

To Shape the Nation's Foreign Policy: Struggles for Dominance among American International Relations Scholars

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Whatever its other effects, the Soviet–American Cold War helped launch and sustain an era of feverish intellectual activity in the linked fields of international relations theory and foreign policy analysis. Hot wars sometimes do the same, but only after they are over. For in the heat of bloody conflict, most intellectuals are sucked into public service and resources flow to support the immediate imperatives of war-making. The cold one, by contrast, in part by virtue of being cold and, in part, therefore, long, and being as well full of strategic and intellectual puzzles, encouraged expenditure on theorizing and encouraged theorists by providing them with the incentive of a receptive audience and the prospect of operational consequence for their work. Reinforcing the impelling effects of the war itself was the danger and novelty of the nuclear weapons the antagonists deployed, weapons that constituted an unprecedented existential threat not merely to them but to the entire planet.

I do not mean to suggest that, but for the Cold War, these fields would have dozed through the second half of the 20th century. It would have been a period of arresting drama even if the United States and the Soviet Union had coexisted with no more than the frictions normally incident to great powers relations. With or without cold war, the three-century riptide of western military expansion would have begun its progressive recession with huge consequences for billions of people. And, driven by the plummeting costs and rising efficiencies of transportation and communication, as well as the changing demographic balance between the transatlantic world and the rest of the earth, those society-shaking processes of economic and social integration we often summarize as globalization would have gathered velocity. One sign of the importance of these other phenomena with all their resonant impacts may be the continuing ferment in theorizing about international relations, foreign policy and public international law years after the war's conclusion, a ferment which the 9/11/01 terrorist attack on the United States and its aftermath have intensified.

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Comprehending the scholarly inquiries and debates in these fields should be important to intellectuals regardless of their professional interests, not only because those inquiries and debates concern profound epistemological and ontological issues, but primarily because they have influenced and continue to influence the trajectory of United States foreign policy. Being the world's only superpower or, as a former French Foreign Minister prefers, 'Hyperpower',¹ America's foreign policy matters to everyone, because its effects ripple into every corner of the earth. In the brief space allotted to me, I will attempt to summarize without caricaturing the principal issues and debates that have structured scholarly activity, or at least those that have the greatest potential to influence the actual conduct of American foreign policy.

If I refer largely to American writings, it is not because they are the only important ones; in fact they are not. For instance, contemporary British international relations scholarship is so rich and in some respects distinctive as to give rise to the idea of a 'British School' of international relations theory. In their different ways, academic scholars like Ken Booth, Barry Buzan and Adam Roberts, to name just three, have helped illuminate discussion on the western no less than the eastern side of the Atlantic. On matters of war and peace, all scholarship is informed by the legacy of that great French theorist and humanist, Raymond Aron. The German intellectual journalist, Josef Joffe, is a constant contributor to discussions about America's role in the post-Cold War World and Professors Volker Rittberger of Tübingen University and Friedrich Kratochwil of Ludwig Maximilians Universität in Munich are among a number of multilingual continental theorists who have helped illuminate many of the great issues of international relations theory. I mention these scholars only for exemplary purposes. I could easily add many other names. But I trust the examples are sufficient to witness my appreciation of the breadth and depth of non-American scholarship contributing directly to scholarly discourse in the United States. Of course, important scholarship relevant to the subject of this brief essay is also being conducted in other parts of the world, in China, Japan, India, Egypt, South Africa and Russia, along with various Latin American countries. I do not refer to it only because it has not yet had much influence on the American scene. As intellectual intercourse along with every other form continues its exponential growth, that condition will undoubtedly change.

International relations theorizing²

Realism

At some risk of oversimplification, the past 50 years of international relations theorizing in the United States could be summarized in terms of 'Realism and its Challengers'.³ Realism is an umbrella sheltering principally two explanations for the behavior of states which have largely succeeded each other as paradigms, the later in time not unnaturally assuming the title of 'neo-realism'. While they differ in their assumptions about the ultimate determinants of state behavior, they share key premises and the conclusion that power (rather than, for example, legal and ethical

norms or idiosyncratic sentimental affinities) is the main, arguably the exclusive currency of international relations, and its pursuit together with its allocation at any given time determine their content and shape.

