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Introduction

> Poetry can give some satisfaction to the mind, wherein the nature of things
> doth seem to deny it.
>
> Francis Bacon

There are few general theories of international relations. One reason for this may be its relatively late emergence as a field of study. The first department and chair of international relations – both at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth – were established only in 1919.[1] More fundamentally, the nature of the subject inhibits theoretical development. International relations is at the apex of multiple levels of social aggregation, and is significantly influenced, if not shaped, by what happens at other levels. A good theory of international relations presupposes a good understanding of politics at all these other levels. It would be something akin to a unified field theory in physics. Einstein devoted his mature decades to this goal, and failed, as anyone would in the absence of more knowledge about the individual forces that have to be subsumed by a general theory. Our knowledge of politics at all levels of interaction is even more fragmentary, as is our understanding of how other disciplines can augment this knowledge.

There is more than one way to skin a cat, and clever political scientists have devised alternative strategies for theorizing about international relations. The most obvious move is to ignore the need to understand politics holistically and to assume that patterns of international behavior can be studied independently of what transpires at other levels of interaction. If system-level relations could somehow be studied in splendid isolation, without any reference to the character and politics of its units, its dynamics might be described by a parsimonious, deductive theory. This

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[1] International law and diplomacy were studied before 1919, and the Chichele Chair of International Law and Diplomacy had been created at Oxford in 1859. Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy*, on the evolution of the field of IR in the United States.

is a variant of the claim advanced to justify international relations as an independent discipline. Theorists and academic empire-builders alike had strong incentives to argue that anarchy and its consequences differentiated international relations from politics at all other levels of social aggregation.[2] This claim was facilitated by the widely accepted Weberian definition of the state as representing a social community and territory, and with a monopoly of legitimate violence within that territory.[3] It allowed theorists to distinguish rule (*Herrschaft*) at the domestic level from anarchy at the international level, thereby creating the necessary binary.[4]

Attempts to build theories at the system level have been prominent but notoriously unsuccessful. Almost from the beginning of the enterprise scholars were drawn to other levels of analysis, to the structure and character of states and societies, domestic politics, bureaucracies and the role of leaders. They offer additional analytical purchase, especially when it comes to explaining foreign policies. To theorize about international relations is to say something systematic about the character of relations among the actors that comprise the system, and also about who those actors are and how they become recognized as such by other actors. To develop meaningful insights into these questions we must go outside of international relations because the patterns of interactions among actors is determined not by their number and relative power but by the nature of the society in which they interact.[5] Society also determines who counts as an actor. Any theory of international relations must build on or be rooted in a theory of society and must address the constitution of actors, not only their behavior.

Existing paradigms are inadequate in this regard. Realism all but denies the existence of society at the international level and treats the character of international relations as universal, timeless and unchanging. Liberalism posits a strong two-way connection between the domestic structure of state actors and the nature of their relationships. It says little to nothing about what shapes the structure of these actors, and is restricted to one

[2] Ashley, "The Poverty of Neorealism"; Little, "Historiography and International Relations," note the success of this strategy.

[3] Weber, *The Profession and Vocation of Politics*, p. 78, and *Economy and Society*, I, p. 54; Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 199–201, for different views of the state.

[4] Guzzini, unpublished comments on the roundtable on " 'Power' in International Relations: Concept Formation between Conceptual Analysis and Conceptual History," American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, PA, 2006. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 24–33, and *Positions*, p. 41, on the central role binary oppositions play in the creation of a scientific or philosophical language.

[5] Onuf, "Alternative Visions," also makes this point.

historical epoch: the modern, industrial world. It is also wed to a parochial Anglo-American telos that assumes that only one kind of state structure (liberal democracy) is a rational response to this world. The English School recognizes society at the international level, but understands it to be thin, limited and a conscious artifact. It generally rejects the idea of progress, although Hedley Bull and Adam Watson welcome it in their discussion of outlawing the slave trade and the legal regulation of war.[6] Marxism links society and international relations in a more comprehensive manner, because it is fundamentally a theory of society. It nevertheless fails in its accounts of history and of international relations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Constructivism also emphasizes the decisive role of society in constituting actors and their identities, but constructivist scholars have not as yet produced a full-blown theory of international relations.[7]

