

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The objective of this research has been to better understand the dynamics of relations between actors within the international system of states by exploring the relations within a particular sub-set of states, notably small states. This objective arose out of the difficulty that exists within current international relations theory in providing sufficient or satisfactory explanation of interventions that do not involve great powers or episodes of intervention that do not, except superficially, entail balance of power considerations. It has been argued that neither the realist nor constructivist theoretic positions alone provide adequate account of the dynamics at play between small states and that to do so a new approach must be adopted. The examination of the three cases of small state intervention has revealed four key facets of this argument that support the conclusion that some form of critical synthesis between the realist and constructivist approaches is required. These key findings are: that balance of power, as the fundamental realist concept that gives theoretic meaning to interventions, is demonstrably insufficient and/or inappropriate to these examples of small state intervention; that intersubjective values and shared ideas such as ideology are significant factors in the reasons for and causes of these interventions; that norms and power mutually implicate one another; and that both variations in the distribution of capabilities and the intersubjective environment of international politics shape the causes and consequences of small state intervention. Together these findings suggest that there is theoretic room for an approach to international relations theory that comprises a critical synthesis between the material realist conception of state relations and the ideational/socially constructed one of the constructivists.

Beyond simply suggesting that such a 'theoretical space' between the realist and constructivist positions exists, it remains to explore the way this space opens up the possibility and necessity of critical synthesis. This space, as suggested, falls in very general terms between the materialist and ideational approaches adopted by realism and constructivism and is most apparent in the ontological distinctions between the two. In re-conceptualising a theoretic account of international relations, constructivism has sought to problematise five key ontological premises of the realist account, and it these key premises that not only expose the space between the positions, but delineate the envelope and contours of it also. The first of these is that while realists are convinced that the nature of the

international system, and the system of relations between states, can be explained in exclusively material terms, the constructivist account is primarily an ideational one that privileges the role of ideas and values in conditioning behaviour. Secondly, the realists assume that relations between states are essentially causal in nature so that explanation of such must be cast in exclusively causal terms. The constructivists contrarily, maintain that these relations are not only causal but constitutive in nature, and that this constitutive dimension fundamentally shapes behaviour and structure. Thirdly, the constructivists insist that constitutive as well as regulatory rules govern the nature and form of relations between states, and that these constitutive rules again condition the international environment and system. Fourthly, while realists see state interests as exogenous, given, and universal, the constructivists maintain that interests are endogenous and shaped by states' identities and the social nature of the international system. Finally, realists assume that the 'logic of anarchy' is essentially singular, immutable, and persistent, while the constructivist approach suggests that 'anarchy is what states make of it'⁵⁸⁷ and that it is conditioned by the 'culture' of shared ideas and intersubjective values that constitute the structure of the system.

Having enunciated the thesis that current international relations accounts provide insufficient explanatory framework for episodes of small state intervention, and that a synthetic approach is required, it was necessary to establish what evidence would be required to sustain this argument. Through the case study discussion it was demonstrated that the conventional realist explanations provided unsatisfactory accounts of the 'causes of' and 'reasons why' these interventions occurred. Analysis of these examples of intervention demonstrated that an adequate theoretic approach must include a coherent account of the significant role of factors other than those at the structural level. Unit level factors such as the role of individuals, decision-making processes, domestic political pressures, and the influence of nationalistic forces, significantly conditioned the behaviour of these states at the systemic level. Similarly, the role of ideational influences such as political ideologies, moral concerns, human rights, and the 'non-structural' (in the realist conception of structure) factors such as the power of norms, shared ideas, intersubjective values, and conventions, were demonstrably substantial in shaping the nature of relations between these states and the structural context in which they operated. All of these significant influences fall largely outside of the

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

conventional realist theoretic account, yet all were shown to be essential to a thorough understanding of the forces that shape international relations.

In these discussions it is noted that the 'realist account' was treated as a single theoretic position, and this might appear at odds with the introductory discussion in which the distinctions between the five primary realist positions were deliberately 'unpacked'. Through the course of research into these interventions it quickly became apparent that the distinction between the realist positions, although significant in how they each form a different 'theoretical space' with the constructivist account, do not offer significantly different account of why small states intervene. The general realist paradigm of states pursuing their materially conceived interests through the mechanism of balance of power was common to all, thus allowing all realist positions in this context to be considered equivalent. Consequently within the case study discussions the realist positions remained undifferentiated with the general case being made that realism in all its forms inadequately accounts for the examples of small state intervention that were considered. This undifferentiation tends to further support the argument that realism does not provide sufficient account of the actions of small states in that none of the forms of realism adequately account for the peculiar circumstances of small state intervention. Nonetheless, while the realist account of small state intervention is not significantly differentiated, it is possible to meaningfully discuss the different spaces between the various forms of realism and the general constructivist position so as to refine our conception of a critical synthesis. The discussion will turn to these spaces shortly.

Secondly it was necessary to establish what evidence was required to demonstrate that the constructivist approach could provide credible alternative account of these interventions. If indeed the constructivist approach could be shown empirically to provide a credible account, then the possibility of developing a critical synthesis between the realist accounts and constructivism would be substantially advanced. There were seven key issues that this research needed to show to establish the credibility of the constructivist approach. First, it needed to demonstrate that a reasonable case could be made that agent and structure are not distinct and unrelated phenomena but that they are contingent upon each other, and to varying degree, 'constitute' each other in virtue of their relationship. Most directly, it was argued, this contingent constitutive relationship could be demonstrated by evidencing that unit level factors and cultural systemic factors such as norms and conventions matter in providing

coherent account of relations between states and the nature of the international system. By demonstrating the importance of these factors in providing adequate account of these interventions the constructivist approach highlights that the realist 'structure only' argument is manifestly inadequate. In ignoring unit level factors and how they can shape and condition state behaviour, realism unacceptably and prematurely collapses analysis of the international system to a 'structure only' argument. Similarly, by denying significant influence to the role of norms, values, and conventions within the international system, the realist accounts shut off the powerful explanatory case for the social dimension of the international system. In doing so realists consequently fail to provide a sufficient account of the nature of relations between states and the behaviour of these small states. The mono-dimensional materialist conception of structure and system fundamentally limits the realist account, and by 'opening up' this dimension of international politics the constructivist can provide powerful and nuanced explanatory account of international relations.

Analysis of the case studies has, it is argued, demonstrated that unit level factors and cultural systemic factors are essential to a proper understanding of the workings of interstate relations such as these interventions. A comprehensive account of these dynamics is not possible at the structural level only, so long as structure is conceived exclusively in terms of materialist power relations. In all three episodes of intervention the insufficiency of the 'structure only' approach has been clearly exposed, and while it is also obvious that not all unit level and cultural systemic factors could or should be included in a truly 'theoretic' account of international relations, a synthesis of ideational and material factors is needed. Waltz claimed that a common error in international relations theory was that it assumed causality of 'motive and result' and that it inferred rules from observed results. Theory under such conditions, he claimed, can easily deteriorate into description, and that the explanatory power of theory can subsequently be diluted to the organization of observation, not the explanation of law-like regularities.⁵⁸⁸ The danger of slipping into the organization of observation rather than explanation, looms large over a synthesis that attempts to include 'too much' unit level analysis or attempts to present a theory of everything, however, conversely the establishment of law like regularities that are premised upon a narrow and particular conception of material power relations is similarly too narrowly conceived. Waltz's, and realism in general's, particular ontological position, privileges the materialist conception that

⁵⁸⁸ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 50.

constructivists criticise it for, and it is this materialist conception of structure and the limiting of analysis to the structural level only that in particular limits the explanatory power of the realist account. By opening up the unit level of analysis, and the ideational and cultural factors also, a critical realist-constructivist synthesis could provide explanation that accommodates the significance of agency and the social dimension of the international system.