Classical or traditional realism, elaborated early in the Cold War by Hans Morgenthau,⁴ located the lust for power in the human heart, in an unmitigable, ego-centric passion to dominate. As an explanation it gave to the theory a literary or almost religious quality, made it seem rather like the political corollary of original sin in the Christian Canon. In an age of secular intellectuals, it therefore had a slightly dusty, antique form, thus adding aesthetic challenge to its problems in soliciting acceptance from the many human rights idealists who abound in the intellectual world, they being, virtually by definition, optimists about the human condition. Still, both its form and substance gave it a handsome pedigree extending back through Hobbes to Machiavelli and, on some readings, to the great classical historian Thucydides.

Despite the pedigree, traditional realism was vulnerable to displacement by a theory expressed in the modern secular idiom, a theory invoking neat sterile observable structures rather than the opaque messiness of the human heart. Enter neo-realism.⁵ Where its predecessor invoked the heart, it invoked the mind as an instrument of rational calculation, if not always in the individual case then usually in the collective one, an invocation flattering to the world of the policy sciences where the Enlightenment's assumptions about the capacity for rational thought and objective inquiry still prevailed even as postmodern skepticism was beginning its infiltration of Anglo-American academic life partially through the medium of literary studies. While the rationally calculating mind was important for neo-realism, the theory's taproot was the anarchic structure of relations among powerful states. By anarchy its acolytes meant nothing more than the absence of a central, militarily dominant authority able and willing to guarantee the political independence and territorial integrity of each state actor. Without such an authority, states were ultimately dependent on self-help to remain independent and secure in their possessions. That they should wish to do and be so was, neo-realists claimed, an empirically demonstrable fact as well as an unassailable intuition.

In terms of policy, what rationally follows from this wish is dictated by four propositions about state actors and their relationships. One is that quite a number of states are capable of projecting military power beyond their frontiers, that is states possess the means, latent if not already deployed, to hurt each other. A second is that no state can be sure about the intentions of other states, particularly over time. The third, reinforcing the problem of unpredictable intentions, is that the line between offensive and defensive military preparations is never entirely clear and, moreover, one can generally morph quickly into the other. And the fourth is that power is relative and multiple in its sources. Given those conditions and the overall anarchic structure of international politics and given the collective will to independent national existence, rational leaders must pursue power at each other's expense and even at the sacrifice of absolute gains in welfare that would result from schemes of cooperation beneficial to all parties but asymmetrically so. If, for instance, a free trade agreement between great powers X and Y was predicted to effect a 5 percent annual increase in Gross National product for X and a 7 percent gain for Y, while in

the absence of such an agreement, each was projected to grow only 3 percent a year, *ceteris paribus*, X should reject the proposed agreement.

As suggested above, not only *should* states be prepared to sacrifice absolute gains in welfare in order to avoid losing ground in the struggle for power, predictably they *will*, because the rigorous conditions of life in an anarchical system, the irreducible threat to autonomy, drives state elites to accept the logic of strategic competition. Occasionally, to be sure, whether for sentimental, religious or other reasons, a leader might resist the logic of power aggregation. Realists do not deny the human factor. But they assume, usually implicitly, that persons blind or indifferent to *raison d'état* will rarely acquire, much less retain the mantle of leadership. And if they do, their failure to act in accordance with the power-maximizing imperative of the game will in the end emasculate the state they govern. Of course, insofar as welfare gains are concerned, considerations of power might, in a particular case, paradoxically dictate temporary sufferance of asymmetrical gains. For instance, a state might need to accelerate growth for a time in order to maintain political stability and the legitimacy of its leaders, to avoid, in other words, domestic turbulence that would undermine its power projection capabilities. In such a case, more welfare for the population is the result, not the motive.

For humanitarians, the bearers of an ethical orientation to which realists themselves could be susceptible, this is not a jolly vision of the political world. One leading American realist, John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago, refers to the relations of states in this vision as a 'tragedy'.⁶ The gloom of the vision varies to some degree with different sorts of realists, for they are not a homogeneous lot. The most elemental division, overlooking many nuances, is between 'offensive' and 'defensive' schools. Followers of the former believe that realism's premises do not lead ineluctably to boundless power-aggrandizing behavior. States, defensive realists argue, seek a measure of power sufficient to give them security with a nice margin of error. Particularly in circumstances where the defense enjoys a considerable advantage over the offense, states can achieve confident security well short of the maximal accretion of power their resources and conditions would permit. The deterrent power of nuclear weapons, assuming they are immune to destruction by a first strike, arguably provides the equivalent of an advantage for the defense in conventional wars.

