Neo Neo Realism: A Note on Contemporary International Relations Theory and Foreign Policy Today

Harvey Glickman, Professor Emeritus, Political Science Department, Haverford College

Introduction: Beyond Realism?

In the past 30 years scholars of international relations have moved beyond the classic dichotomy of realism and idealism (liberalism), in an attempt to enlarge the theory of international relations. Assiduous analysts have extended these classic approaches into, *e.g.,* structural realism (structuralism), hegemony stability theory, institutionalism, institutional liberalism, institutional society, constructivism, Marxism… and a jumble of post-modern isms (Reus-Smit & Snidal, eds., 2008; Carlsnaes, Risse & Simmons, eds., 2003, *passim*).

Reviving the theoretical exclusivity of state-to-state relations seems inadequate in the post-Cold War, inter-state terrorism environment of the 21st Century. An alternative has emerged that emphasizes trans-state institutions, *i.e.,* reflections of a growing international "community" which cut across the state/state axis of analysis. It focuses on concepts like class, cultural communities, shared ideologies, and an emerging world "society" (Jackson and Sorenson, 2003). More thoroughly revisionist is the view that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than by material forces, …"what individuals and groups most want is not security or power or wealth, but recognition of, and respect for, their rights" (Wendt, "Social Constructivism,"*Theory Talks*, #3, n.d.].

The "clash of civilizations" critique of international politics destined to emerge as a new liberal new world order seemed validated by the Islamist-jihadist attacks emanating from an international but non-state entity (Huntington, 1996). Attempts to "re-master" the older models of descriptive theory have ranged from the applicability of a renewed American hegemony to multi-polarity. An analytical multi-dimensionality clearly transcends the received state interests or "statist" dominated paradigm (Nye,"Teaching America,"*Theory Talks*, n.d; Nye, *Soft Power*, 2004, 30-32.). Finally, there is the utility question: the relevance of international theory and theorizing to what used to be the whole point of the exercise -- the making of policy in foreign affairs.

This dialogue with Realism—questioning the behavioral centrality of state power in a supposed anarchic world –has combined through two great post-war attempts in the 20th Century at organizing international relations on the basis of a set of agreed principles of governance. In the political science of international relations, Liberalism challenged Realism in the 1920s. "Institutionalism" modified liberalism in the 1970s (Stein in Reus-Smit & Snidal, 2008, 201-221). A more fundamental challenge to the primacy of states, indeed to conventional political thinking, however, has been "Constructivism." The major thrust of the debate today is the question of whether there is an international society which sets limits to the behavior of states and sets the agendas of non-state international institutions (Walker, 1992; Hurd in Reus-Smit & Snidal, 2008, 298-316).

The international society school (called the English School by international relations

theorists) claims that world politics is not anarchy, that the world works today in accordance with norms and rules, reflecting international agreements and international institutions, paradigmatically similar to the imperially competitive but authoritatively Christian Europe of the 17th to the 19th Century. In this view, the important as well as mundane trans-national and interstate relations built in the second half of the 20th Century have created the equivalent of a world civilization, with not only contracts and understandings but a global ethic (Buzan, 2004; Dunne in Reus-Smit & Snidal, 267-285; Adler in Carlsnaes, Risser and Simmons, 95-118). The major evidence is that today the world operates according to understandings that have reversed or severely modified previous norms. Backed by power and international authority, there is a global consensus in realms such as anti-slavery, anti-racism, and anti-colonialism.

Two larger questions, and one derived question, emerge (the *au courant* term is "interrogations"):

1) How do an expanding international society and trans-state institutions modify or affect the activity of states?

2) To what extent can international society replace the centrality of state interests as the master explanatory model of international relations?

3) What effect does the debate over international theory today affect what many people thinks is its relevance and utility—foreign policy-making?

We conclude with an examination of the relevant theory-policy questions in the exercise of "stateness" in one region, Africa, where Realism and power balances and the uses of juridical sovereignty might have appeared to have lost their relevance for analysis.