The second case that needed to be established was the ideational foundation of state behaviour, system dynamics, and the very basis of structure itself. The constructivist position asserts the primacy of the ideational over the material as the foundation of international relations, politics, and system, and in order to substantiate this claim the case studies needed to demonstrate that a materialist conception based on power relations is not sufficient to account for these small state interventions and that better explanation could be found within the ideational-material synthesis. In many respects the distinction between ideas and material power as the prime motivators of state action has been portrayed as a philosophical/ontological one that is difficult to conclusively evidence empirically either way – either you believe ideas underpin behaviour or that material power conditions do. The constructivist position, although as Wendt suggests is conceived as “ideas all the way down”⁵⁸⁹ does not necessarily ignore the role of material power conditions, nor suggest that ‘ideas only’ matter. It is in this theoretical space concerning the mutually constitutive nature of the relations between ideas and material conditions, (a kind of ‘praxis’) that a sophisticated synthesis can occur, suffice at this point to suggest that the constructivist position can most accessibly attack the realist account by demonstrating that power and material conditions alone are insufficient to adequately answer the ‘reasons why’ and ‘causes of’ questions in these examples of intervention. It is also germane to note that the constructivists conceive structure in terms of shared ideas, intersubjective values, and norms that constitute the culture within the international system, and that this culture shapes and conditions state behaviour more than brute material conditions. In order to demonstrate the existence and importance of this culture, these case studies needed to give evidence not only that norms, shared values, and ideas exist within the international community, but that they influence the manner in which states relate, behave, and perceive themselves. Clues to such evidence are accessed through questions of the ‘reasons why’ type rather than the ‘causes of’ form, and in the case

⁵⁸⁹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*.

study discussions questions of this constitutive nature featured in an attempt to demonstrate the necessity of the ideational and social basis of the international system.

The case study analysis supported these constructivist propositions in all three cases. Unequivocally the case studies have demonstrated that the nature of the relationship between the states involved were constituted by the ideas that informed the states' identities, and by the shared ideas that constituted the dynamic in which they inhabited, as much as the material context. The history of relations, conceptions of nationalism, and shared ideologies, to name a few factors, conditioned the nature of the relations between the states as much as the shared borders and the unequal distributions of power. The reduction of the enormously intricate and multifaceted dynamics between the states to the simple distribution of power capabilities not only misconceives the nature of the relations between the states, but it denies the whole range of human agency that shapes state behaviour. As has been discussed, to account for the dynamic relations between Tanzania and Uganda for example, without an appreciation of the role of colonial and post-colonial forces in shaping state identities, and the role of those identities in shaping behaviour, is to needlessly dismiss a range of causal and constitutive dynamics that materially affected the intervention in 1978. Similarly, in the Vietnam and East Timor cases a panoply of ideas, values, and shared experiences conditioned the behaviour of the states, and constituted the nature of the relations between them in virtue of their standing one to another. Although realism might not be interested in the causes of intervention – rather just that they occur – this is insufficient. More can and needs to be said otherwise our understanding of reality through theory is not advanced merely abstracted.

The case studies also verify the claim that the structure of the international system is constituted by the culture of shared ideas, values, and beliefs that inheres in the society of states, not just the material distribution of power across the system. In each episode the milieu in which the states and their mutually constitutive relations existed, was comprised of this culture of shared ideas, values, and beliefs, and the intervention which eventuated in each instance was not only shaped by this culture, but was the product of it. In the Australian led intervention for example, the prevailing culture of the 'legitimacy' and 'necessity' of humanitarian interventions not only shaped the nature of the intervention but to large degree produced it also. Without a culture that legitimised humanitarian intervention, it is hard to conceive Australia leading a multinational force into what it had for two decades conceded to be an Indonesian territory. The brute material power context delineated what was politically

possible, but the cultural context of human rights and legitimate state humanitarian intervention provided the ideational context and impetus to action. Realism would not have predicted this intervention, nor could it account for it merely in terms of power. The Vietnamese and Tanzanian cases by contrast took place within an international culture that privileged the norms of non-intervention and state sovereignty, and so these interventions were cast in a very different light – impacting not only how they were received in the international arena and justified internationally, but also the manner in which they took place, and the fact that they took place at all. In these cases the material context defined a different ‘space of political possibility’ and the culture of non-intervention legitimated a different kind of response.

The third case that needed to be made concerned the inadequacy of the materialist conception of the dynamics of ‘balance of power’, and the associated notions of ‘hegemony’ and ‘relative power gain’, to satisfactorily account for the small state interventions. The centrality of the theory of balance of power to the realist accounts has been noted, and given the austere materialist conception of relations between states in the realist account, the logic of balance of power is an elemental necessity in their scheme of power relations between states. For the constructivists, balance of power, as the realists express it, is a hollow mechanism that is essentially vacuous in its explanatory power without its proper contextualisation within the ideational and structural milieu that gives it substance and meaning. Balance of power is fundamentally a socially derived idea concerning forceful interaction between states. Without a shared constitutive framework it is but a shell of an idea, and for the constructivists the utility of the concept is limited and conditioned temporally and spatially. The case study discussions indicate the insufficiency of the realist conception of balance of power for the actions of small states, and so too they highlight the very limited applicability of the exclusively materialist conceptions of hegemony and relative power pursuit as satisfactory explanatory mechanisms.

In all three cases, balance of power is intuitively an inappropriate explanation of much of the dynamics at play, and as the analysis has borne out, balance of power considerations, as conceived by most realist positions, if at all evident in these interventions, were of negligible significance. The logic of states intervening to shift either a regional or global balance of power in their favour appears to be applicable primarily to great powers in certain circumstances. It does not appear to be particularly applicable to small states, not only on the

basis of their lack of material capability, but also as a result of a different set of cultural values that inform the identities of small states. In none of the cases examined did the intervening states identify relative power maximisation or hegemonic pretensions as significant in shaping their state interests. Although in the Vietnamese case national security was a consideration, the evidence suggests the Vietnamese would have preferred to have acted cooperatively with the Cambodian government to amicably settle their disputes without recourse to coercive force, and even then it was regime change (although this is not necessarily incompatible with balance of power) that the Vietnamese sought, not territory or relative power gain. The materialist explanations are insufficient and inappropriate in the cases studied, and the exclusively materialist mechanics of balance of power consequently are equally as inappropriate. The bases of the disputes that led to the interventions in each case were decidedly ideational in nature, and explanation of them is best sought in an understanding of the ideas, values, and beliefs that motivated these states to act in the manner they did within the material and ideational context of the time. Clearly if the very fundamental basis of explanation as provided in realist theory is inappropriate, then other explanation is required, hence synthesis is necessary.

The fourth case that the constructivist alternative account needed to demonstrate was that legitimacy within the international community is a powerful force in shaping state beliefs and behaviour. The social dimension of legitimacy is essentially dismissed in the realist accounts, as it is not a function of power relations between states in an anarchic environment. The notion of legitimacy, although acknowledged, is seen as subordinate to state interests expressed in terms of power. If it is relevant at all to the realist, it is only as a *post-facto* rationalisation or justification of self-interested behaviour – not a source of real or significant influence. For the constructivists, legitimacy is an expression of the social needs of states to confirm their identity with and within the culture of shared ideas, values, norms, and conventions of the international system. Legitimacy in this context is made sensible by the existence and force of norms and conventions as the framework of socially derived and agreed practice. According to Wendt, states observe norms for three primary reasons, because: they are forced to do so – which is the neorealist position, because of their self-interest in doing so – which is the neoliberal position, or because they perceive them as legitimate – which is the constructivist approach.⁵⁹⁰ If these case studies then could provide

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

evidence that states acted on the basis of their understanding of and desire for legitimation then the constructivist account would be substantially strengthened. Determining if concerns for legitimacy were relevant motivations to state behaviour is a decidedly subjective enterprise, however, in examining the justification these states proffered for their actions, some insight into their motivations may be achieved, especially if the justifications accorded with available evidence concerning decision-making and their conduct of the interventions.