Offensive realists disagree. Even assuming that at a given point in time, technology clearly favors the defense, technological factors are volatile, subject to unpredictable change in the technology itself or in the tactics for exploiting it. The advantages that a static defense offered in the First World War shrank in the Second. Moreover, the extent of those advantages is hard to anticipate. Hence, no margin of error is plainly sufficient at any one time, much less over time. As for nuclear weapons, they tend to deter each other, leaving their holders at liberty to wage conventional conflicts, albeit perhaps with ends short of the adversary's destruction, the prospect of which might lead it to escalate toward a nuclear exchange.

Even offensive realism, however, should not be confused with a prescription for aggression. Traditional realism, with its emphasis on the lust for power, conveyed subliminally the proposition that every country would conquer the world if it could. To be sure, the implication proved misleading. One of the stoutest opponents of the

United States' war in Vietnam was the seminal traditionalist, Hans Morgenthau. Still, contemporary Realism has a much cooler sound. And if one is to judge the policy implications of a theory from the policy positions of its most conspicuous advocates, it is certainly not intended to encourage anticipatory elimination of every presently or potentially threatening regime. Illustrative in this respect is widespread opposition among *academic* realists, including Mearsheimer, to the US invasion of Iraq.⁷ Among American *practitioners* thought to be inspired by realist theory or to have had it hot-wired into their psyches, views were mixed. Traditional realists like former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and his long-time associate, former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, were skeptical about a war to change regimes in Iraq,⁸ while Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld appeared as an ardent advocate. As academic Realists come in offensive and defensive forms, it seems fair to say that practicing realists come in cautious and daring styles, the former epitomized by Otto von Bismark following the unification of Germany and the latter by the German exponents of *macht politik* and geopolitics who advocated strategic war and territorial expansion.

The former are careful cost-benefit analyzers, ever alert to the risk of losing power through the effort to grasp more of it. Power generally will and should be pursued until the costs of trying to gain a certain increment outweigh the potential gains measured, of course, only in the currency of power (as distinguished, for example, from the general welfare of one's population, much less universal human rights). Thus Mearsheimer opposed the war against Iraq, because, on the one hand, he could foresee various potential costs to the United States and, on the other, he believed that Saddam Hussein was a rational calculator where his security was concerned, so he could be deterred and deterrence was a less costly way of handling this modest threat to US power.

While Realism is not a call to war, it dismisses means other than the balance of power for maintaining peace. Schemes to banish the threat of war by means of arms control and non-aggression agreements and collective security organizations are seen to have no independent effect on the behavior of states. To the extent they have substance, it is because they express and serve the allocation of power among states extant when such schemes are adopted. When the allocation shifts and with it the central interests of states, agreements and institutions either shift too or become nugatory.

Nor do Realists see a diminution in the latent tensions among states stemming from the processes of economic and societal integration generally referred to as 'globalization'.⁹ Neither integration nor the resulting interdependencies nor the institutions established to lubricate the process will, ardent Realists argue, alter significantly the incentives for states to shift the balance of power in their direction. If globalization increases the power of one state, it will become more of a threat to the interests of others. Consistent with that view, Mearsheimer proposes that the United States seek to slow China's growth rate rather than continuing its present policy of facilitating it by providing access to American financial and consumer markets.¹⁰ At least some practicing Realists, like Henry Kissinger, take a contrary view. His championing of expanded Sino-American economic ties and sensitivity on the part of the United States to the political interests of China's ruling party are hard

to reconcile with realism but quite compatible with other explanations of the behavior of states.

Non-realist explanations of state behavior

One non-realist explanation is generally known as liberal institutionalism.¹¹ Its supporters do not so much reject root and branch the realists' description of international politics as supplement it. Realism, they argue, accurately identifies the basic structure and the resulting obstacles to inter-state cooperation. Where it goes wrong, at least in the hands of purists, is treating those obstacles as if they were insuperable. As a result they turn tendency into destiny, thereby obscuring ways of mitigating the struggle for power and failing to account for a good deal of the observed cooperative behavior of states.