From Deconstructionism to Constructivism and the Uses of Sovereignty

A spectre haunts international relations—Deconstructionism. In so far as the post-modernist critics wish to replace international politics with international relations broadly understood, or global human relations, the deconstructionist mode of thought interrogates power at the center of international relations. It drifts to reductionism when it seeks to critique all arguments as about power relations (see Smith in Smith, Booth & Zalewski, 11-44;*cf.* Walker, 1993, Walt, 1998). Rather than politics at the center—the received doctrine that the paramount international relations depend on state to state contacts—the critics contend that such statism misses the importance of political economy and political sociology in determining international relations. This essentially sociological outlook—which constitutes a benign face of deconstructionism— seeks to differentiate, not altogether unreasonably, international relations from international politics. Identity is now seen as central to understanding international relations, which means that the parochial challenges the universal.

Constructivism, which bears the birthmarks of Deconstructionism, is a reaction to the perceived hegemony of ideas and power of the West (especially the USA). Basically, it conceives thought as reflecting power: so theory also reflects power. The terms preferred are "world politics," which reflect the various agents, forces, and discourses in its configuration and constitution and a variety of state and non-state forms, which act and interact, with varying

degrees of agency (Hurd, *Op. Cit*; Price in Reus-Smit & Snidal, 317-326; Checkel, 1998, 324-48; Agnew,"Power and Geography,"*Theory Talks, #4.*)

In policy terms the present day struggle is pictured as matching the power hegemony of the USA—Western, modernist, expansionist, dominant—against identity parochialism. So, despite the pretentious universal challenge of Islamism to Western domination, the core of even that challenge is parochial—a struggle for the soul of Islam in the areas of large Muslim populations of Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

When carried further back toward Deconstructionism, we do harm to theory altogether, and certainly harm to policy-oriented theory. It becomes an attack on all serious intellectual attempts to explain how things work in the world of politics. The drift toward the idea that relevant thoughts reflect power, means that reigning theory reflects regnant power. Behind all theory then is privilege…the question one hears from Deconstructionists is "who gets to write the script?" Unsaid here is the suspicion that there is always somewhere a hidden power privileging someone or something. "Orientalism" (Said, 1978) is perhaps the most influential example of deconstructing the so-called Western orientation to the East. Imperialism is more than regional power politics, it established hegemony in the development of human relations, as the West penetrated, and, for a time, ruled the East. One must then interrogate everything, because everything said or done in the past would reflect an unjust relationship (Buzan in Smith, Booth & Zalewski, 1996, 62-63).

Questioning theory and received doctrine is what waters the flowers of intellectual and academic life. Unpretentious interrogation is fertilizer of serious inquiry. It makes for scientific progress. But the suspicion here is that constructivist interrogation has turned inward and has become a Deconstructionist closed shop. We are told that theory making, unless it struggles against oppression, becomes reactionary; analysis is either for or against the good guys—"knowledge about society is incomplete if it lacks an emancipatory purpose" (Linklater in Smith et al, 281). This is "Darkness at Noon" for international politics theorists.

Policy failure also leads to interrogating theory. It remains important to question reigning theory, especially when theory fails spectacularly to account for practice. Old-fashioned Realist theory rmorphed into, for example, the Dr. Strangelovian action scenarios, *e.g.*, Doomsday Machines, during the height of the Cold War. It failed to comprehend the vulnerability and sudden demise of apartheid, and it failed to understand (or much less predict) the winding down of the Cold War (Lepgold and Nincic, 2001, 3).

Challenging Realism and Power Politics

What is the use of theory in international relations at all? Theory is important to explain the reality out there in the world, and to help make policy to deal with that reality. In the "canon," theorizing about relations between state-like entities begins with Thucydides, moves through Grotius, and appears in pieces of Hobbes, Rousseau, and Hegel. It reaches its liberal apogee in Kant (and Bentham); appears in several reflections on war and peace-making in Europe in the 19th Century and is thoroughly reconstructed as class relations by Marx and Lenin

(Schmidt in Carlsnaes, Risse and Simmons, 2002, 3-22).