The case study analysis certainly suggests that in each episode of intervention notions of legitimacy played a significant part. This legitimacy, and the states' desires to be seen as acting legitimately, displayed both a regional or local dimension and a global or international dimension. In the case of Tanzania's intervention for example, concern for how other African states and the OAU would perceive her actions materially influenced Tanzania's decision to intervene, how she conducted that intervention, and how she sought to justify her actions subsequently to those states and the OAU. As has been noted, the peculiar African interpretation of norms, such as non-intervention and state sovereignty, meant that to some degree the regional normative context was out of phase with international conventions, and Tanzania was concerned to meet the expectations and obligations of both. In arguing for the exceptional circumstances of their intervention, Tanzania was acknowledging the importance and force of regional and international legitimacy in the conduct of her affairs. The case study discussions concerning the role of legitimacy in the Tanzanian intervention clearly indicate that Tanzania recognised the social dimension, and legitimating role, of both the regional community of states and the international community of states, and that along with this recognition came an identification with both, an internalisation of the rules, norms, and conventions of both, and the desire to participate as a member of these communities of states. Clearly, the mutually constitutive nature of the relations between Tanzania, and other member states of the regional and international communities, evidenced the ideational and social dimension of international politics and the international system.

Similarly, in both the Vietnamese and Australian cases these states displayed a positive desire to conform to, and participate in, their regional and international communities and the norms and conventions that they entailed. Although condemned widely within the international community, Vietnam was demonstrably concerned to be seen to be acting legitimately, lawfully, and within the spirit of the norms of international behaviour. Recognising also the untenability of its position in the eyes the powerful Western states and

China, Vietnam attempted to justify its actions on the solid bases of national security rather than on the less well accepted grounds (at the time) of humanitarian need or self-defence. Vietnam's actions clearly demonstrated a desire for legitimation of its actions beyond that which could be construed by a realist account, as subterfuge for its self-interested aggression. The Australian case likewise demonstrated the force of international legitimacy in shaping state behaviour, and the salience of Australia's identification with the community of states and the values, beliefs, and norms that it represented. Indeed Australia's desire to be seen as an exemplar of international values and beliefs shaped the re-conceptualisation of its foreign policy and, to large degree, directly led to its military intervention. Australia's self-perceived identity as 'good international citizen', 'significant regional player' and 'stalwart of human rights' manifestly shaped its values, its interests, and its behaviour, and this cannot be easily accommodated within the exclusively materialist realist paradigm. For the constructivists, the role of legitimacy and legitimation that these case studies evidence unequivocally supports their argument that the international system is a social system that is inhered with a culture of shared ideas, intersubjective values and beliefs, and that the ideational basis of this culture shapes and conditions state behaviour and the dynamics and structure of the international system.

The fifth case that required evidence to support the alternate constructivist account concerned their insistence on the historical contingency of state behaviour and the structure of the international system. The realist account is essentially ahistorical in that it claims that the forces of structure transcend the currents of history and are persistent and pervasive because they are structurally, not agentially, founded. As such state interests and balance of power do not change with time, and state behaviour will always be dictated by the systemic conditions of anarchy and self-help. The constructivist approach, following from Giddens' concept of 'structuration', sees structure as both temporally and spatially contingent, as the ideas that inhabit structure change and shift across time and location, such that the prevailing norms and conventions in sub-Saharan Africa during the Cold War for example, may be substantially different to those of South East Asia a decade later. Evidence to support this case came primarily in the form of shifts in the normative context surrounding the case studies and in the form of decision-making and justification offered by the states involved. If indeed as Finnemore suggests a shift in the purpose of intervention, or in the norms that 'govern' such behaviour could be detected, then the constructivist case would be further bolstered and the development of a synthesis given further shape and clarity.

The argument for historical contingency in international relations theory has been made through the case study discussions and the subsequent analysis, what remained therefore, was to illustrate the connection between the general need for international relations theory to incorporate historical context into its explanatory schema and the constructivist case for structuration. The case studies demonstrated that between the late 1970s and 1999 the normative context pertaining to the use of intervention and the primacy of state sovereignty had shifted. In the Tanzanian and Vietnamese cases, violation of the norms of non-intervention and state sovereignty, were usually condemned by the international community regardless of motivation. The concept of humanitarian intervention likewise was not an accepted practice and was not seen as a legitimate foundation from which to violate the superior norms of non-intervention and state sovereignty. By 1999 the precedence for intervention on the basis of humanitarian concern was well established, and indeed it is argued that the norm of forceful intervention on the grounds of humanitarian need by this time was also an accepted if not established convention. The normative framework, which was an expression and manifestation of the culture of the international system had clearly evolved in the post-Cold War years. The international cultural milieu of the late 1970s was substantially different, as a result of a number of ideational as well as material factors, to that which existed at the turn of the twenty-first century. The role of this culture in shaping state behaviour has already been illustrated, and as the case study discussions bear out, the behaviour of the states in these different cultural and normative contexts, as evidenced in their decision-making processes and the justifications they proffered for their actions, was concomitantly conditioned and manifest.

The sixth issue that needed to be demonstrated was that the realist concept of a single persistent 'logic of anarchy' is too restrictive and probably misconceived, such that 'multiple logics' may be possible, and that this 'logic' is contingent rather than fixed. According to the realist account, the anarchic international environment produces a self-help condition in which the only option for states is to interact competitively in the pursuit of their interests. Although some variance in the behaviour is proposed in the different strands of realism, and even cooperative behaviour is proposed by contingent realism, the underlying dynamic to this process is driven by the exclusively materialist conception of power relations. Fundamentally at odds with this, the constructivist approach envisages the international environment constituted by the prevailing 'culture' of shared ideas, values, and norms. As this culture evolves, so too does the systemic logic, thus if evolving norms could be demonstrated, and

concomitantly if evolving state behaviour could be shown, then the constructivist case would be advanced and the ultimate nature of anarchy challenged.

The case for an evolving normative framework and the subsequent changing patterns of state behaviour has already been made, however the case that different logics of anarchy may exist is yet to be substantiated. The logic of anarchy suggests that states interact competitively in the pursuit of their interests. The fact that these interventions occurred would tend to suggest that this logic still pertains and that states still violently force their will on their neighbours. However, this presumption may be attacked on two fronts. Firstly, in the Australian led intervention it is obvious that the logic of competitive interaction is insufficient to account for the cooperative multinational nature of the interventionary forces into East Timor. Such cooperative behaviour is at odds with a strict interpretation of the logic of anarchy, although as the realists would quickly respond, such cooperative action is short lived and serves only to 'gang up' small or less powerful states against a more powerful hegemon or hegemonic contender. Such balancing, realists contend, is the basis of balance of power politics and cases such as the intervention into East Timor would support their position. The case however, is a very poor fit. The multinational force into East Timor was not a case of small states balancing against a more powerful state. The forces involved did not attempt to wrest power or territory away from Indonesia but rather to enforce the results of a UN sanctioned public referendum concerning the rights to self-determination of the indigenous peoples. The states involved did not represent a weaker coalition against a rival power, nor was the motivation behind the intervention one based on exclusively material power considerations. Rather the multinational force into East Timor was an example of a different logic of state behaviour, one based on mutually shared values and beliefs concerning human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples to self-rule.

Secondly, as has been discussed, the constructivist conception of the ideational basis of state behaviour rejects as insufficient the realist materialist conception of power relations. The constructivist account suggests that state behaviour is conditioned by the ideational and cultural milieu that inheres the international system in the particular temporal and spatial context. Further, as has been demonstrated in the case studies, none of these small state interventions were the result of balance of power contestation or the pursuit of relative power gain by one state against another, rather they were the result of a range of ideational factors within the context of the material conditions at the time. For the constructivists, and as has

been evidenced in the case studies, what matters is not how the logic of anarchy, acting upon the material conditions of power, determine the nature of state behaviour, but rather how the ideational culture of the system at that time conditions the actions of states within the context of the material conditions. The case studies demonstrate this in the way in which the actions of the states was not a product of the immutable logic of anarchy, but shaped by the ideational cultural context extant at the time.