A theory of society, or of aspects of it most relevant to the character and evolution of politics at the state, regional and international levels, is a daunting task. It involves something of a Catch-22 because understandings of society and politics at least in part presuppose each other. Their co-dependency troubled Greek philosophers of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE and led to Plato's paradox: if true knowledge is holistic, we need to know everything before we can know anything.[8] Plato developed his theory of a priori knowledge to circumvent this dilemma. He posited a soul that had experienced multiple lives in the course of which it learned all the forms. Knowledge could be recovered with the help of a dialectical "midwife" who asked appropriate questions.[9] Thucydides pursued a more practical strategy; he nested his analysis of the Peloponnesian War in a broader political framework, which in turn was embedded in an account of the rise and fall of civilization. By this means, the particular could be understood, as it had to be, by reference to the general. Knowledge, once retrieved and transcribed, could become "a possession for all time."[10] I hope to emulate Thucydides, not in writing a possession for all time,

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[6] Bull and Watson, *The Expansion of International Society*. Vincent, *Human Rights and International Relations*. More recently, Buzan, *From International to World Society*; Wheeler, *Saving Strangers*; Linklater and Suganami, *The English School of International Relations*.

[7] Alexander Wendt, who describes his theory as constructivist, is better categorized as a structural liberal.

[8] Dumont, "The Modern Concept of the Individual," for the conception of holism.

[9] Plato, *Meno*, 86b1–2, and *Cratylus*, 400c, for his theory of rebirth and its connection to knowledge.

[10] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.22.4. Lebow, *Tragic Vision of Politics*, chs. 3, 4 and 7 for an account of this framework.

but in attempting to explain the particular with reference to the general. I offer my theory of international relations as a special case of political order.

Society is a catch-all term that encompasses all aspects of a group of people who live together. Order describes any kind of pattern or structure. It enables societies to function because it provides guidelines for behavior, making much of it routine and predictable. Vehicular traffic is a simple case in point. It could not flow if drivers did not drive on the same side of the road when moving in the same direction, stop at red lights and adhere to other important "rules of the road" (e.g., signaling for turns, passing in the outside lane, not blocking intersections).[11] Drivers enact most of these rules out of habit, and if they reflect upon them, generally recognize that they are in everyone's interest. There are, of course, violations, and the more often they occur the more difficult it is to maintain or enforce order. When enough people violate a rule – as in the case of speeding – it becomes increasingly difficult to enforce. At every level of human interaction, from interpersonal to international, order requires a high degree of voluntary compliance.

Order also refers to some kind of arrangement or rank, among people, groups or institutions.[12] On the road equality is the rule, but ambulances, police cars and fire engines have the right of way. Off the road, social hierarchies embed inequalities. Some actors are consistently treated better than others because of their social standing, wealth, connections or willingness to push themselves to the head of the line. Inequalities are usually self-reinforcing. Wealth allows better educational opportunities, which lead to better connections, better jobs and higher status. Inequalities are also self-sustaining when those who benefit from them can pass on advantages to their progeny. Given the inequalities of all social orders, and the exclusions, restrictions and compulsions they entail, it is nothing short of remarkable that most people in most societies adhere to stipulated practices and rules.

Philosophers and social scientists have come up with four generic explanations for compliance: fear, interest, honor and habit. The power of fear has been self-evident from the beginning of civilization, if not before, and is probably a component of most social orders. Tyrannies are the regimes most dependent on fear; Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle thought they

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[11] Lewis, *Convention*, for this now famous example.
[12] Weber, *Political Writings*, p. 311. For a reminder that not all systems are hierarchical, Luhmann, *Social Systems*, pp. 298–9.

would survive only as long as they had the power and will to cow their subjects, or the wisdom and commitment to transform themselves into more consensual kinds of regimes.[13] The interest explanation is associated with Hobbes and is central to modern social science. It assumes that people are willing to accept relatively inferior positions and benefits in return for the greater absolute rewards they receive by belonging to a society in which their physical security and material possessions are protected.[14] Honor refers to the seemingly universal desire to stand out among one's peers, which is often achieved by selfless, sometimes even sacrificial, adherence to social norms. Homer might be considered the first theorist of honor, and his account in the *Iliad* is unrivaled in its understanding of this motive and its consequences, beneficial and destructive, for societies that make it a central value. In modern times, the need for status and esteem is described as "vanity" by Hobbes and Smith, and for Rousseau it is at the core of *amour propre*.[15] The importance of habits was understood at least as far back as Aristotle, who observed that children mimic adult behavior and are taught how to act and toward what ends by their mentors. They are socialized into behaving in certain ways and may ultimately do so unreflexively.[16] Habit can ultimately be traced back to one or more of the other three explanations. Children emulate adults because they fear the consequences of not doing so or in expectation of affection, approval or material rewards.

