strongly to Realist prescriptions and policies. Realism, as Hoffmann put it, was "nothing but a

152 Hoffmann, The State of War, p. 4. See also K. J. Holsti, "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Which are the Fairest Theories of All," International Studies Quarterly, 33, No. 3 (September 1989), p. 259.
rationalization of Cold War policies."\textsuperscript{153} And in the 1980s, international theorists began to grapple with the implications of an apparent decline of American pre-eminence in world politics and, more recently still, with the end of the Cold War itself.\textsuperscript{154} Speculation about change is of course a tricky business, with numerous potential causal variables at play. But the end of the Cold War constitutes a "crucial test for the explanation of change provided by the established (neorealist) paradigm of international politics"\textsuperscript{155} and, by implication, a test of the argument developed in this chapter.

Under neorealist premises, we might expect to see a significant decline in international cooperation, especially in areas furthest removed from political and military policies.\textsuperscript{156} Indeed, the end of the Cold War marks a test for Marxist theorists as well, since they view aversion to communism as a strong stimulant to collaboration amongst capitalists.\textsuperscript{157} On the other hand, however, the Cold War may well have been an impediment to the development of genuinely global regimes. Thus, rather than speculative aimlessly about a process that is only now unfolding, I will confine my comments to a discussion of possible scenarios:

\begin{thebibliography}{99}

\item \textsuperscript{154} See Nye, "Neorealism and Neoliberalism," p. 247.

\item \textsuperscript{155} Kratochwil, "The embarrassment...," p. 63. Parenthetical addition mine.

\item \textsuperscript{156} Nye, "Neorealism and Neoliberalism," p. 247.

\end{thebibliography}
(1) an increasingly fragmented, competitive, and uncooperative world

(2) an increasingly cooperative, culturally and ideologically homogenous world, marked by the emergence of genuinely global institutions and values

While the end of the Cold War is new, the issues at play are not, and boil down to a seemingly perennial clash of fragmentationist and integrationist forces in world politics. John Lewis Gaddis argues that the Cold War represented an artificial suppression of these dynamics, organizing normally factional nationalities under the competing supra-national hegemonies of the US and USSR.158 This persuasive argument constitutes an ironic inversion of the presently popular view that world politics is on the threshold of a new dawn, marked by nothing less momentous than the "end of history" itself.159 That is to say, for Gaddis, the end of the Cold War does not mark a fundamental change in the dynamics of world politics, but a return to its fundamental dynamics. Thus construed, the Cold War was a departure from the norm of international politics -- not business as usual, but a historical hiatus from its usual business. Its end marks a return to history, and may ultimately broaden the scope of international conflict, including for example ecological threats, regional conflicts, and internal struggles.160

In a similar, but arguably more ominous, vein, Samuel Huntington speculates that the end of the Cold War portends a new beginning, and not the end,


160 Gaddis, p. 22. See also Adam Roberts, "A New Age in International Relations?," International Affairs, 67, No. 3 (July 1991), p. 518.
of history. For Huntington, patterns of conflict in the past occurred along national lines, but within the cultural parameters of "Western Civilization." In the post-Cold-War era nationalist ideologies will increasingly fail to mobilize support, and fall by the wayside of history; new "fault lines" will emerge along cultural lines, pitting civilization against civilization. The end of the Cold War marks the symbolic end of Western Civilizational hegemony, and the symbolic emergence of other civilizations as historical "movers and shapers."

The scenarios offered by Gaddis and Huntington stand in marked contrast to those of Francis Fukuyama, Zacher and Matthew, and Buzan. To be sure, there are distinctions to be made between these scholars; neither Zacher and Matthew, nor Buzan, for example, proclaim "an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism." Zacher and Matthew in particular, while sanguine about the future prospects for increased integration and regime growth, tend to hedge their bets that these dynamics can persist in the future, though they are more confident that liberal international theory is adequate to explain them. Ultimately, however, there is no definitive way to adduce the international political consequences of the end of the Cold War, precisely because it remains unclear whether past cooperation was a function of hegemonic stability, bipolar stability, the paralysis of "the territorial conquest system caused by nuclear risk," all of the above, and/or other

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161 Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs*, 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993).