The relevance of theory to policy was critically relevant in international politics with peacemaking after World War I, and reflections on that by Woodrow Wilson (tellingly, an academic before he was a politician). Wilson and his supporters wanted to place interstate relations on a footing more legitimate than imperial entities enveloping nascent nation-states. This was seen to instigate uprisings and alliances that effectively defended the oppression of captured peoples in an attempt to balance the threats of possible rivals. A world (at least a Europe and the Americas) in which the legitimate aspirations of nations gave birth to states would be more peaceful, especially if such a world was represented in the new League of Nations, in which states would co-operate in peaceful enterprises. Via "collective security," they could resist aggression and prevent or quickly end accidental wars. Wilson's vision of postwar international relations would have abolished the balance of power as a master strategy. It inaugurated collective security as a police measure when war threatened, and in popular parlance, it would "end power politics."

Reality proved different, as we all know: states and power politics and imperialism re-asserted themselves in Europe, Asia and Africa. An alliance to resist an axis of aggressors reflected a new realism, which was later—after hard and bloody combat—institutionalized in the Security Council of the new United Nations, in which the victorious "Great Powers" maintained a veto over executive resolutions in matters of war and peace. Unfortunately and all too quickly, the Cold War led to a bi-polar balance, again reflecting the perceived power realities of the post-war world. So the reigning theory of international relations—reborn in the atomic age—both explained and made policy: the systemic structure of bi-polar power, led by rational actors, pursuing national (state) interests, explained international politics for academics and for policy practitioners (Waltz, 1979).

Nevertheless, an inchoate international society had been developing, as early as in the era in which monarchical legitimacy was challenged by popular will. In the post-World War II era it was reflected in burgeoning international institutions, under and around the realist policy-balance of nuclear power exemplified in expert descriptions and prescriptions, An international society was growing, illustrated in popular movements and causes uncontained by bi-polar Cold War politics. So anti-colonialism, in dependent territories restored to the Great Powers after World War II, managed to disconnect Asian and African dependencies from Europe—not without considerable violence—in the 1950s, continuing into the 1980s. Imperium and colonialism were de-legitimized. A whole sub-world of non-great powers emerged, transforming the General Assembly of the United Nations into a giant talking shop of international causes—largely concerned with economic development imbalances between the global "North" and the global "South"-- unsubsumed by the policies of states alone, especially the major Powers.

In addition, anti-racism, especially anti-apartheid, unified otherwise ideologically divided states in what was essentially an emerging world consensus on racial justice. The great debate over the applicability and effectiveness of sanctions policy in relation to South Africa reflected a struggle over the emergence of universal norms of racially defined legitimacy. Popular

democracy now informs (but is not a universal guarantee of) the international recognition of sovereignty, And it remains contested as to whether it may be imposed (Hurrell, 2007, 35-36). Today we witness the attempted expansion of a "rights regime"—*e.g.*, basic human rights vs. group cultural liberation; a basic right to existence vs. economic re-distribution; an international right to intervene to save lives vs. state sovereignty.

Finally, the forty years of Cold War also saw the growth of an increasingly dense network of international institutions, starting with the councils and committees of the United Nations, the European co-operation groupings leading to the European Union, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Labor Organization, the various humanitarian relief and social service organizations, expanding international commercial law, law enforcement co-operation, not to speak of other regional trade and financial groupings, formal and informal.

Does this add up to an International Society? My answer is "sort of;" we can call this Liberal Institutionalism, an international regime establishing a web of relationships among states which reduces the anarchy of power politics (Jackson and Sorenson, 2003, 120-127). As far as expressing a theory of international relations, we can say that replacing a state-centric paradigm is a more descriptive "world politics" model, and instead of the dominance of inter-state interactions, we may more accurately speak of "transnational interactions" (Risse in Carlsnaes, Risse and Simmons, 2002, 255-274).

Yet the "international society" paradigm is more ambitious; it claims that perceived insecurity gives rise to values that challenge "interest defined as power" (Morgenthau, 1954), the classic governing core concept of Structural Realism as model and as policy. Values other than state power as terminal authority complicate the perception of this classic model and the derived policy. Natural law, humane social justice, individual rights make state sovereignty problematic; the legitimacy of a world of sovereign states has been undermined by sub-national and ethnic challenges, by hegemonial realities of certain states, and by uncertain responsibilities over "international commons," such as sea beds, outer space and the natural environment. Finally, multi-national enterprise, legal and illegal, undermine state sovereignty and the ability of states alone to cope with a more complicated world politics (Walker,1993,173).