A case in point, institutionalists argue, is the European Union into which ancient antagonists have, in an act of supreme mutual confidence, merged important incidents of sovereignty as classically conceived. If France's political elite can arrive at an historical juncture where it no longer even imagines Germany as a threat to national sovereignty, realism cannot plausibly offer itself as a sufficient explanation of state behavior. Moreover, the willingness of all the EU members to diminish their capacity for independent action, that is their sovereignty, casts doubt on realism's assumption that states prize sovereignty over all other goods. While the EU challenges the core premises of realism, the many other schemes of cooperation at work in the world at least demonstrate that neo-realists exaggerate the intensity of the power struggle and unduly discount the ways in which it can be reduced and the resulting room for states to pursue interests other than the accumulation of power.

Given the school's name, institutions are obviously central to the theoretical insights of its members.¹² They define institutions broadly as regularities of behavior, thereby including rules and principles as well as the bureaucratic structures in which many of the most important ones are to varying degrees embedded.¹³ How, according to the institutionalists, do institutions ease the struggle for power. To say that, as in the case of free trade associations, they enhance the well-being of all participants, is to say nothing, insofar as the realists are concerned, since it is not responsive to the concern about asymmetrical gains from schemes of cooperation. Institutions are seen to influence state behavior in a number of ways: by reducing the likelihood and the risk of cheating by some participants; by structuring and facilitating iterative transactions between states in a given issue area and by structuring interaction across a number of issue areas, so it is easier to balance (or at least to envision balancing) relative losses in one with gains in another; by creating behavioral pathways, that is reducing the complexity of real life, with all of its roaring buzzing confusion, to scenarios of initiative and response that have in the past yielded satisfactory outcomes to national elites.

How do institutions accomplish these results and why should their accomplishment mitigate the threats that obsess the primordial realists? At least part of the answer rests on the quite plausible assumption that some international agreements could benefit both parties equally. Take, for instance, a proposed agreement between

great powers not to deploy a particular weapons system which, if deployed by both, would leave them poorer and without any net power gain vis-a-vis each other.¹⁴ Realists on both sides might still oppose an agreement on the assumption that the other party would probably cheat, an assumption springing from realist views about the irreducible compulsion to accumulate power. This is the classical instance of the 'Prisoner's Dilemma' puzzle that haunts strategic analysis.

The dilemma arises in all binary relationships where each party to a proposed agreement will achieve maximum benefits if it cheats and its opposite number complies. If, out of fear of cheating, the parties decide not to cooperate, both are worse off than if they had reached an agreement and both had complied. In other words, unilateral (hence presumably clandestine) cheating is the best option, if cheating will yield gains that the other party, when it discovers the cheating, cannot easily undo. If the prospect of consequential cheating can be eliminated, then the best option is collaboration. Cooperation should therefore result where an agreement, or let us call it the 'institutional arrangement', is so structured as to make cheating very difficult and/or to trivialize its consequences. Where those conditions are in place, cheating by either party is irrational.

However, as I have previously noted, potential cheating is only one obstacle to schemes of cooperation. Another is asymmetrical benefits in cases where all parties comply with the terms of the arrangement. Schemes of cooperation, like the European Union, that structure cooperation across many economic sectors and across an indefinite period of time, provide multiple opportunities for offsetting unequal benefits stemming from any single transaction. Moreover, because they carry the promise of ongoing beneficial relationships, these schemes coincidentally mitigate the cheating problem. In the case of the Prisoner's Dilemma, a single transaction is hypothesized. But where multiple beneficial transactions are in prospect and cheating in the first of them will quickly become apparent and thus discourage future cooperation, cheating may no longer appear to be the optimal choice.

Realists have several responses to the institutionalists. One is to remind the latter that anarchy, not cheating, is the central problem. Arrangements that minimize the risk of cheating may be useful, but their utility functions within the framework of the realist's world. For example, imagine a moment in time when a balance of power, nuclear as well as conventional, prevails and there is no immediate prospect of it being altered by any means other than a surprise attack. The parties can avoid that contingency either by putting in place a hair-trigger pre-emptive response to certain indications that an attack will shortly occur (in other words, to somewhat ambiguous actions by the other great power) or by various cooperative arrangements like stationing trustworthy observers in both countries or agreeing not to interfere with satellite observation by either state or agreeing not to deploy weapons with high payloads, etc.