162 Ibid., p. 29.

163 Fukuyama, as cited in Roberts, p. 518.

164 Zacher and Matthew, p. 138.
factors. My point in any case is not that bipolarity can explain everything related to cooperation, but that, in neoliberal analyses of regimes, it tends to be overlooked.

Finally, it seems clear that the moral and analytical complexity of international politics ought to caution us against premature conclusions regarding current trajectories, just as the complexity of international thought cautions us against definitive statements about the nature of theory. At a minimum, it behooves us to note that there are always competing dynamics at work. The grotians, perhaps, come closest to recognizing these intellectual realities:

"the vision of a states system that achieves order and harmony through the triumph in all countries of the true ideology is different from the Grotian or solidarist vision, for the latter assumes that conflicts of interest will continue to exist among states, and seeks to curb them through the overwhelming power of the collectivity, whereas the former maintains that when the true ideology is universally enthroned, conflicts of interest will not exist or will only be of slight importance."166

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166 Bull, p. 245. Zacher and Matthew would perhaps define Bull as a "true liberal": "we would judge that true liberals focus on how states are able to harmonize their different conceptions of interests and not on perfect concord among nations." Zacher and Matthew, p. 110.
CHAPTER FIVE
IMPOSING DISCIPLINE

I do not claim that it is possible to squeeze the whole camel of international relations through the eye of one needle

Stanley Hoffmann

For a word so widely used, what constitutes a "discipline" is seldom discussed

Immanuel Wallerstein

As Nye suggests, "[h]ow states define their interests, and how their interests change, has always been a weak area in Realist theory." ¹ Because Realists tend to be both skeptical of the adaptability of human behaviour, and are committed to parsimonious theories, they assume readily that human/state interests are fixed. Interests are thus not something to be explored, but are, for the sake of analytical convenience, something to be taken for granted. Critics might suggest that analytical convenience is a scientific veneer for Realism's ideological agenda -- its "anti-political apology for cynicism and physical force." ² It is true that Realism's philosophical presuppositions are mirrored in its investigative techniques, and vice versa, but this is true of any perspective. Methodologies, as Alker suggests, are no


more than "applied epistemologies." Hence, it might be fairer to suggest that interests are less a "weak area in Realist theory," than an area of inquiry unamenable to fruitful exploration via a Realist methodology.

Are we then to conclude that, despite its aspirations and claims to provide a comprehensive theoretical framework, Realism contains only a partial explanation of international politics? For a host of international scholars, many of whom are associated with the neoliberal label, the answer to this question is yes. In their justification for "complex interdependence" as a new perspective in international politics, for example, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye argue that Realism needs to be "supplemented by a more complex model of change." Similar arguments are made on behalf of international regime and hegemonic stability theory, and are joined by more general attempts to expand the scope of Realism, focusing more in recent years on its especially influential and parsimonious variant of neorealism. The definitive work in this genre is Barry Buzan et. al's The Logic of Anarchy, where it is suggested that neorealism is not "wrong" but incomplete, and the authors endeavour systematically to fill in its analytical gaps.

War and peace are traditionally the core concern of Realism, but does this preclude its interest or competence in other international issues? That Realism tends to subsume the full panoply of international issues under the central concepts of

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anarchy, national interest, and balance of power does not render its treatment of other problems invalid, though it does render them suspect. Realism can account for international institutions, collaboration, collective security, political integration, free trade, or the many substantive concerns that impel recent perspectives on international politics. But is it Realism's ability to deal with the new facts of international politics that is really in doubt, or its inferences and prescriptions? While I suspect that the latter is true, this thesis is less concerned with defending particular perspectives on international politics than with challenging approaches that aspire to "squeeze the whole camel of international relations through the eye of one needle."6

Every attempt to rise above the fray of perspectivism in international politics deserves to be treated skeptically, as all claims to have achieved so lofty an estate invariably carry and express an ideology of their own. But, precisely because non-ideological thought is encoded in an ecumenical genre, its predilections and biases are not easily grasped. The literature on international regimes is a case in point. While nominally an inter-paradigmatic concept, regimes are linked closely to an ongoing attempt to play down, and even to reconcile, idealist and realist accounts of international politics.7 The seemingly catholic character of regimes studies is reflected in a litany of theoretical approaches: structural, game-theoretic, functional, cognitive, eco-evolutionist, eco-reformist, egalitarian, liberal, mercantilist, mainstream, and so on.8 Virtually every state of the art on regime theory leaves us