These explanations for compliance draw on universal drives (appetite and spirit), a powerful emotion (fear) and routine practices (habit). Their relative importance varies within and across societies and epochs. Fear, interest and honor operate at every level of social aggregation. Reflecting the conventional wisdom of his day, Thucydides has the Athenians explain their drive to empire and their subsequent commitment not to relinquish it to all three motives.[17] I contend that each of these motives gives rise to

[13] Plato, *Republic*, 571c8–9 and 579d9–10; Aristotle, *Politics*, 1315b11; Thucydides, *passim*, but especially the Melian Dialogue.

[14] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, I.11.9. Although fear is central to Hobbes, it is a secondary means of control. He recognizes that sovereigns must govern by legitimacy if coercion is to be effective against any minority that resists. His sovereign encourages citizens to concentrate on their material interests, as appetite combined with reason is likely to make them more compliant. Williams, "The Hobbesian Theory of International Relations," on this point.

[15] Chapter 7 offers a fuller account.

[16] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252a1–7, 1155a22–613, 162b5–21, 1328b7–9, 1335b38–1336a2, 1336b8–12.

[17] Thucydides, 1.75.2–5. All English quotations from Thucydides are from the Richard Crawley translation in *The Landmark Thucydides*.

a particular kind of hierarchy, two of which – interest and honor – rest on distinct and different principles of justice. All three motives also generate different logics concerning cooperation, conflict and risk-taking. These logics are intended to sustain the orders in question, although, depending on the circumstances, they can also work to undermine them. This dynamic holds true at every level of social order, and the nature of hierarchies and their degree of robustness at any level has important implications for adjacent levels.

Of necessity, then, my project has a double theoretical focus: order and international relations. As each theory is implicated in the other, a simple linear approach will not work. I can neither formulate a theory of political orders and extend it to international relations, nor develop a theory of international relations and derive a theory of political order from it. Instead, I adopt a layered strategy. I begin with the problem of order, and propose a framework for its study, but not a theory. This framework provides the scaffolding for a theory of international relations, the major part of which I construct in this volume. In a planned follow-on volume, I intend to use this theory and additional evidence to transform my framework of order into a theory of order, and use that to further develop my theory of international relations. Like the calculus or the hermeneutic circle, such a series of approximations can bring us closer to our goal, if never actually there.

Why international relations?

International relations is the hardest, if in many ways the most interesting, case for any theory of political orders. Given the thinness of order at the international level, does it make sense to start here? Why not approach the problem of order at the levels of the individual or the group? Plato opts for this strategy; he develops a theory of individual order in the *Republic*, which he then extends to society. Thucydides uses a roughly similar formulation to bridge individual, polis and regional levels of order. Modern psychology also starts with the individual and builds on this understanding to study group and mass behavior. I do something similar, starting with the individual and working my way up to international society and systems. Following the Greeks, I develop a model of the psyche and argue that order at the individual or any social level of aggregation is a function of the balance among its several components. At the macro level, balance sustains practices that instantiate the principles of justice on which all successful orders are based.

   The most important analytical divide is between individuals and social
units. In the literature it is generally assumed that different levels of order
are sustained by different kinds of norms. Groups are thought to be gov-
erned by social norms, societies by legal and social norms, and regional and
international systems primarily by legal norms.[18] In developing his con-
cept of organic solidarity, Durkheim theorizes, and subsequent research
tends to confirm, that legal and social norms are more reinforcing, and
informal mechanisms of social control more effective, in small social units
(e.g. villages and towns) where the division of labor is relatively sim-
ple.[19] Moral disapproval of deviance is more outspoken in these settings
and serves as a powerful force for behavioral conformity.[20] Paradoxically,
deviance is also more likely to be tolerated when it is understood as closing
ranks against outside interference.[21] On the whole, however, tolerance of
deviance varies with the division of labor; it is more pronounced in larger
and more complex social systems.[22] Order is accordingly more difficult to
achieve and sustain at higher levels of social aggregation for reasons that
have nothing to do with the presence or absence of a Leviathan.