Some critics of Realism genuflect to Constructivism by claiming that the world is too complicated to reflect simply "explanatory theory." Intersubjective world politics requires "interpretive theory" rather than "explanatory theory" (Little, in Reus-Smit and D. Snidel, eds.,2008, 679). Yet to claim that the cultural-institutional-normative aspects of international relations have created a widely shared, intersubjective awareness among peoples, that nations are "social constructions"—hence "constructivism"—stretches the imagination beyond useful theory (Jackson and Sorenson, 2003, 249).

The claim that instead of discovering an objective world, we create an intersubjective world may be pedagogically helpful hyperbole, but it is a methodological dead end. If this be constructivism, it explodes theory rather than creating it. Other critiques of Realism and Institutionalism seem more obviously parlor games rather than theory. For example, critical theory and post-modernism, which challenge all objectivity, which see knowledge as only a

reflection of power, which gleefully undermine attempts at objectivity, border on nihilism rather than scholarship. Scholarship on world politics, unlike world literature, deserves a strong relationship to practice, and to making policy. Woodrow Wilson deserves better.

The Relevance of Policy to Theory

The debate over international relations theory is particularly important, perhaps more than in other areas of scholarly political studies, due to the close connection between the classic theory - Realism, and policy. Even the liberal idealists of the Wilson era did not believe they were disconnecting theory from policy. A world re-organized in accordance with liberal principles, that reflected the popular authority of nation-states, rather than empires, would yield policies of co-operation among compatible national interests—all of this abetted by the forum and mechanism provided by the League of Nations. This would reduce tensions and avoid wars.

In the period between the World Wars, liberal idealism did not replace realism as the policy result of its challenge to power politics. Wilson's failure to convince the US Congress to ratify membership in the League of Nations and the rise of the dictators in continental Europe (fascist and communist) and militarism in Japan re-emphasized the importance of national power. Appeasement as a policy sought to recognize the interests of other states; alliances and guarantees (Britain, France, Poland) were designed to achieve a balance of power vs. Germany. The reigning theory was Structuralism and the resulting policy was Realism. Appeasement failed as policy, but it is derived from a plausible theory of conciliation. (*Cf.* the 2010 debate of US policy toward Iran,) Appeasement misread the nature and intentions of the leadership of the dictatorship states. Ultimately, one alliance (the Allies) was required to defeat another (the Axis)

The postwar world, as noted, did not replace Structural Realism with Liberal Idealism, although the rhetoric about the United Nations sometimes made it sound that way. Nevertheless foreign policy politics in the world did not stray far from scholarly international relations (J. Lepgold and M. Nincic, 2001, 2-3). The field of strategic studies, born after World War II, informed important elements of foreign policy, such as arms control. Containment grew out of the analysis of Soviet Russia as an expansionist, authoritarian state, whose only understood language was opposing power (Kennan, 1947).

The failure of the Vietnam strategy by the USA opened the gap between scholarly international relations and policy international relations (although not always on scientific or objective scholarly grounds). The scholarly and policy communities began to mistrust one another. Many international relations scholars refused to contribute to government-sponsored research; on the other hand, the US government found a number of sympathetic academics (Henry Kissinger is the best example). The post-Vietnam syndrome widened the gap between process knowledge and scholarly theory, somewhat on intellectual grounds—disagreement about the analysis of the problem of the Vietnamese rebellion—but mostly on moral grounds: the war was wasteful, useless; we would not win and we ought not to win because the Vietnamese were more nationalist, though communist, than they were pro-Soviet lackeys.

There is, however, a legitimate separation between policy and scholarly research in

international relations. Scholarly research tries to explain how the world works; it attempts to remain value-neutral or articulate about values espoused. Even here there is a difference between favoring human rights and explaining how a human rights intervention works or might work. Policy research should be about how to get from here to there. It is, in Alexander George's phrase, "contingent advice" (Lepgold and Nincic, 2001, 83). Even the analysis of the critics of structural realism recognize that it is legitmate to recognize "situational ethics" and that we operate in a world of "nonperfectionist ethics" (phrases from Arnold Wolfers and Stanley Hoffmann, quoted in Jackson in Smith, Booth and Zalewski, 1996, 211.). Even liberal institutionalists will argue that there are "just wars."