7 Stephan Haggard and Beth A. Simmons, "Theories of International Regimes," International Organization, 41, No. 3 (Summer 1987), p. 492.

with the impression that the regime concept is both an agent for, and a reflection of, widespread intellectual concord in international theory. Popular accounts of regime theory thus have a distinct feel of folie à deux, as the convergent expectations of regime theorists begin to parody the convergent expectations of actors in regimes. If regime analyses do not appear to pose issues of an ideological nature, it is only because the concept is associated closely with a particular -- albeit disfigured -- manifestation of liberal international theory.

It is tempting to discount international regimes as the arcane and fleeting fancy of a chronically impetuous discipline. But while the emphasis on regimes may turn out to be transitory, the desire for intellectual consensus that pervades the regime literature is not. This impulse is natural, as the consensual erosion or resistance of international theory seems both to threaten it with interminable debate about basic concepts, and to expose it to opportunistic attack by non-traditionalists. Hence, theoretical disagreements are characterized by some regime proponents not as disputes, but as misunderstandings. Ernst Haas, for instance, speaks of "terminological confusion" among the many approaches to international regime.\footnote{Haas, p. 30} Antinomies are played down, and there is an implicit and explicit sense of teleology in both the development and study of regimes.

Regime studies are linked to a series of theoretical innovations that eschew the hard boundaries of the inter-paradigm debate, and displace images of a theoretical Babel with images of a theoretical multiculturalism. There are of course attempts to discern the theoretical contribution and direction of these analyses, but -- on balance -- there is little concern about where we are going, and widespread faith that we are going somewhere. This is because regime thinking encourages, and almost demands, philosophical non-partisanship; regimes are conceived as a
product, and/or producer, of changing circumstances. There is some confusion on this point because theories of regime origin are less apt to converge than theories of regime behaviour. Yet the key point of emphasis for regime scholars is not how regimes got here, but what they do after they emerge. This too is a point of considerable debate, but regimes are conceived broadly as constraining and changing the expectations and behaviours of actors, and funneling each in a common direction. There is a strong sense of inevitability and constraint in regimes, with the problems of interdependence engendering collaboration in a broadening range of issue-areas, and changing not only the behaviour of actors, but their thinking about their thinking about their behaviour. There is also a distinct element of serendipity, as regimes afford some measure of autonomy over the individual and collective fates of actors despite, and in an importance sense because of, the inauspicious conditions of complex interdependence.

For a significant number of scholars, international politics and theory is less and less about conflicting goals, values, agendas, or conceptions of the international system, and increasingly a function of mutual constraints -- of pressing "new" realities. But if the deepening complexity of international politics makes interstate cooperation necessary and desirable, it does not make it any easier: "[c]onditions of interdependence make essential a sense of community but do not automatically engender that sense."¹⁰ There is, in other words, no "hidden hand" to assure safe passage from an increasingly anachronistic states system to the new global order. Though there may be present in international politics a transcending global interest, it is not axiomatic that the international system of states is likely to be transcended. But, because it is a nascent field of inquiry, involving conceptually difficult entities, regime analysis is able to evade definitive statement about international trends:

"international behavior displays more and more instances of collaboration among states in recognition of growing complexity. But it continues to contain the opposite trend as well."11 Thus, while faith in the evolutionary character of regimes abounds, it is tempered with vigilance.

The protean nature of international regimes, and of the international system, alerts us to the presence of an evolutionary epistemology. While the inclusive definition of regime offered by Krasner cautions against so sweeping a claim, regimes are only nominally connected to intellectual traditions outside the mainstream of international theory, and even here have been a product almost exclusively of American scholarship. An exception that proves the point is James Keeley's Foucauldian analysis of regimes, an attempt to decouple regime thinking from its narrow association with rational actor models, and to broaden regime theorizing to include assessment of their less consensual and benign elements.12

The linkage of regime analysis to Realism is likewise suspect, as is a broader tendency -- both a product and producer of the regime literature -- to collapse Realist and liberal understanding of international politics. That international cooperation is compatible with Realism is undoubted, but regimes are scarcely a core or defining Realist concept. Hence, the inculcation of Realist and/or modified Realist theories of regime seems a gratuitous and -- for neoliberals at least -- self-serving practice. The philosophical muse of regime theory is clearly idealist, and its more proximate theoretical sources are theories of integration and commercial/economic liberalism more broadly. In neoliberalism, regimes are associated with an expectation of increased cooperation that defies the self-interested, rational motivation of its

11 Haas, p. 56.

creators. Actors succeed despite themselves in the creation of global community, an ironic outcome that resonates clearly with economic liberalism's happy discovery of unintended consequences.