The final point that the case study discussions provide evidence for is not strictly speaking a constructivist premise, however, it is closely allied to the ideational dimension of state action – that states can display a form of situational ethics in which they pursue action based upon moral principles. The realist position explicitly denies such behaviour, unless it is merely fortuitously coincidental with material state interests, or as in Carr's⁵⁹¹ argument that states always conceive *their* action and purposes as morally founded - in either event the realists insist that morality resides at the individual level and is not a property of states at the systemic level. The constructivist approach although not espousing a case for state morality, attributes to states, identity, collective intentionality, and values, and as such is open to the notion that states can act on principles not necessarily dictated by self-interest. In order to make such a case, the examples discussed would have to have provided evidence that the states justified their action on the basis of morally founded principle and that this justification was borne out in their behaviour. This is the case that has been made for the Tanzanian and Australian led interventions.

The Tanzanian intervention into Uganda has been portrayed through the analysis of this study as having been in large part motivated by Julius Nyerere's concern for the people of Uganda and his abhorrence at Amin's authoritarian regime. In acting to remove that regime and to respond to the desperate need of the Ugandan people, Tanzania demonstrably followed a principled and morally based course of action, in spite of the deleterious consequences for its own national interests. The realist account clearly does not accommodate such explanation and would challenge such as subterfuge to mask fundamentally self-interested action. The Australian case also exhibits reasonable grounds to believe that, at least in significant part, the action of the Australian government, in acting as it did in East Timor, was based upon the principled moral values of concern for the rights of the East Timorese. Again such behaviour is dismissed by the realist account as tangential at best

⁵⁹¹ Carr, *The Twenty Year's Crisis 1919-1939*.

to the real concerns of state interests. In both instances however, the evidence supports the claim that these states did in fact act in a fashion consistent with, and motivated by, a morally principled concern. How then can a theoretic account of such ethical state behaviour proceed? The constructivist approach offers the most reasonable conduit to account for such by way of its ideational basis of action. Ultimately, principles, morals, and ethical considerations exist in the ideational and social domain, and behaviour based on such are similarly ideationally constituted. The constructivist approach posits state behaviour and international structure as being ideationally constituted, thus states can behave in principled and moral fashion if these are the ideas that constitute their identity. Interestingly, classical realism with its emphasis on human nature is also open to the idea that state behaviour can be morally based if such is a manifestation of human behaviour - and Lebow⁵⁹² makes a very strong case for classical realism's moral dimension - although Niebuhr's classical treatise on *Moral Man and Immoral Society*⁵⁹³ is usually treated as the last and authoritative word on such by realists of all persuasion. Certainly the possibility of collective moral action, as state moral behaviour would constitute, is problematic and difficult, however, the constructivist conception of collective intentionality, and their attributing to the state properties usually considered individual, such as beliefs and values, enables the state to be conceived as possessing moral or principled beliefs. Indeed the adoption of basic human rights as a norm within the international community would represent the incorporation of a moral premise into the culture of the community of states, albeit observed in rhetoric more than practice. The possibility therefore is certainly open to states to identify with principled moral action and to behave accordingly.

The Theoretical Spaces

In the introductory chapter the contemporary realist paradigm was presented as comprising five distinct variants of realism, and although they shared certain core realist tenets they also exhibited substantial differences. In a 1999 *International Security* article Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik from the University of Virginia and Harvard respectively, outlined a different typology of the realist paradigm, one that reformulated realism along three core

⁵⁹² Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*.

⁵⁹³ Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*. Niebuhr's argument essentially states that while individual man can behave morally, social collectives of men do not.

assumptions.⁵⁹⁴ Their work is significant for this study in that it bears directly upon the aim of this research in attempting to move international relations theory towards a “multi-paradigmatic synthesis”⁵⁹⁵ which they suggest is not only desirable but imperative for the future of international relations theory. Legro and Moravcsik argue that contemporary realism is in some trouble, with new variants of its essential form unacceptably diluting its coherency, parsimony, and distinctiveness. As they write:

The central problem is [instead] that the theoretical core of the realist approach has been undermined by its own defenders – in particular so-called defensive and neoclassical realists – who seek to address anomalies by recasting realism in forms that are theoretically less determinate, less coherent, and less distinctive to realism.⁵⁹⁶

The concept of realism subsequently, they claim, has been stretched beyond recognisable limits and the boundaries between realist, institutionalist, liberal, and epistemic approaches (as they term them) have become so blurred that significant and important distinctions have been lost. While arguing ultimately that multi-paradigmatic synthesis is required, in order to do so the genuine boundaries of the realist paradigm must first be reformulated and distinguished. They do this by establishing the three core assumptions of realism. First, the nature of the actors as rational, unitary, political units in anarchy, in which competition and conflict is the essential mode of interaction. Second, the nature of state preferences as fixed and uniformly conflictual goals, whereby interstate politics is a perpetual bargaining game over the distribution and redistribution of scarce resources. Finally, the international structure and the primacy of material capabilities, in which material resources constitute a fundamental reality that exercises an exogenous influence on state behaviour no matter what states seek, believe, or construct.⁵⁹⁷

Based on these ‘immutable’ premises, Legro and Moravcsik argue that some contemporary formulations of realism, such as offensive, contingent, and neoclassical realism are not in fact realist positions properly understood, despite their innovative and valuable contributions to international relations theory, and should not be called realist at all. Notwithstanding Legro and Moravcsik’s objections to what have here been referred to as the ‘neoclassical, contingent and other’ forms of realism, this study has treated all five variant of

⁵⁹⁴ Legro and Moravcsik, "Is Anybody Still a Realist?."

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid.: p.6.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.: p. 18.

realism as distinct yet recognisably realist positions based primarily on the grounds that they claim to be so, and that they incorporate at least the basic common realist core premises. Legro and Moravcsik do however raise an important point in arguing that in attempting to be 'inclusive', some of the new realist positions have overstepped the mark and incorporated non-realist assumptions and arguments into their accounts. Their caution supports the argument advanced in this study that what is needed is not an enlargement of realism, nor an expansion of constructivism, but rather the development of a new mutually conditioning critical synthesis. Using all five of the realist varieties, this study now proposes some conclusions concerning the theoretical spaces that exist between these forms of realism and the constructivist approach, and the contours of the critical synthesis that may be derived, for it is in these spaces that a more nuanced and sufficient account of these small state interventions may be found. Furthermore, the spaces are differentiated between the different forms of realism to demonstrate that while the realist account of small state intervention is relatively monolithic, the spaces that exist between the various forms of realism and constructivism are not and that while some commonalities and similarities exist, significant differences are evident also. In formulating a synthetic perspective between constructivism and realism therefore, no one approach is necessarily sufficient or superior.

Classical Realism and Constructivism

The key defining features of classical realism are its insistence that: "politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature"⁵⁹⁸ and that state interests are defined in terms of power. By human nature, Morgenthau means to imply that the laws that govern international political life, like those that govern society, are essentially fixed and bounded by the range of possible human experience. The quest for power at the international level mirrors that at the individual level and is motivated essentially by the same 'nature'. But Morgenthau's conception of power is perhaps not as materialistic as is often supposed. In citing Weber on interests he writes: "interests (material and ideal) not ideas, dominate directly the action of men"⁵⁹⁹ and presumably states also. Power likewise he insists, depends on the political and cultural context within which it is located. Specifically of power, Morgenthau writes:

Its content and the manner of its use are determined by the political and cultural environment. Power may comprise anything that establishes and maintains the control

⁵⁹⁸ Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, p. 4.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

of man over man. Thus power covers all social relationships, which serve that end, from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls another. Power covers domination of man by man, both when it is disciplined by moral ends and controlled by constitutional safeguards, as in Western democracies, and when it is that untamed and barbaric force which finds its law in nothing but its own strength and its sole justification in its aggrandizement.⁶⁰⁰

Clearly for Morgenthau, although based in a material context, power is shaped and applied by the will of man, and as such has substantial ideational dimension. Power accordingly, is the result of the purposive actions of men driven by an essentially fixed human nature, yet its application clearly is conditioned by the state of man's mind – not just his nature. This opens an interesting space between classical realism and social constructivism – a space in which the dual nature of power as a manifestation of human nature provides a potential bridge between the material and the ideational.