Scholars who ventured into holding official policy positions go beyond, noting the different intellectual orientation for policy rather than theory. They aver that they really have no time to study and weigh scholarly output. Instead they must operate on previously acquired intellectual capital. Sufficient reading matter is provided by memos and cables. Time is the precious commodity. A one page summary is far more effective than the text of a journal article. (See the discussion of the experience of Joseph Nye and Henry Kissinger in Lepgold and Nincic, 2001, 19-20). So policy-oriented theory must build the intellectual capital that policy-makers draw upon.

Scholarly international relations studies are also not scientific in the sense that new theory supersedes old theory; new discoveries do not cause the discard of old theories (Jackson in Smith, Booth and Zelewski, 1996, 210-211). So the challenges to Structural Realism since the 1990s have not demolished it; they simply compete for adherents in explaining world events and international phenomena. That's why we now have "schools" of theory: the Structural Realists, the Liberal Institutionalists, the Constructivists, the Marxists…and even the Critical Theorists.

One commentator (Wohlforth, 1998) has tried to summarize the cross- currents of debate over theory at the end of the 20th Century by positioning "constructivism" as a query about changing ideas. Realists emphasize the centrality of material power. But where does material power end as an adequate explanation of change in international politics? Despite material incentives, ideas do change, as we have seen, and they exercise influence over state and inter-state decision-making. Focusing on the structure of power in the world will yield Realism; whereas a focus on systemic factors in the world will yield the dominance of liberalism (*cf.* Levy, "Theories…" in Crocker *et al*, 2001, 3-7).

The concept "complex interdependence" of Joseph Nye (2002) offers a policy oriented theory perspective to international politics. His famous three dimensional chess image allows us to move from inter-state to global inter-relationships: in matters military, international relations remain largely uni-polar; in matters of economic relations, the world is multi-polar; and in transnational relations—all the rest—relationships are largely outside the control of governments, reflecting a variety of political and non-political resources and power, distributed in a disorderly fashion. To govern is not to dominate, but to find ways to provide global public goods through international institutions and to deal with the problems of participation and accountability in the midst of a global constituency of varying influence.

Nye's image raises the question of the emerging sinews of a world community, given the imbalance between military and economic power versus all other transnational relations. Respect for sovereignty seems beleaguered and perhaps beside the point in places like Somalia or in practices of "rendition" in the treatment of "enemy combatants." The enforcement of procedural justice seems problematic and haphazard in the case of international war crimes trials or warrants for war crimes by individuals issued by certain activist judges in individual countries. Even the enforcement of limited membership in the nuclear club suffers from favoritism and the difficulties of enforcement. The General Assembly of the United Nations pursues the violations of human rights by the state of Israel far more than in cases of other countries.

Toward Policy Relevant Theory

Scholars as well as diplomats have long noted the gap between what international relations academic theorists do and what policy practitioners deal with (Walt, 2005). "The higher learning about international relations does not loom large on the intellectual landscape. Its practitioners are not only rightly ignored by practicing foreign policy officials; they are usually held in disdain by their fellow academics as well" (Kurth 1998). The International Relations Academy rarely generates high policy advisers. Scholars who enter high government positions rarely return to the Academy. Major foreign policy practitioners usually come from the ranks of lawyers (Sandy Berger), bankers (Douglas Dillon), military (Colin Powell) or professional politicians (Hilary Clinton). University-based economists seem to move easily back and forth between Washington and the Academy; less so for political scientists.

The gap between theory and practice is due not only to the nature and limits of international relations theorizing, which, as noted, is usually too general for policy application. Secondly, the Academy offers few incentives toward influencing policy. Most theoreticians among academics write for one another. Publications in scholarly journals and by major university presses are the measure of success. Sojourns in Washington are often seen as diversions rather than career builders.