   Regional and international orders are particularly challenging because
they inevitably have competing as well as reinforcing norms, and glaring
contradictions between norms and behavior. The lack of normative con-
sensus, the paucity of face-to-face social interaction and the greater diffi-
culty of mutual surveillance, make effective social control more difficult,
but by no means impossible, at the regional and international levels. It is
most effective among states and societies that subscribe to a common core
of values. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, where there was
a reasonable degree of mechanical solidarity at the regional level, group

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[18] Regional orders come in between and display considerable variance. Regional order in
   Europe more closely resembles a domestic society, whereas regional orders in the Middle
   East or South Asia – to the extent that we can even use the term order – more closely
   resemble international relations. Thucydides and Plato distinguished Greece from the rest
   of the ancient world on the basis of its cultural unity, which led to a different structure of
   relations among its political units. For the same reason, Buzan and Waever, *Regions and
   Powers*, wisely argue that since the end of the Cold War, regional clusters have become the
   most appropriate level at which to study international politics.
[19] Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, pp. 400–1.
[20] Erikson, *Wayward Puritans*; Shilling and Melor, "Durkheim, Morality and Modernity."
[21] Brian Lavery, "Scandal? For an Irish Parish, It's Just a Priest with a Child," *New York
   Times*, January 22, 2005, p. A6, describes local support for a 73-year-old Roman Catholic
   priest who fathered the child of a local schoolteacher and unwillingness to talk about it to
   representatives of outside media. The local bishop was also supportive and did not remove
   the priest from his pastoral duties.
[22] Glaser, "Criminology and Public Policy," pp. 24–42.

pressures to adhere to accepted norms and practices were more effective than the balance of power in restraining actors.[23] The Montreal Protocol and subsequent agreements to ban chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and restore the ozone layer indicate that this kind of suasion serves not only as a source of social control but as a catalyst for change.[24] Although generally framed in terms of great power pressure on recalcitrant actors, social pressures arising from moral outrage can be effectively utilized by the weak, and even by agents who are not even recognized as legitimate actors. A striking example is the boycott of South Africa to end apartheid, which arose from successful appeals to Britain and the United States by non-state actors to pursue foreign policies in accord with their professed values.[25] As informal social mechanisms of control are at least as important as threats, bribes and institutions in bringing about self-restraint and compliance, the robustness of society – and not the absence of central authority, as modern-day realists insist – should be considered *the* determining characteristic of regional and international systems.[26] Both sources of control have their limitations, which we will explore in due course.

Regional and international orders are set apart by another phenomenon: the consequences of the seeming human need to generate social cohesion through distinctions between "us" and "others." The research of Tajfel and others on "entitativity" suggests this binary may be endemic to all human societies and certainly operates at the group level.[27] It was first conceptualized in the eighteenth century in response to efforts by Western European governments to promote domestic cohesion and development by means of foreign conflict. Immanuel Kant theorized that the "unsocial sociability" of people draws them together into societies, but leads them to act in ways that break them up. He considered this antagonism innate to our species and an underlying cause of the development

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[23] Wight, *Systems of States*, pp. 23, 149; Schroeder, "International Politics, Peace and War, 1815–1914"; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, p. 1.

[24] Parson, *Protecting the Ozone Layer*, on the role of moral outrage.

[25] Klotz, *Norms in International Relations*.

[26] Finnemore and Toope, "Alternatives to 'Legalization,'" make a variant of this argument in the context of compliance with international law. The international society and international system are distinct but overlapping, and given the complexity of contemporary political, economic and social relations, it is probably impossible to distinguish the two categorically. We should nevertheless be aware of the problem, which I will return to later in this volume. For some of the relevant literature, see Bull, "The Grotian Conception of International Society"; Buzan, *From International to World Society?*, pp. 133–4; Dunn, "System, State and Society."