Ultimately, Morgenthau's reliance on his 'human nature' dimension of international relations led to classical realism being largely superseded by neorealism, which rejected the role of human nature as an agential property of states. For neorealism human nature was too indeterminate and subjective a factor in relations between states, and although its existence was not denied, its significance for international politics was marginalised as with all other unit level variables. Constructivism also does not use the language of human nature, yet in its formulation of social construction the 'fact' that man by nature is a social being forms the basis of its conception of political activity. The major distinction between Morgenthau's 'human nature' and the 'social nature' of man as conceived by constructivists is that Morgenthau promotes man's quest for power as *the* determinant trait of human political interaction. For the constructivists this may or may not be the case and they do not dwell on the matter, what is significant however, is that mankind interacts socially, develops identities and relationships based on social interaction, and regulates behaviour based not just on material power conditions but on socially understood beliefs, values, and ideas. Although Morgenthau insists that the laws of politics have their roots in human nature, his conception of human nature is under specified (at least as far as it is proposed in his international relations theory). A possible link therefore, between the classical realist position and constructivism, lies in a more developed or specified conception of human nature. There is little evidence in the literature to suggest such development in contemporary international

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 9.

relations theory, however, a critical synthesis would include a developed theory of human social nature and how this sociability shaped the formation of identity and patterns of behaviour at both the individual and collective levels.

The second key feature of the classical realist approach is that of interests defined in terms of power. As noted Morgenthau's understanding of power is complex and individually conceived – man's control over man – and quite distinct from later forms of realism in which power is reduced to capability, military strength, and offensive military capacity. Morgenthau's conception of interests defined in terms of power consequently is more nuanced and subtle than is often supposed, and as was built upon by subsequent realist theorists. Power, as Morgenthau suggests can be conditioned by moral and political constraint and is clearly not reducible to brute material capacity alone, similarly interests, which have both material and ideal dimension according to Weber, cannot be conceived as a mere calculus of physical strength or material capability. The constructivists argue something similar – that ideas inform, and are constitutive of, interests and power. Material power, although an objective reality, as the realists repeatedly remind⁶⁰¹ is conditioned, interpreted, and applied through the purposive will and understanding of men – that is through ideas in action. Although Morgenthau attempts to distance his conception of interests from the ideas that animate them – as he writes: “a realist theory of international politics, then, will guard against two popular fallacies: the concern with motives and the concern with ideological preference.”⁶⁰² – his understanding of power and his insistence on the influence of human nature, prevent him from doing so successfully. If as Morgenthau insists, power and interests are the product of human nature and can be disciplined by moral ends, then they cannot be the immutable and exogenous material conditions that he wishes, and Waltz subsequently insists, that they are. Rather as the constructivists maintain, they are subject to, and given meaning by ideational considerations. Power and interests operate not only at the causal level as dictated by material context, but also simultaneously at the constitutive level in virtue of their relational properties. The space therefore, between classical realism and constructivism around the issue of interests is somewhat more sparsely connected than that around the issue of human nature, nonetheless some potential links are possible given Morgenthau's nuanced conception of power and its multidimensional nature.

⁶⁰¹ Benjamin Frankel quoted in Legro and Moravcsik, "Is Anybody Still a Realist?."

⁶⁰² Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, p. 5.

A third point of interest lies in classical realism's understanding of the place of morality in political interaction. Morgenthau writes that: "Realism maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the action of states in their abstract universal formulation, but that they must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place"⁶⁰³ and that "political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe."⁶⁰⁴ It is usually accepted that on this basis classical realism views the international environment as an amoral one in which the morality which governs individuals, is distinct and separate from the political ethics that govern states. While Morgenthau certainly distinguishes between the morality of man and the political ethics of states, he does so from a position of opposition to the 'utopian idealism', which proposed that all state action should be governed by a universal moral code. From such position Morgenthau was concerned to refute not only the applicability of universal moral law to states, but more importantly to refute the claims made by states that their action and moral aspirations were the embodiment of universal moral law. Such refutation however, does not preclude the possibility of states acting in accordance with moral principles and as such a linkage may be found between the ability of states to act morally within the classical realist conception, and the power of ideas, values, and beliefs, to animate the actions of states as proposed by the constructivist approach.

For Morgenthau, 'interests in terms of power' was the 'signpost'⁶⁰⁵ that allowed classical realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics, yet his conception of power, as has been demonstrated, incorporates the ideational as well as material context that gives shape and meaning to that power, thus the possibility of moral principles informing interests is not closed off in the classical realist account as it is in later variations of realism, and so the possible synthesis of the ideational and material bases of interests, power, and behaviour, is exposed in the theoretical space between the classical realist and constructivist accounts. Indeed of all of the realist positions, classical realism appears to offer the most subtle, complex, and nuanced understanding of international relations and the relationship between human agency and state behaviour, and as such potentially offers the most fruitful 'space' in which to develop a critical synthesis.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., p. 10.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

Neorealism and Constructivism

If the frontiers of the theoretical space between classical realism and constructivism were characterised by areas of possible fertile synthesis, the boundaries of the space between neorealism and constructivism appear to be particularly arid and inhospitable. As perhaps the most parsimonious form of realism, neorealism conspicuously attempted to “abstract from every attribute of states except their capabilities”⁶⁰⁶ and in particular it sought to explain persistent patterns of international behaviour in terms of structure alone. As such, neorealism would appear to share very little, if any, common ground with constructivism, and to the extent that it denies the significance of the ideational domain for international politics it is in many ways antithetical to constructivism. For Waltz, the persistent patterns of international behaviour arose from persistent structures of international anarchy,⁶⁰⁷ and although states may behave as they like, persistent patterns of behaviour emerge nonetheless as a consequence of the structural constraints of the system. Agency, and sociability amongst the agents, although existent, is not significant in Waltz’s structural account of the forces and dynamics that constitute the international system, thus any role for ideas, values, or beliefs, or any constitutive nature of relations between states is largely irrelevant in the ‘structure only’ account.

Structure for Waltz consisted of the distribution of material capabilities throughout the system. All that was needed for this structure to exist was the persistence of the anarchic international environment. For the constructivists structure was comprised of entirely different stuff. Structure for them was constituted of the culture of shared ideas, values, and beliefs that inhabit the community of states within the anarchic environment. Although conditioned and bounded by the brute material context, the nature of structure was ideational, social, and cultural and as such could not be ‘abstracted from the attributes of states’. What possible synthesis therefore is achievable between such contradictory accounts of the role of ideas in structure? Clearly a simple synthesis that attempts to ‘meld’ the two accounts is inappropriate and would risk distorting the boundaries of each position to the extent that neither would represent a coherent and internally sustainable account. A mutually conditioning critical synthesis however, might proceed along the lines of some form of ‘praxis’ between ideas and material reality. What is common to both neorealism and constructivism is the belief in the validity of seeking theoretic account of interstate behaviour

⁶⁰⁶ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 99.

at a 'systemic' level. Alexander Wendt indicates the possible direction a critical synthesis might take when he elaborates his own constructivist project as follows:

Like Waltz, I aim to develop a systemic as opposed to reductionist theory of international politics. However, in taking this stance I take issue with his exclusion of unit-level factors from systemic theorizing, on the grounds that he has misconstrued what divides the two kinds of theory. I argue that it is impossible for structure to have effects apart from the attributes and interactions of 'agents'. If that is right, then the challenge of "systemic" theory is not to show that "structure" has more explanatory power than "agents", as if the two were separate, but to show how agents are differently structured by the system so as to produce different effects.⁶⁰⁸

A critical synthesis may therefore proceed along the lines that systemic account is able to explain the persistent patterns of interstate behaviour, but that the structure that exists at the systemic level is both materially and ideationally constituted, and that this structure is comprised of agents whose attributes and interactions 'constitute' the shape of that structure in virtue of their relationship with each other, and their relationship with the structure. From this, the synthesis may be further developed to include an account of the nature of relations between states, based on this dual nature of structure.