Walt (2005, 25-28) asked what type of theory would be useful. After a pithy survey, the conclusion was that there was "a bewildering array of competing arguments." General theories are least useful. At the most general, it seems 'you pay your money and you take your choice.' As Walt (2005, 34) summarizes "…a grand strategy based on liberal theory would emphasize the spread of democratic institutions within states or the expansion and strengthening of international institutions between states. Success would be measured by the number of states that adopted durable democratic forms… By contrast, a grand strategy based on realist theory would devote more attention to measuring the balance of power, and success might be measured by increases in one's own relative power…or the disruption of an opponent's internal legitimacy."

In this debate Constructivism (and, certainly, Deconstructionism) offer the least likely paradigm to help practitioners. This is not an argument against theorizing; it is an argument about the disutility of the constructivist paradigm (what Walt [26] calls "a body of theory [that]

focuses on collective ideas, identities and social discourse.") and against the fad of deconstructionism in international relations and the obfuscations and impenetrabilities of so-called hermeneutical and "interpretivist" knowledge.

The real world problems that need to be solved depend on perspectives based on the evidence of behavior. The 2002 controversy over war with Iraq, for instance, depended on one of two kinds of analysis: on the one hand, of the internal nature of the regime, the nature of leadership, past conduct and supposed evidence of current actions and aspirations; or, on the other hand, of the external actions and past behavior, in which deterrence had worked (Pollock 2002; Mearsheimer & Walt 2003). We are in the realm of theories of state behavior. Walt's (2005) survey of types of theory and their relevance to policy offers only residual space for the uses of constructivism, which would fall into the categories of general or abstract theories. The closest might come in limited remarks about "constructing international reality" beyond materialist conceptions. "Such works suggest that societies have greater latitude…than materialist conceptions imply, but they rarely offer concrete guidance for how policy makers might create a better world" (Wendt 1999).

The Relevance of Sovereignty: Africa and IR Theory
We conclude here with a glance at international relations in Africa as a test case of illuminating theory and theory relevant to policy. Of all places in the world where one might have expected the state system to implode, it might have been post-colonial Africa. The colonial envelopes were artificial, based on conquests and boundary treaties of the European imperial powers. Actual borders originated in European conference rooms, cutting through indigenous political entities, rarely reflecting native political systems (Davidson, 1992) Relations between colonies reflected European interests. Soon after World War II, a political debate arose between integrating African interests into Europe's (*e.g.,* Algeria as a *departement* of France) or fostering gradual movement toward independence within colonial boundaries (*e.g.,* Ghana). The UN Trusteeship program undercut the integrationist argument (France and Portugal) by authorizing a march toward independence in the administration of the former Mandated territories (e.g., Tanzania, then Tanganyika, Togo, Cameroun and the special case of Somaliland).

Anti-colonial "nationalism" succeeded as territorial movements. Newly independent governments simply occupied the colonial state apparatus. Despite minor challenges by "tribal" parties, delaying actions by Portugal and Spain, diversions into multi-racialism in Kenya and in the Rhodesias (now Zambia and Zimbabwe) and a few territorial federations (*e.g.,* Zanzibar and Tanganyika, Ethiopia and Eritrea–shortlived), African states have maintained the boundaries they inherited. A formal continental state system endures. The Organization of African Unity gave way to an African Union, but it has not transcended the formal state autonomy in critical decisions. Indeed the large number of separate African states lends a certain weight to African regional concerns in formal international institutions, such as the United Nations, especially in the General Assembly, where the voting system is one country-one vote.

Yet the African continent is hardly a microcosm of regional state organizations vs state

anarchy. Occasional wars between African states have broken out: Tanzania invaded Uganda to overthrow Idi Amin, Ethiopia and Eritrea have fought over a border sliver, and Morocco occupies a part of former Spanish Sahara. On the whole, states have supported one another in larger trans-state causes. For instance, the African Union has only partially supported the UN intercession in Darfur, Sudan, while neighboring African states have played host to the Sudanese President, despite a warrant for his arrest from an international tribunal (over complicity in genocide in Darfur). African governments have regretted the internal disarray in Zimbabwe after flawed elections, but they have not materially responded to external condemnation of President Mugabe for flagrant neglect of the welfare of the country's population and for flouting previous agreements concerning the land ownership rights of the white minority.