If the risk of cheating can be annulled, then choosing an arms control agreement over the hair-trigger option is perfectly consistent with realist premises and prescriptions. So is entry by potential state rivals into certain schemes of economic cooperation, precisely because asymmetrical gains for one party in one area can be offset by asymmetrical gains in another area. Moreover, if the scheme does not include important rivals, as long as it confers asymmetrical benefits on states that

cannot hope to match your power, it may still be advantageous as a power-aggrandizing move. Realism, after all, is not hostile to agreements and institutions, per se. It merely predicts (and prescribes) that when conditions change, in such a way that one party can achieve a substantial additional increment of power by abandoning the institution, it will and it should.

However well realism can respond to essentially a priori arguments for the independent relevance of institutions, does it have an answer to the empirical phenomenon of post-World War II amity among the historical national rivals of Western Europe? We might call this the 'Long-Peace' objection to realist analysis. The answer is two-fold. First, peace among great-power rivals lasting roughly half a century is not unprecedented. Europe previously experienced it after the Napoleonic wars. Secondly, fairly extended periods of peace between traditional antagonists are not incompatible with realist analysis. The structure of great-power relations at any given time, according to realism, is a function of the allocation of power. In the bipolar world that emerged after World War II, adjacent Soviet power constituted the most immediate threat to German, French and British sovereignty. So they rationally chose to cluster together under the American strategic umbrella. Consistent with his assumptions about the world, shortly after the Soviet Union's dissolution Mearsheimer predicted the gradual recurrence of balance-of-power politics in Europe reminiscent of the 19th century.¹⁵

Democratic peace theory

Another contemporary international relations paradigm, democratic peace theory, directly challenges Mearsheimer's prediction and the realist paradigm more generally. It claims that democracies rarely if ever war against each other precisely because they are democracies. Inspired in part by the work of Immanuel Kant, it was launched in the United States by a Princeton professor of politics, Michael Doyle,¹⁶ whose initial article galvanized a cottage industry of theorists and historical interpreters. Much that is problematic in democratic peace discourse turns on the definition of 'democracy' and also to some degree of 'war'. Turning first to 'democracy', a key definitional issue is whether a state qualifies for the label simply by virtue of the fact that control of its highest office is determined through an electoral competition in which all or at least most adults are eligible to vote, more or less freely, and their votes are counted with reasonable accuracy. Or is it also necessary that in general, civil and political rights are respected and reinforced by a largely free economy and a genuinely autonomous civil society? In other words, should democratic peace theory be assessed only in terms of the relations among 'liberal' democratic societies?

The definitional question is important because, in World War I, states sharing at least some of the characteristics of democracies fought each other with terrible ferocity. England and France were arguably liberal democracies on the eve of World War I. What about Germany? It had an elected parliament and active party competition. The Parliament was supposed to have constitutional power over the budget. But the Kaiser, a hereditary ruler, had the power to appoint ministers (who did not have to enjoy the confidence of the Parliament) and to initiate war. And compared to

what we today regard as a liberal democratic society, it is arguable that all of these states with their, to differing degrees, intrusive military commanders, their harsh class conflicts, and their opaque processes of governance were qualitatively different from contemporary North Atlantic Democracies or their scattered equivalents in other regions.

The definition of 'war' is a matter of some consequence because if subversion and semi-clandestine interventions are included, then democracies clearly do 'war' on each other from time to time. The most powerful liberal democratic country, the United States, did so on at least three occasions during the Cold War: Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954) and Chile (1973). Arguably, for purposes of appraising democratic peace theory, those instances should be excluded from the definition, because their clandestine character and brevity radically restrict the operation of those features of liberal democracies hypothesized to restrain conflict between them.

One feature consists of the liberal democratic values that saturate fully consolidated democratic polities. By fully consolidated I mean states where electoral competition for a broad range of important offices coincides with the generally effective protection of human rights. Collectively these values constitute the creed that enables peoples otherwise divided by class, religion or ethnicity to cohere in a strong national community. A central element of that liberal creed is the individual and collective right to self-determination. When the government of a society organized and saturated by liberal values acts dictatorially toward another liberal democracy, it conspicuously violates its own credal values in that it is denying not to some regime but to another people the right to determine its policies and to shape its fate. Thus it tarnishes the admiring self-identity of its own people and subverts its own legitimacy which, after all, derives from that process of successive self-determinations we call 'elections'. Also inhibiting recourse to force with other democratic states is another facet of the liberal democratic value set, namely compromise and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

A second relevant feature of liberal democratic states is their porosity which, for purposes of the democratic peace hypothesis, is important in at least two ways. One is the openness of such states to efforts by foreign governments to influence their policies whether through officials, prominent citizens, private organizations or general public opinion. Another is the participation of their citizens in transnational commercial, intellectual, philanthropic and social networks of all kinds. In other words, liberal democracies allow the formation of sentimental and instrumental cross-border interdependencies between citizens, commercial enterprises and non-profit associations of all kinds. Those interdependencies and associated personal and normative ties are bound to inhibit reciprocal demonization of the respective polities and governments by demagogues in both countries, much less recourse to network-threatening force.