The second substantial incompatibility between neorealism and constructivism concerns the nature of the 'interests' that states pursue. While both neorealism and constructivism agree that states pursue their interests within an anarchic international environment, they differ sharply in their understanding of what those interests are, how they are formed, and what constitutes their 'nature'. The neorealist conception of interests is that they are exclusively materialist, exogenous, and given. All states seek survival, and material power is the means to that end. Constructivism by contrast posits interests as endogenous and ideationally as well as materially founded. State interests although persistent and often common, in that all states seek to survive for example, are not just realised in exclusively material terms, but are located in, and given meaning and expression by, the social culture of the structure they inhabit. Although the neorealist conception of interests is distinctly at odds with the constructivist, it is in this notion of interests that a critical synthesis that acknowledges the mutually conditioning nature of the ideational and material is possible.

The notion of 'praxis' as a conceptual understanding of the mutually constitutive relation between thought and action - ideas and material reality - is a useful analogy for the

⁶⁰⁷ Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*.

relationship between ideas and material conditions as regarding 'interests'. Although usually associated with Marx's philosophy of praxis, the idea here is stripped of its ideological connotations and is used rather to connote the inextricable relation between ideas and reality. Specifically in relation to interests, as forms of human activity, interests are thought-actions. That is, they are both and simultaneously, idea and action, and an exclusively materialist conception of interests (or power) is, accordingly an impossibility - interests do not enjoy an autonomous existence outside of the ideas and values they represent. In pursuing interests, states are acting out the value they place in these interests, and the ideas that constitute those interests, for example, 'liberty' as an interest embodies the value that states put in such notion, and it entails ideas of freedom and constraint. Thought and action, and thought and reality are here connected through 'human activity'⁶⁰⁹ such that the question of 'is it the interests states pursue that determine how they think, or is it the way states think that determines what interests they pursue?' is accordingly senseless because a way of 'thinking' is simultaneously a way of 'acting'. Thus not only is an exclusively materialist conception of interests a nonsense, but attempting to construct theory that treats the ideational and material as separate entities is similarly misguided. A critical synthesis therefore, would acknowledge this relationship of praxis and develop its theory of state behaviour cognisant of the roles that ideas and reality play in the politics between states. Thus building on the dual nature of structure, the critical synthesis would proceed to give account of relations between states on the basis of the praxis of the ideational and material for all state interests, and their consequent behaviour.

A further consequence of the neorealist ontology, that privileges the exclusively materialist conception of power, structure, and interests, is that neorealism evinces a mono-dimensional 'causal' relationship between states. That is, neorealism portrays relations between states as being exclusively 'causal' in nature such that state behaviour can be considered to be the consequence of cause and effects dynamics alone. Constructivism however identifies the constitutive nature of relations also, in which the behaviour of states is conditioned by the nature of their identities in virtue of their mutually conditioning relationship. Neorealists deny the significance of any constitutive dynamic, arguing rather that the objective material reality of the unequal distribution of capabilities across the system is itself sufficient to account for the behaviour of states and the nature of relations between

⁶⁰⁸ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 12.

⁶⁰⁹ Gavin Kitching, *Karl Marx and the Philosophy of Praxis* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 29.

them. A critical synthesis however, rejects both the sufficiency and necessity of such claim. A critical synthesis would argue that a causal only account ignores the substantial influence constitutive dynamics has for the behaviour of states. Further it would repudiate the neorealist claim that causation alone is *the* imperative modality of capabilities distribution, arguing that capabilities themselves are meaningless unless animated by ideas, beliefs, or values, and that the distribution of capabilities infers also constitutive relationships in that state identities are constituted by their relations with other states of different capability. For example Vietnam's identity and behaviour is conditioned by virtue of its relationship with China, which is different to how it perceives itself in relation to Cambodia, and so although the material conditions set the physical context, the nature of the relations that develop are constitutive also.

The theoretical space between neorealism and constructivism although apparently devoid of compatibilities is nonetheless the site of several critical synthesis possibilities. This synthesis would be markedly distinct from both neorealism and constructivism and, although much work is needed to develop coherent theory from this perspective, the general outline of that position is beginning to emerge.

Structural Realism and Constructivism

As an outgrowth of, and a reaction to neorealism, structural realism advances several key propositions, which are relevant to the shaping of the theoretical space between it and constructivism. The first of these is its developed multilevel conception of structure and how this effects the nature of relations between states and the functioning of the international system. In proposing two levels of structure – deep structure which comprises the organising principle of the international system and the functional differentiation of the units, and surface structure which consists of the distribution of capabilities across the units – the structural realists hoped to allow for the inclusion of other factors that shape the international system which were not adequately accounted for in neorealist theory, such as the role of economics, commerce and trade, and the influence of norms and institutions. To some degree this effort can be seen as a theoretical promontory projecting from structural realism into the theoretical space toward constructivism, in that it goes some way toward acknowledging the insufficiency of the 'structure only' approach and is inclusive of neoliberal concerns regarding institutions and conventions. This promontory however reaches only so far and is firmly established in a materialist conception of power, structure, and relations between

states. While the structural realists acknowledge that the distribution of capabilities alone is insufficient to account for the manifold relations between states, and that political, societal, military and economic factors, amongst others, shape the international system, their conception of structure is still essentially materialist and causal. Deep structure as they conceive it, provides the persistent basic patterns of political structure, and to some degree, is comparable with the constructivist notion of 'rump materialism', in as much as material conditions form the basis of the physical structure of the international system, shaping the relations between units and conditioning the cultural structure that inhabits the international structure. Deep structure for the structural realists is the result of the anarchic international environment – the ordering principle – and the lack of functional differentiation between units. It is an exclusively materialist conception of structure and although it allows for the subsequent development of a surface structure which attempts to account for the role of the 'non-structural' influences such as norms and institutions and so on, it denies the substantive role of the influence of ideas, beliefs, and values in conditioning this material basis.

A critical synthesis between structural realism and constructivism consequently, may acknowledge the utility of conceiving structure as multileveled but it would still insist that both the deep structure and the surface structure include the role of the ideational dimension in shaping the organising principle and the distribution of capabilities across the system. Deep structure in this synthesis would deny the immutability of the organising principle and the lack of functional differentiation, insisting rather that the 'logic' of such anarchic environment is not fixed and singular but is subject to interpretation and change by the units that inhabit such conditions. Although material structure is significant in the synthetic account, it would not replace the 'structure as culture' approach that the constructivist position contributes to the debate, rather the mutually constitutive nature of the 'praxis' between the material and the ideational would form the basis of any 'deep' structure.

The surface structure in the structuralist account is comprised of the distribution of capabilities across the system and represents the potentially changeable conditions that constitute the international system. The structural realists attack neorealism's equation of the notion of capabilities with that of power and seek to disaggregate capabilities and reconceptualise power in differentiated terms. In doing so they sought to demonstrate that, by considering power in its many forms, a more accurate account of state behaviour could be derived, and it would allow structural theory to be connected to the body of work of process

theory. In the end however, the differentiated concept of power that it proposed still ignored the praxis between the material and the ideational, and power and capability, although disaggregated and differentiated, were still exclusively materially conceived. A critical synthesis therefore, if it were to utilise the notion of surface structure would insist that what matters in the distribution of capabilities is not just the distribution of material power, but that power is interpreted, conditioned, and animated by ideas, beliefs, and values.