Elements of an international consensus on certain pan-African ideals are in place. The present international relations reality in Africa reflect a mixed regional order…and transnational institutionalism. Certain states are acting as regional hegemons: South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia, as expected by Structural Realists. South Africa's economy exerts important influence over the whole continent, as investor and as trading partner. It is the engine of regional economic co-operation that benefits Namibia, Mozambique, Botswana and Zimbabwe. Nigeria is a West African hegemon, the hub of regional economic co-operation (ECOWAS) and regional military co-operation (ECOMOG). Kenya is the center of regional and international economic co-operation; Ethiopia is emerging as a military resource in the attempt to stabilize an East African region under siege by secessionists and Islamists.

Ironically, the writ of the official state on the African continent barely stretches over its whole territory. Weak state authority and juridical state sovereignty operate in tandem. The state as a political actor competes for authority with several important non-state actors, across as well as inside state boundaries. Certain official international institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, exert enormous authority in important political decisions of official state leadership—in virtually all African states. In the past half century, dominated by economic difficulties, effective governance has occasionally been exercised by a number of international financial institutions. Due to natural disasters, such as floods and famines, and civil wars, the "politics" of states have been conducted by warlords, bankers, smugglers and elements of neighboring armies. The African international politics "regime" is comprised of liberal institutionalism and juridical state sovereignty under constant challenge, by legal and illegal contestants. (Dunn and Shaw, 2001; Olsen and Engel, 2006). In fact, the mantle of international juridical sovereignty, respected by international law and practice, has served to mask the process of hollowing out state institutions by warlords, smugglers and criminal syndicates (Reno, 1998).

African international politics are not definitively informed by the concept of an international society. It is hard to conceive of how "constructivism" in international relations theory would help comprehend political relationships there. This opposes the view that "employing a constructivist approach to study the African context can lead to the bridging of the theoretical abyss in which Africa find itself…This premise is derived from the middle ground

position that constructivism occupies between rationalism and reflectivism [sic], as well as the contention that constructivism, in establishing the middle ground, has changed the culture of IR, thus creating the necessary dialogical space to overcome the institutionalization of the incommensurability thesis within the discipline." (Smith, mss, 2009). Instead a Realism, in its classic formulation by Machiavelli, makes its slouching return in attempting to understand the basis of political authority across and within African states.

National interest, balance of power, "reason of state" applied by an effective territorial authority do not apply. Central to this revisionist realist view (Clark in Dunn & Shaw, 2001: 85-102) is the concept of "regime security." The formal authority inside the juridical sovereign state finds financial and military backing from outsiders—business corporations, tribal leaders, warlords, foreign military or para-military. Internal support, based on formal elections, is but one element in building effective authority. And the formal recognition of state sovereignty by the rest of the world is instrumental in permitting claimants who don its mantle to secure their power.

This Machiavellian realist view of African politics places foreign policy in a singular light. Placing regime security at the center of African politics emphasizes the instability of African international relations. It is unlikely that Africa's own international institutions will see robust growth until states' internal institutions develop. Interstate community in the region remains limited to appeals to racial and continental solidarity in the face of perceived threats. Accelerating economic development needs to be protected from capture by illegal enterprise.or disruption by small wars. The policy orientation derived from the neo-realist view of African international relations leans in the direction of liberal institution-building. Within the existing envelope of state sovereignty, republican and representative institutions, citizen rights, market economies, and social welfare need strengthening (Nkiwane in Dunn and Shaw, eds., 2001).

Except for mineral exports, Africa lags in integration into the world economy. Unlike other world regions, its connections to global institutions is more object than strong participant-subject. Theory that recognizes the instrumental reality of state envelopes and the purposes served by regime security, inside the recognized sovereign entities, enables us to clarify the policy steps that may act to empower Africa's long-embattled peoples.

Works Cited

Adler, Emanuel, 2003. "Constructivism and International Relations," in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomass Risse and Beth A. Simmons, eds., 2003. *Handbook of International Relations*. London: Sage Publications.