Porosity leads into a third consequential feature of liberal democratic societies, namely their transparency. The defense budget must be submitted to the elected Congress or Parliament and is subject to independent expert analysis, the results of which can be disseminated through the media and partisan debates. The budget itself can provide reassurance about the motives and goals of a foreign state that mere peaceful declarations by a dictator could not. Even if it leaves open doubt about

a regime's motives, at least it provides information about its means. The debate surrounding its adoption, as well as the debates about foreign policy that go on all the time, can certainly do both. For purposes of predicting the trajectory of a country's policy and interests even more important are the transnational networks serving as pipelines for the regular flow of information about the views and values of all kinds of social groups and institutions in the two societies. By virtue of the democratic process, they will, after all, influence the long-term direction of public policy.

A further relevant facet of liberal democracy is the division and balancing of public power and the related rule of law. Among other things it restrains volatility in public policy. Some democratic constitutions explicitly withhold exclusive war-making power from the chief executive. Even where they do not or where, as in the United Kingdom, there is no constitution, elected parliaments may restrain the executive through their control of appropriations or, in a parliamentary system, by forcing her or him from office through a vote of no confidence.

Yet another facet of contemporary liberal democratic society supportive of the democratic peace thesis stems from the primary means it employs to organize economic life, namely free markets. Whatever may have been the effect of markets on citizens in the age of heavy industry and generally low standards of living, in the post-industrial age markets powerfully encourage citizens to find satisfaction in the consumption of commercially produced goods and services. The ethic of consumption tends to displace the ethic of self-sacrifice and heroism that supports martial ventures, and elections allow citizens to replace officials inclined to sacrifice them for millennial ends.

In short, there is a reasonably persuasive a priori case at least for the proposition that the existence of liberal democracy in two powerful countries makes it very unlikely that they will resort to the threat of force in their mutual relations. Realism rejects this proposition, insisting rather that the risks inherent in anarchy force countries to behave in the same feverishly competitive way regardless of differences (or similarities) in their creeds and institutions. A priori reasoning and an admittedly limited historical experience support a proposition even more alien to the realist mind set, namely that the kind of deep inter-penetration that can occur between liberal democratic states enables them to form a 'zone of peace' or a security zone in which states cease altogether to imagine themselves as potential antagonists. Arguably that has already occurred in Western Europe and in the wider North Atlantic community of states. Anglo-American relations assumed this form early in the 20th century and arguably it is now emerging in the southern cone of Latin America as Argentine and Brazilian democracy consolidate.

Constructivism

Democratic peace theory and the associated belief that intense social and economic affinities and interdependencies between liberal states are able to eliminate mutual threat perceptions can be seen as instances of a broader approach to international relations sometimes described simply as 'constructivism'. Realists, on the one hand,

assume a world in which all regimes pursue the same end (national independence) by means of the same sorts of rational calculations within a uniformly understood set of constraints constituted by the fact of anarchy. The constructivist approach, on the other, is nicely summarized in the title of one of the school's most famous articles, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics'.¹⁷ Anarchy, according to constructivism, is not, like the sink in one's kitchen, a material reality. It exists not in fact but in the mind. It is, in other words, a discursive or inter-subjective phenomenon, a shared way of seeing the world. As such, it may be and indeed is viewed and appreciated differently by different observers. What is true of anarchy is equally true of every other concept or term in the realist idiom including the state itself and its supposed interests.