The surface structure is also the location of norms and institutions in the structural account, and it is at this level that the structural realists suggest a synthesis between neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism is possible. Although this may appear to be a major feature of the theoretical space between structural realism and constructivism with considerable common ground being shared around the role of institutions and norms, the reality of this common ground is less substantial than it might appear. For the structural realists, the influence and effects of institutions and norms is still firmly conceived in material terms. Institutions and norms, according to their account, direct and influence the behaviour of states, not so much from a social and ideational perspective as from a material one. For the constructivist approach, what is most significant about the role of institutions and norms is not the way they represent collective attempts by states to pursue interests in terms of power, but the collective ideas, beliefs, and values that inhere these institutions and constitute the basis of these norms. While realists have a conception of regulatory laws, institutions and rules, they lack an understanding of the constitutive nature of such. As Rawls and Searle⁶¹⁰ have argued, constitutive rules govern the very possibility of norms, conventions and institutions existing at all. Thus for the structural realists, institutions and norms are significant in that they cause certain outcomes, not that they are constituted by certain shared ideas, values, and beliefs. A critical synthesis would insist that the significance of institutional behaviour, and norms and conventions lies in the constitutive rules that they embody, as well as the effects they have on the collective behaviour of states.

The final key feature of the structuralist position is its concept of interaction capacity as a third level of analysis beside structural and unit. For the structural realists, interaction capacity is crucial to the existence of system – as systems cannot even be considered to operate as systems without some minimum level of interaction. By quantifying this capacity, a theoretical account of the dynamics of various forms of system is possible such that systems

can display different levels of interaction capacity, and this in turn may have direct bearing on the behaviour of states in that system. The notion is an interesting one and it represents an attempt, within the realist tradition, of opening up a third way between an exclusively structuralist account and an inclusivist one that includes unit level analysis, whilst consistent with the scientific positivist approach of adding 'rigour' to the analysis of systemic dynamics. The compatibility with a critical synthesis is evident in its attempt to bridge the theoretic divide between structure and agency, although the materialist basis of this quantification is at odds with the constructivist project. It would appear that for the structural realists, the interaction capacity can be conceived in exclusively materialist and general terms – classified as either high, medium, or low with no reference to the ideas or culture that might enable and facilitate such interaction. The constructivists would argue that what determines the level of interaction capacity is the 'culture' of the system, that is its structure, endogenous to the system and able to change, while the structural realists remain silent on what produces this interaction, treating it as exogenous and given.

A critical synthesis might utilise this quantification of interaction to suggest that different 'logics' of anarchy may exist for different levels of interaction, such that a highly 'social' system – one that displays high interaction capacity – may be a far more cooperative, institutionalised, and consensual environment than one in which interaction capacity and sociability are low. Wendt⁶¹¹ suggested that different types of anarchy are possible, Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian depending on the levels of culture and social interaction between the states, and this analogy has obvious compatibilities with the structural realist notion of interaction capacity. The shape therefore between structural realism and constructivism includes several areas of possible synthesis and may prove to be a reasonably fertile environment in which to pursue further development of a critical synthesis. Certainly, although a more inclusive form of realism, structural realism is still a distinctly materialist and realist approach, and so a critical synthesis within this theoretical space would necessitate the fracturing of the realist material-causal nexus to allow the incorporation of a conception of the power of ideas to shape and animate material conditions.

⁶¹⁰ Quoted in Ruggie, "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge."

⁶¹¹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*.

Offensive Realism and Constructivism

Offensive realism proposes an extreme formulation of the exclusively structural and materialist paradigm of neorealism, and as such describes an intervening space with constructivism that is particularly arid and may seem virtually devoid of mutual compatibility. Assuming virtually all of the core tenets of neorealism, offensive realism distinguishes itself from other realist works primarily in its conception of 'power maximisation' by great powers. Offensive realism is first and foremost a realist theory of great power behaviour. It purports to account for the actions of great powers in shaping the international environment as they endlessly seek to gain more power at the expense of possible rivals. As a theory of international relations, it says practically nothing about the behaviour of other states that do not possess 'great' power, nor does it intimate that the dynamics that govern great power behaviour pertains in any particular way to other states. The space therefore between it and constructivism is almost coincident with that between neorealism and constructivism, except in regard to the notion of 'power maximisation as security'.

In the offensive realist account, great powers, like all states, seek first and foremost to survive in the anarchic international circumstance. However, unlike lesser states, great powers seek to achieve this security through the maximisation of their power at the expense of others – to the extreme extent of seeking to become the 'hegemon' – the only great power in the system. This power maximisation strategy is the result of the imperative of the security dilemma, which faces all states, but most especially those great states with the power to materially effect the balance of power in their favour. The net result of this dynamic is that the international system is dominated and characterised by the power struggle between contending great powers.

As an extreme variety of neorealism, the foundations of offensive realism are exclusively materially conceived, privileging the role of power above all other considerations, and diminishing whatever small theoretical space neorealism may have afforded to the role of ideas, to near zero. Because power is *the* only force that matters in international politics, the whole framework of offensive realism is expressed in material terms of capability, military force, and physical power. The role of great powers in such account is consequently predictably privileged. In this schema the roles of ideas, institutions,

and collective normative behaviour are absolutely marginalised, as brute power assumes the only impetus to action.

A critical synthesis within this space would appear to be particularly problematic as the core premises of each position are mutually exclusive. Yet there is one possible avenue of opportunity for progress toward a synthetic position – that offered by the extensive use of the notion of ‘rationality’ in offensive realism. In recognising that ‘power maximisation’ alone is inadequate an account of even great power behaviour, Mearsheimer resorts to the use of ‘rationality’ of state behaviour to account for behaviour and interstate relations that clearly do not fit the offensive logic. Rationality according to Mearsheimer allows states to act in prudent and feasible fashion when the ‘offensive logic of anarchy’ would suggest they do otherwise. This rationality therefore can act contrary to the apparent law like patterns of state behaviour that power maximisation and security dilemma necessitate. Because this rationality pertains to individual states in individual circumstances, its essence consequently must be endogenous to the ‘agent’ and not the ‘structure’, thus states exhibit rationality as a property of their being, not as a systemic property of the structure. As to exactly what informs this rationality Mearsheimer offers no explanation, but it seems that only an ideational dimension could constitute the basis of rational action if power alone is insufficient explanation. For example, in the case of a great power not pursuing a course of aggressive power maximisation, even though it has the capability to do so, clearly explanation based on power dynamics alone is insufficient to describe the state’s inaction; some form of explanation beneath power is necessary. Mearsheimer would argue that the state acted as it did based on some other ‘rational’ considerations of self-interest, however only recourse to the role of ideas, values, and beliefs can adequately explain the foundations and nature of this rationality. For Mearsheimer at the very least, rationality must constitute a relatively coherent framework of self-interested ideas, values, and beliefs that animate states to act contrary to the systemic forces of power maximisation when necessary. For a critical synthesis however, this coherent framework of ideas need not be necessarily exclusively self-interested, and would incorporate values and beliefs that are shared within the community of states. Likewise this rationality would inform all state behaviour not just that which is contradictory to the logic of power maximisation. Rationality as an expression of ideas, values and beliefs, both shared and individually held, acts upon and within the brute material conditions to shape and direct state behaviour in conditions of anarchy. Rationality therefore, is the conceptual host to the ideational content of a critical synthesis between constructivism and offensive realism.

Offensive realism offers some interesting insights into the possible dynamics that govern the behaviour of great powers under certain circumstances, however, as an adequate account of international relations it is demonstrably insufficient. A critical synthesis located within the theoretical space between it and the constructivist approach would necessarily assume the characteristics of a far more constructivist than realist account and would be heavily qualified as to 'where' and 'when' such offensive logic may pertain to the behaviour of states within the international system.