But whatever their debts to a liberal idealist tradition, regime analysts do not always acknowledge their benefactors, nor do they enhance a liberal international theory. On the contrary, regime theory is part of neoliberalism's selective appropriation of liberalism, and thus abets and aids in the homogenization of a diverse tradition. Neoliberalism merely arrogates the liberal label, reducing a comprehensive tradition to a narrow theoretical interest in international institutions. Suitable to its place of inception, the regime concept, like a Hollywood set, conveys a realistic but empty facade. Its liberal props are absolute gains, convergent expectations, actor-interests, public goods, and a faith in the capacity of actors to learn how to cooperate, while its more impressive stunts are performed by Realists.

I have attempted to situate neoliberalism's gratuitous simplification of liberal and Realist concepts in the general theoretical malaise afflicting recent international scholarship. Disciplinary incertitude is the parent of innovation, and innovation tends in turn to beget faddism. I have chosen to focus on neoliberalism not because it is especially culpable in this regard, but because it is the nearest thing extant to a credible mainstream heir to Realism. While neoliberalism's impact on international theory is generally negative, its errors are those of omission. It is my view that, in their attempt to reorient crisis-weary international relations, the neoliberals misapprehend, and founder ultimately on, the core problem of the field: its need to accommodate the two broad and irreconcilable ideals of utopia and reality. These different ontological stances issue inevitably in conflicting epistemological, normative, and methodological positions. Neoliberalism runs headlong into this theoretical reality, countenancing -- or engaging in -- attempts to reconcile, or even
synthesize, intellectual traditions. As a result, neoliberalism's attempt to resuscitate international theory moves the field further from its intellectual roots, perpetuating its misrepresented "crisis" and exposing it to attack from the harpies of the third debate.

If the claims of this thesis with regard to neoliberalism and regimes seem sweeping, it is because they are directed at a set of moving targets within a set of moving targets. What defines a regime, and thus a regime theorist, cannot easily be discerned, nor is it possible to say when or where the liberals, Realists, grotians, pluralists, and other members of international theory's supporting cast become neoliberals. Chapter four distills neoliberalism into a series of propositions but, because adherents and taxonomers of this emergent perspective locate it at the interstices of Realist and liberal international theory, its intellectual boundaries are porous, and its membership difficult to estimate. But the pervasive use of regime theory, interdependence analyses, and other cognate concepts suggest that the neoliberal guild is a substantial and growing body. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to situate and generalize neoliberal and regime thinking, not least because these approaches seem designed precisely to defy the exclusive logic of taxonomy, and to presuppose an end to ideology in international scholarship.

If my critique of these approaches resides at a relatively high level of generality it is because my central problem concerns the general state of international theory. Though chapters three and four take aim at specific aspects of neoliberal scholarship -- and focus in particular on its dubious attempt and claim to modify Realism/neorealism progressively -- the gist of the critique is less an interest in arcane debates about process level and system level analyses, and more a concern that these debates lead us entirely to miss the point, purpose, and prerequisites of sound international thought. Such thought is alive to the distinctiveness of
intellectual traditions; it does not attempt to forge contending theoretical impulses into a potpourri of slippery categories and shadowy concepts.

In understanding the requirements for sound international theory we need look no further than E. H. Carr, whose simple but profound characterization of the field as composed of a central antithesis between normative and empirical theory holds up as well today as it did in his era. This is not a typology so much as it is a conceptual means of analysis of an exotically complex realm. International theory cannot tie its fate too closely to its facts because these are fleeting constructs that can be only partially apprehended and are bound up inextricably with normative attitudes that do not merely resist objective analysis, but are variable across time and cultures. But neither can international theory lose sights of its facts. It matters little if these facts are constructed socially, as their impact on real lives is sensible enough, and they do constitute a shared, if imperfect, notion of something that really does exist. None of these things renders international theory impossible, but suggests that it must strive always for some degree of accommodation between the empirical and normative aspects of the world it seeks to comprehend. Any theory that cannot or will not do so can amount to no more than a political ideology -- to a "concrete expression(s) of particular conditions and interests."  