For constructivists of all types,¹⁸ identity (and the interests which adhere to different identities) and the processes by means of which it is constituted are at least as important as the allocation of material capabilities for analyzing international relations. For example, during the Cold War, the members of Nato could have seen themselves either as realist states balancing against a threat or as liberal democratic allies with a broad and enduring community of interests. If it were predominantly the latter, then one would expect Nato to survive the end of the threat.¹⁹

Identities are formed through practices that establish norms that in turn, along with culture and institutions, shape observers' appreciation of subsequent practices. Since a state's self-identity is the result of domestic as well as international processes of identity formation, different states are bound to have different conceptions of themselves and their interests. Identity is important not only because it shapes one state's understanding of another and also of itself, but also because states can and do attempt to influence the behavior of other states by constructing a certain identity for themselves, an attempt unlikely to succeed if it clashes with practice. The ability to influence behavior by influencing perceptions of one's identity can be seen as a form of power, discursive power.

Constructivism argues that both material and discursive power are necessary for any understanding of world affairs. I emphasize both because often constructivists are dismissed as unrealistic for believing in the power of knowledge, ideas, culture, ideology and language, that is, discourse. The notion that ideas are a form of power, that power is more than brute force, and that material and discursive power are related is not new. Michael Foucault's articulation of the power/knowledge nexus, Antonio Gramsci's theory of ideological hegemony, and Max Weber's differentiation of coercion from authority are all precursors to constructivism's position on power in political life.²⁰

From theoretical speculation to American foreign policy

The theorizing so briefly summarized is a backdrop, often unacknowledged and possibly often unrecognized, to the huge corpus of foreign policy diagnosis and prescription produced in the wake of the Cold War. Collectively it analyzed and assessed four grand strategies for the United States. One, often labeled 'neo-isolationism', calls for withdrawal from overseas military commitments and a corresponding reduction in defense expenditures. Its underlying assumptions were that

two oceans, nuclear deterrence, weak neighbors, and regional balances of power outside the western hemisphere provided a comfortable measure of security, the main threat to which was blowback from involvement in other peoples' quarrels. Championed for different reasons by traditional nationalist conservatives, libertarians and a fragment of the tiny American left, it had little effect on American foreign policy even before the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. Although that attack could have been construed as confirming the neo-isolationist claim that global engagement will generate threats to American security, the opposite construction seems to have prevailed.

Advocates of a second grand strategy, generally labeled 'selective engagement', also were generally sanguine about the long-term security position of the United States. Nevertheless, they regarded regional power balances as sufficiently problematic to require active monitoring and the promise of intervention either to restore or to reinforce power balances in regions or sub-regions of real importance to the United States. The perceived precedent for this policy was British offshore balancing in European great-power competition in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The other two strategies competing for dominance were unilateral and multi-lateral global engagement. Their supporters had much in common. They believed that developments all over the globe can have a serious impact on the security and welfare of the American people and that a relatively benign global political, economic and military environment requires unremitting engagement. They differed, however, in at least two respects: in the way they prioritized threats and, more importantly, in basic ideas about remedies.

Unilateralists emphasize classical political-military threats, precisely those that are most amenable to mitigation by military power, the resource the United States can produce in singular abundance. Multilateralists, while they would not eliminate would at least flatten the hierarchy, thus reducing the steep distinction between threats that often yield to coercive diplomacy and threats like pandemics, global warming, destructions of the seas' living resources and the rain forests, and volatility in the global economy that are not amenable to military remediation. Nor, of course, will they yield to any other form of unilateral action.

Conclusion

The American decision to invade Iraq without authorization from the United Nations Security Council reinforced a widespread perception that the unilateralists had won the debate over grand strategy and were firmly in the saddle of power. That perception stemmed from the pre-9/11 rhetoric and practice of the Administration of President George W. Bush, including its rejection of various international agreements, such as those dealing with global warming, biological warfare (ironically) and the International Criminal Court. Rejection seemed part of a larger strategy of minimizing normative and institutional restraints on the exercise of American power, a dramatic departure from American behavior after World War II when it served as principal architect for the United Nations and the international financial arrangements – World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the General Agree-

ment on Tariffs and Trade (now morphed into the World Trade Organization – WTO), that constituted a rudimentary global management system.

The accuracy of this perception remains to be seen. When accused of being unilateralists, senior officials of the Bush Administration plead not guilty. They invoke their efforts to construct different coalitions for different tasks. In the case of Iraq they have been at pains to celebrate the number of cooperating states and their attempt to obtain unequivocal authorization from the Security Council, rather than relying exclusively on Saddam Hussein's violation of certain conditions on which the 1991 Gulf War coalition had relied in deciding to halt hostilities when it lay within its power to destroy Iraq's armed forces and thereby precipitate the destruction of Saddam Hussein's regime.