[27] Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories*; Brewer, "The Psychology of Prejudice"; Brown, "Social Identity Theory," for a literature review.

of the state. Warfare drove people apart, but their need to defend themselves against others compelled them to band together and submit to the rule of law. Each political unit has unrestricted freedom in the same way individuals did before the creation of societies, and hence is in a constant state of war. The price of order at home is conflict among societies. The "us" is maintained at the expense of "others."[28]

Hegel built on this formulation, and brought to it his understanding that modern states differed from their predecessors in that their cohesion does not rest so much on preexisting cultural, religious or linguistic identities as it does on the allegiance of their citizens to central authorities who provide for the common defense. Citizens develop a collective identity through the external conflicts of their state and the sacrifices it demands of them. "States," he writes in the *German Constitution*, "stand to one another in a relation of might," a relationship that "has been universally revealed and made to prevail." In contrast to Kant, who considers this situation tragic, Hegel rhapsodizes about states as active and creative agents which play a critical role in the unfolding development of the spirit and humankind. Conflict among states, he contends, helps each to become aware of itself by encouraging self-knowledge among citizens. It can serve an ethical end by uniting subjectivity and objectivity and resolving the tension between particularity and universality. After Hegel, peace came to be seen as a negotiated agreement between and among states, and not the result of some civilizing process.[29]

International relations as a zone of conflict and war was further legitimized by the gradual development of international law and its conceptualization of international relations as intercourse among sovereign states. In the seventeenth century, Grotius, Hobbes and Pufendorf endowed states with moral personalities and sought to constrain them through a reciprocal set of rights and duties.[30] In the eighteenth century, the state was further embedded in a law of nations by Vattel.[31] The concept of sovereignty created the legal basis for the state and the nearly unrestricted

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[28] Kant, "Idea for a Universal History," pp. 44–7; "Perpetual Peace," p. 112.

[29] Hegel, "The German Constitution," pp. 15–20, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Right* and "The Philosophical History of the World," for the development of his thought on the state. See also Pelcynski, "The Hegelian Conception of the State"; Taylor, *Hegel*, ch. 16; Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*.

[30] Grotius, *De jure belli ac pacis libri tres* (1625); *Hobbes, De Cive* and *Leviathan*; Pufendorf, *De jure naturae et gentium libri octo*; Onuf and Onuf, *Nations, Markets and War*, ch. 4; Keene, "Images of Grotius," for a critical review of contrasting interpretations and the application of his ideas to international relations theory.

[31] Vattel, *Le droit de gens*; Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations*, ch. 1.

right of its leaders to act as they wish within its borders. It also justi-
fied the pursuit of national interests by force beyond those borders so
long as it was in accord with the laws of war. Sovereignty is a concept with
diverse and even murky origins, that was first popularized in the sixteenth
century. At that time, more importance was placed on its domestic than
its international implications. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century jurists
and historians, many of them Germans influenced by Kant and Hegel
(e.g. Heeren, Clausewitz, Ranke, Treitschke), developed a narrative about
sovereignty that legitimized the accumulation of power of central gov-
ernments and portrayed the state as the sole focus of a people's economic,
political and social life. The ideology of sovereignty neatly divided actors
from one another, and made the binary of "us" and "others" appear a nat-
ural, if not progressive, development, as did rule-based warfare among
states.[32]

This binary was reflected at the regional level in the concept of Euro-
pean or Christian society, which initially excluded Russia and the Ottoman
Empire as political and cultural "others." There was no concept of the
"international" until the late eighteenth century, and its development
reflected and hastened the transformation of European society into an
international system in the course of the next century.[33] New standards
of legitimacy enlarged the boundaries of the community of nations fol-
lowing the Napoleonic Wars.[34] By 1900, non-Western states were being
admitted to the community, and the number of such units burgeoned
with decolonization in the late 1950s and 1960s. In recent decades, non-
governmental organizations (NGOs) and diverse social movements have
pushed a more cosmopolitan notion of democracy that extends to units
beyond states and challenges the legitimacy of many recognized interna-
tional organizations.[35]

Equally sharp distinctions were made at the outset between the Euro-
pean "us" and Asian and African "others," facilitated by the fact that

[32] Kant, "Idea for a Universal History," pp. 44–7; "Perpetual Peace," p. 112; Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, pp. 220–9; Osiander, "Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth"; Schmidt, *Political Discourse of Anarchy*, on these developments more generally.

[33] Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, ch. 5; Ziegler, "The Influence of Medieval Roman Law on Peace Treaties"; Lesaffer, "Peace Treaties from Lodi to Westphalia." According to Halliday, *Rethinking International Relations*, p. 6, Jeremy Bentham coined the term international relations in the early nineteenth century.

[34] Clark, *The Hierarchy of States*, ch. 6.

[35] Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*; Bernstein, "The Challenged Legitimacy of Inter-national Organisations."