Carr's position is useful because it does not invite us to engage the arcane issue of fact and value in international politics, nor does it promote open-ended epistemological wrangling. Rather, it promises to disengage the habitually misunderstood problem of fact and value by affirming the dual ontological character of world politics. Because facts and values -- empirical and normative theory -- reality and utopia -- are part of an enduring antithesis, they set the parameters for constructive international thinking. That this antithesis influences international

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thought can be seen in its penchant for dualisms — it is reflectivist or rationalist, interpretivist or behaviouralist, historical or explanatory, organic or mechanical in conception. The categories seem endless but, significantly, tend to be variations on the central and single antithesis described by Carr, or at least tended to be so until the advent of the "third debate," a series of epistemological innovations premised on the assumption that traditional international theory has become philosophically inert. But the "crisis" of international theory turns out to be little more than disciplinary self-immolation, attendant on the field's inevitable failure to hold itself together around the single epistemological stance of scientific Realism. This misapprehended "crisis" has helped to impel the field toward consideration of a host of theoretical and epistemological innovations, further deepening its sense of disciplinary self-doubt. Numerous tendencies are at work in this cauldron of theories, often given the benign title of pluralism. But there is no intrinsic virtue in diversity and, more to the point, international theory has all but surrendered itself to a "crisis" of its own making, thus losing sight of its truly distinctive constitutive features. It is time to put its manufactured "crisis" behind it, and to return to the basics of elementary ontological hygiene.

Its creeping association with scientific conceptions of paradigm and discipline have had much to do with international theory losing sight of its early roots. Utopia and reality are very general categories, and are no substitute for the parsimonious and elegant theories of the hard sciences, or even other social sciences. Impatience with broad philosophical traditions gets the better of many practitioners of international politics, and neorealism and neoliberalism seem to be the product of such an impulse. But when international theory dons the mantle and rhetoric of the natural sciences, it accepts their evaluative criteria as well. This must lead to

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14 K. J. Holsti, "Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall, Which are the Fairest Theories of All?," *International Studies Quarterly*, 33, No. 3 (September 1989), p. 257.
distortion, as even the most sophisticated and subtle techniques of behavioural science cannot hope to apprehend that realm of international politics that is eternally beyond the ken of objective analysis. It is this aspect of international scholarship that opens it wide to attack from its critical or "post-positivist" flank. But the post-positivists get the problem of international theory only partly right, in that they draw the wrong inference, and offer the wrong prescription, in response to the field's hubristic preoccupation with science. That the attempt to develop the empirical side of international theory often goes too far does not invalidate empirical investigation, but exaggerates its importance at the expense of normative theory. The post-positivists set up a false dichotomy between science and relativism, and lead us down a theoretical blind alley when they countenance, by default, acceptance of the latter. Post-positivism thus tends to conceive of international theory in terms of mutually exclusive epistemological stances -- it is either scientific or non-scientific. Though the modern practice of international theory invites such a conclusion, the judgment is nevertheless wrong. International theory is neither a science nor a non-science, but rather a science/discipline with a character unique to itself. Its roots are empirical and normative, issuing in broad philosophical traditions that together define the field, but render it always a theoretical realm of irreconcilable differences.

The dualism of idealism and realism manifests itself in a variety of ways, depending on how, or if, international theorists choose to engage it. First, through neglect, misunderstanding, or fear of the philosophical complexity of their subject academics may be driven to impose or promote single epistemological standards. Many international theorists, for instance, are inveterate backers of a "global explanatory theory," despite widespread recognition of the elusiveness of this goal.15 This tendency has helped to engender a second, equally lamentable, response

15 Hoffmann, Contemporary Theory, p. 10.
discussed in chapter two: an orgy of perspectives characteristic of the post-positivists. A third propensity is to view different conceptions of knowledge and purpose in international theory as, at a minimum, complementary and, at a maximum, amenable to synthesis. The synthetic temper is particularly prominent in recent international scholarship, and is a defining characteristic of neoliberalism. But this "new" perspective merely represents the first tendency of epistemological monism in a new form; neoliberalism's proposed synthesis is part of an agenda to revitalize, broaden the analytical scope, and widen the membership of a hitherto dominant Realist "research program." This goal, as argued above, is a misguided one.