While rejecting charges of unrestrained unilateralism, Administration officials have stated that they oppose what one, in a private meeting attended by the author, called 'lowest common denominator' multilateralism. That today's world, featuring murderous civil conflicts, proliferating weapons of mass destruction, pandemics and delicate systems of interdependence, requires decision-making, ideally within the framework of the United Nations, that is less sensitive to the claims of sovereignty, more decisive and qualitatively more expeditious than has been the norm seems indisputable.

Scholars need to explore means for the requisite repair of multilateral institutions, their mandates no less than their procedures. One thing, however, should be clear at the outset. Multilateral institutions will not grow more effective if they are used only to advance the immediate purposes of a superpower. The test of a commitment to multilateralism, that is to institutionalized and normatized cooperation, is willingness to discuss ends and means and sometimes to modify them in order to foster the spirit of cooperation. If the world's most powerful state uses international institutions only when they rubber stamp not only its ends but also its tactics and strategies, effective international institutions are not part of the global future. Fortunately the shape of that future is not preordained.

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Notes

1. Keith B. Richburg, 'Chirac Seems Intent on Challenging US Foreign Policy', *Washington Post*, 31 May 2003, p. A12.
2. Whether to call the results of this theorizing 'theories', 'schools' or 'approaches' seems to me a matter of taste. Those working in the natural sciences in particular may prefer either of the latter two on the basis of a feeling that the approaches I discuss lack the sharp edges and susceptibility to rigorous testing that full-blown 'theories' should possess.
3. For an extended treatment of the subject, see Jack Donnelly, *Realism in International Relations*, New York, CUP, 2000.
4. Hans Morgenthau, *Power Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th edn, New York, Knopf, 1973.
5. For an extended treatment intended for the general reader as well as the specialist, see John

- Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York, W. W. Norton, 2001. However, the canonical work is Kenneth N. Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*, Reading, MA, Addison-Wesley, 1979.
6. See note 5 above.
 7. John Mearsheimer and Stephen Watt, 'An Unnecessary War', *Foreign Policy* (Jan/Feb): 51–60.
 8. Henry Kissinger 'Phase II and Iraq', *Washington Post*, 13 January 2002, p. B7; Brent Scowcroft, 'Don't Attack Saddam', *Wall Street Journal*, 15 August 2002, p. A12.
 9. See, for example, Kenneth Waltz, 'Globalization and Governance', *Political Science and Politics*, 32(4): 693–700.
 10. John Mearsheimer, 'The Future of the American Pacifier', *Foreign Affairs*, 80(5), Sept–Oct 2001: 46–61.
 11. For a fine brief survey of institutionalist thought, see Robert O. Keohane, 'International Institutions: Two Perspectives', *International Studies Quarterly*, 32(4) December 1988: 379–6.
 12. For a lucid overview of institutionalist theory, see Robert O. Keohane and Lisa L. Martin, 'The Promise of Institutional theory', *International Security*, 20(1) summer 1995: 39–51.
 13. Of course the structures themselves can be described as clusters of procedural and substantive rules and principles defining roles, allocating authority, guiding decisions, etc.
 14. Or gains from deployment by one might be neutralized by counter-measures. Thus if one great power deploys an anti-ballistic missile system, the other might respond not by deploying a similar system but by increasing the number of its deployed missiles so that it has sufficient to overwhelm the defensive system.
 15. John J. Mearsheimer, 'Why We Will Soon Miss the Cold War', *Atlantic Monthly*, August 1990: 35–50.
 16. Michael Doyle, 'Kant, Liberal Legacies and Foreign Affairs', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 12(3): 205–35; 'Liberalism and World Politics', *American Political Science Review*, 80(4): 1151–69.
 17. Alexander Wendt, *International Organization*, 46(2) spring 1992: 391–425.
 18. As in the case of realists, there are basically two sub-schools: conventional constructivists and critical theorists. For a crisp summary of their similarities and differences, see Ted Hopf, 'The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory', *International Security*, 23(1) summer 1998: 171–200.
 19. I draw the instance from the Ted Hopf article cited above. He in turn was referring to a piece by Thomas Risse-Kappen, 'Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO', in Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1996, pp. 361–8.
 20. Hopf, *op. cit.* note 18, p. 177.