Buzan, Barry. 2004. *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalization*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

---------, 1996. "The Timeless Wisdom of Realism?" in Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski, eds., *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 47-65.

Carlsnaes, Walter, Thomas Risse, and Beth Simmons, eds., 2003. *Handbook of International Relations,* London: Sage Publications.

Checkel, Jeffrey T.1998, "The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory," *World Politics*, 50: 324-48.

Crocker, Chester A., Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall, eds., 2001. *Turbulent Peace*. Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press.

Davidson, Basil. 1992. The *Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation State*. NY: Times Books.

Dunn, Kevin C. and Timothy M. Shaw, eds. 2001. *Africa's Challenge to International Relations Theory*. NY:

Palgrave.

Huntington, Samuel P. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. NY: Simon & Shuster.

Hurrell, Andrew. 2007. *On Global Order*. NY: Oxford University Press.

Jackson, Robert. 1996. "Is There a Classical International Theory?" in Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski, eds., *International Theory: Positivism & Beyond*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, , 203-220.

-------- and George Sorenson. 2003. *Introduction to International Relations, Theories and Approaches*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed.

Kennan, George F. 1947. (1950). "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," reprinted in *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 107-128.

Kurth, James 1998. "Inside the Cave: the Banality of IR Studies," *National Interest*, 53: 29-40.

Levy, Jack S. 2001. "Theories of Interstate and Intrastate War: A Level of Analysis Approach," Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall, eds., *Turbulent Peace*. Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 3-28.

Lepgold, Joseph and Miroslav Nincic 2001. *Beyond the Ivory Tower*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Little, Richard. 2008. "International Relations Theory from a Former Hegemon," in Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*. NY: Oxford University Press, 675-690.

Mearsheimer, John J. and Stephen Walt, "An Unnecessary War," *Foreign Policy*, no. 134, 51-61.

Morgenthau, Hans. 1954.. *Politics Among Nations*. NY: Knopf, 2nd ed.

Nkiwane, Tandeka C. 2001. "The End of History? African Challenges to Liberalism in International Relations," in Kevin C. Dunn and Timothy M. Shaw, eds., *Africa's Challenge to International Relations Theory*. NY: Palgrave, 103-111.

Nye, Joseph S., Jr. 2002. *The Paradox of American Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

---------- 2004. *Soft Power*. NY: Public Affairs.

Olsen, Gorm and Ulf Engel. 2006. "Africa in International Relations Theory." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, San Diego, CA, mss.

Pollack, Kenneth. 2002. *The Threatening Storm; the Case for Invading Iraq*. NY: Random House.

Reno, Will. 1998. *Warlord Politics and African States*. Boulder,CO: Lynne Rienner Publisher.

Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. NY: Pantheon Books.

Reus-Smit, Christian and Duncan Snidal, eds. 2008. *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*. NY: Oxford University Press.

Schmidt, Brian C. 2003. "On the History and Historiography of International Relations," in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simmons, eds., *Handbook of International Relations*. London: Sage Publications.

Smith, Karen. 2009. "Constructing Africa(ns) in International Relations Theory." Paper presented to the annual meeting of ISA-ABRI, at PUC-Rio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, July 22, mss.

Smith, Steve, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski, eds., 1996. *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Theory Talks Series online < http://www.theory-talks.org/> acc. 3/20/10.
    Joseph S. Nye, Jr. #7, "Soft Power and the US."
    Joseph S. Nye, Jr. "On Teaching America to be More British."
    Alexander Wendt ,#3, "Social Constructivism and UFOs."

Barry Buzan, #35, "On International Society, Securitization, and an English School Map of the World"
    John Agnew, #4, "Power and Geopolitics."

Walker, R.B.J. 1993. *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Walt, Stephen M. 1998. "International Relations: One World, Many Theories." *Foreign Policy*, no. 110, 29-35.

---------- 2005. "The Relationship between Theory and Policy in International Relations,." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 8: 23-48.

Waltz, Kenneth. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. NY: Random House.

Wohlforth, William C. 1998. "Reality Check: Revising Theories of International Politics in Response to the End of the Cold War," Review Article, *World Politics*. 50: 651-680.

Published by the Forum on Public Policy