But the impossibility of reconciling philosophies of progress in international theory need not jeopardize the viability of the discipline as a whole, nor condemn international theorists to "an intellectual life without standards." Epistemological differences can be counted on to thwart consensus over the appropriate uses of theory, but this raises technical issues of implementation -- conceptions of theoretical purpose narrowly defined -- that need not challenge nor preclude the existence of a deeper purpose. As Hoffmann observes, echoing Quincy Wright, "at the least a discipline implies consciousness by the writers that there is a subject with some sort of unity," even though disagreement and uncertainty might exist about the criterion, the limits, and the methods of the discipline. Hence, Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach get both the depiction and significance of the epistemological dimensions

16 In this sense the participants in the "third debate" have not discovered epistemology, so much as they have foundered on the unrealizable ideal of founding their discipline on a unitary epistemological standard.

17 Holsti, "Mirror, Mirror...," p. 261.

18 Stanley Hoffmann, Contemporary Theory, p. 1.
of international theory wrong when they suggest that idealism and realism are reflections of differing normative commitments. Rather, idealism and realism are instrumental responses to a single set of normative problems concerning war and peace in international politics: namely, how best to avoid the former, and how best to secure the latter. Differences that cannot be reconciled in a particular theory, can thus be accommodated by a broader, more general, sense of purpose. Put differently, we may all agree on where we want to go, but disagree on how to get there.

Hence, disputes over theory are inevitable, but occur within a broad disciplinary ambit in which they can and must be reconciled to a single conception of the field's core defining problems. Scholars that reject this ambit reject the discipline itself, and thus logically cannot be called international theorists, as is the case with many of the post-positivists. On the other hand, however, we must be weary of stifling pluralism in the name of unitary evaluative standards of science -- of imposing single epistemological standards. Such a stance is tautological in that it conflates theories of international politics to the discipline in which they are housed. Theoretical diversity, and thus a measure of fragmentation, is endemic to the theoretical enterprise. Thus, rather than aspire to the harmony of a global explanatory theory, academics might more reasonably hope for intellectual syncopation.

Finally, however, we must guard against nodding too vigourously in the direction of perspectivism. As Thomas Biersteker puts it, "[o]nce liberal toleration yields to the production of alternative interpretations and understandings, how are we to choose from the abundance of alternative explanations?" Thus, the


proclivity to conceptualize international relations as an edifice with multiple "rooms" and "views" may weaken more than shore-up the foundations of the discipline.\textsuperscript{21} The house of international relations may have many rooms, and may put on additions, but its builders must have a care to its structural integrity. They must be careful in particular to recognize and bar would-be home-wreckers who, camped outside the house, celebrate its apparently steady dilapidation, eagerly awaiting and/or abetting its collapse. But the house is in better repair than both its builders and wreckers generally suggest. In order better to apprehend the structural integrity of our enterprise this thesis has returned to the blueprints of its principal architects, and to the sketches of Carr in particular. In those designs are the outlines of a house divided over the precise nature of its substructure, but united behind the walls of a common interest in better understanding the world beyond our doors. But if international relations is a common disciplinary home, it is also a split level house, with two broad views. Nearest the ground, in multiple chambers, are the empirical theorists. From their "earth-bound" portals they are able to see the facts of international relations with relative clarity, but unable to tie them to a broader prospect. In the penthouses, attics, and garrets are the more philosophically-inclined tenants that, with varying degrees of acuity, scan the broad horizon of international politics, but cannot clearly discern its most terrestrial features.\textsuperscript{22} Though many of the tenants of our disciplinary home divide their time between its floors, these remain distinct levels with distinct vistas, but with a common roof.

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\textsuperscript{22} For the conception of "earth-bound" and "sky-bound" theories I am indebted to Hoffmann. See Hoffmann, Contemporary Theory, p. 9.
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