Neoclassical and Contingent Realism and Constructivism

The final positions, which in this study were grouped together as neoclassical and contingent, are those forms of realism that Legro and Moravcsik⁶¹² attacked as not faithfully representing the realist tradition but rather incorporating the counter-realist assumptions of alternate accounts. For this very reason this last group produces the most interesting and fertile theoretical space with constructivism, and to a degree already represent the development of a synthesis between realism and constructivism, although it is not as critical or far reaching a synthesis as is proposed here. The fundamental aims of neoclassical realism were twofold – to reintroduce the classical realist roots of human agency into modern international relations discourse, and to move toward bridging the theoretical gap between parsimonious structural realist theory and domestic political analysis. In doing so neoclassical realism has alienated itself from the 'hard core' neorealists and structural realists who insist that realism's power resides in its parsimonious structural account that resists the reductionist unit level analysis. It has also raised the ire of scholars such as Legro and Moravcsik who, claim that they have effectively muddied the waters of international relations theory by blurring the realist boundaries. The difficulty with the neorealist approach it would seem, is not that it has embarked on the much needed enterprise of theoretically reconciling the two levels of analysis, but that they claim to do so while remaining 'realist' accounts. The synthesis they seek, it is argued here, lies not within the domain of realist theory but within the theoretical space that exists between realism and constructivism, not in a synthesis of discordant theories, but in the more elemental synthesis of compatible political concepts.

Neoclassical realism argues that the actions of states, and the political leaders and elites within the states who speak authoritatively for the state, take place within the international boundaries established by relative material capabilities, and as such reflect the

⁶¹² Legro and Moravcsik, "Is Anybody Still a Realist?."

nexus between domestic political activity and the overarching international political context. Within this framework they can argue that states with relatively comparable material capabilities can act very differently in any given circumstance as a result of a range of complex perceptual and structural domestic factors. Thus the link between unit and structural level analysis is established and the parsimonious account of international relations is given 'flesh' by the inclusion of domestic considerations. In similar fashion the generalised simplification of the temporal dimension in realist theory is made more sensitive to the historically contingent domestic circumstance. The compatibility of this approach with the critical synthesis that has been developing in this research is evident – the necessary mutually conditioning relation between historically contingent 'macro' scale brute material conditions and the behaviour of states as a consequence of unit level factors. What is missing however is the critical inclusion of the ideational to this equation. Although the neoclassical realists incorporate human agency in their account in the form of the role of statesmen and elites in determining state domestic and foreign policy, they do not explicitly acknowledge the role of ideas and beliefs in shaping the actions and decisions of those statesmen, nor incorporate the collective social dimension of shared values, ideas, and beliefs that inhabits the collective community of states. A critical synthesis would not only include such factors but ascribe to them substantial importance.

Neoclassical realists come close to acknowledging the role of ideas and norms when they propose a more nuanced conception of power that includes the subtle notion of 'influence'. 'Influence' conceived of as something akin to Joseph Nye's⁶¹³ concept of 'soft power' is still essentially a material property but is not merely brute force but includes the ability to shape the psychological states of others so as to value what you value and to desire what you desire - Western culture and material goods is the usual example cited to support this notion. For the constructivists however, 'influence' is associated with socially derived norms and a collective value system. The ability of a state to 'influence' others beyond its mere material capability is a function clearly not of material capability but of ideational and social force. For such influence to be effective there needs to exist a collectively recognised sense of community, in which states exist and interact not just in terms of power but as social entities within a system or structure. Similarly, states within this collective need to have a working conception of their identity, social location, and of belonging, through which their

⁶¹³ Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone*.

behaviour is 'socially' conditioned. A critical synthesis therefore, would incorporate a developed concept of influence in which ideas, shared values, beliefs and norms gave expression to, and facilitated, states exerting influence on one another within the context of the social domain of the international community. 'Influence' in this case would mean the ability of states to shape the will of others by recourse to socially agreed values, beliefs, or ideas as well as the ability to establish and promote norms of desirable behaviour. The concept of 'power', as distinct from 'influence', in this synthesis would also be understood not just as material capability, but as a relational property that is constituted by virtue of the relationship between states, in addition to its brute material reality. This constitutive property of power, in addition to its causal property is a uniquely constructivist insight that adds complexity and subtlety to an otherwise diminished concept.

The role of statesmen also in a critical synthesis would not hinge on a vague notion of human nature and its lust for power, as in the classical realist conception, but in the 'praxis' of thought and action that human agency infers. The significance of the role of individuals in determining not just foreign policy, but the nature of relations between states, would be acknowledged, but not on the basis of individual traits and idiosyncrasies, but on the basis of the power of ideas, values, and beliefs, both individual and collective, to shape human and state behaviour. Both human agency and collective intentionality are essential criteria for the incorporation of the ideational dimension into international political theory, and while neoclassical realism brings with it the human agency component, the constructivist approach provides the notion of collective intentionality, thus through synthesis the two are brought together in a reformulation of political concepts.

Contingent realism approaches the issue of the nature of relations between states from a different perspective – that of the necessary 'logic' of anarchy. Arguing that 'cooperation' is as logical a means of interaction as 'competition' in the given circumstances of anarchy, Glaser demonstrates how a more complex and ultimately more satisfying account of state relations can be developed simply by enlarging the logic of anarchy to include cooperative behaviour. Although fundamentally at odds with mainstream neorealism over the substance of the 'logic' of anarchy, Glaser's approach is otherwise a wholly realist argument, his conceptions of power and structure are essentially materialist, and his explanation of interstates dynamics is exclusively causal. By reformulating the logic of anarchy however, Glaser has potentially opened up an area of possible synthesis between the exclusively

materialist understanding of competition and the ideational nature of cooperative behaviour. Whilst competitive self-interest can be conceived in exclusively materialist form, the notion of cooperation entails at least a minimal understanding of social interaction with shared ideas or values. Thus contingent realism opens the door to a critical synthesis that would acknowledge that anarchic conditions, although a material reality, are not the only structural force that conditions the behaviour of states. Whilst ‘competition’ is one consequence of the anarchic self-help environment, as social and moral agents states can and do interact in a range of ways, including cooperatively, as a consequence of the ideational dimension of their existence, the constitutive nature of their relations with each other, and the social reality of the culture that comprises the structure of the international system.

Although otherwise quite stark, the landscape of the theoretical space between contingent realism and constructivism is punctuated by this site of potential compatibility, and although a critical synthesis emerging from this site would certainly be hardly recognisable as having its roots in a contingent realist concept, it would serve to illustrate how rigid and artificially coherent the boundaries of realism need to be to avoid conceptual cross-pollination.

Balance of Power Revisited

Having briefly outlined the contours of the theoretic spaces that exist between the various realist positions and the constructivist approach, and having suggested the probable shape of the critical synthesis that can be developed between these two traditions within these spaces, it remains to return to the concept of balance of power to complete the theoretical ‘journey’ that was begun in Chapter One. By returning to the notion of balance of power, which for the realist is the key concept in understanding interventions, and re-conceiving it through a critical synthesis perspective we can begin to operationalise at least aspect of a synthetic position. The concept of balance of power was utilised as a conduit to the theoretical accounts of interstate behaviour proposed by the various forms of realism, in much the same way as ‘small state interventions’ was a convenient conduit to discuss interstate dynamics. Having proposed that a critical synthesis is possible between realism and constructivism, it is

necessary now to briefly outline how this synthesis might conceive balance of power as a dynamic of interstate politics within the critical synthesis account. Although a critical synthesis clearly has not been fully articulated here, and this work remains to be done elsewhere, some general comment on balance of power should serve not only to give a broad outline of the concept in this new formulation, but also to validate that a viable alternative to the realist account of such is possible.

Fundamentally within a critical synthesis, balance of power would remain a theory of international politics - that is, it would propose the mechanisms and rationale by which states interact within the anarchic international circumstance. In sharp contrast to the neorealist position however, balance of power would be conceived as the *purposive* action of states to alter the distribution of material capabilities as well an arrangement of non-material political influence. As purposive action, balance of power is the manifestation of socially understood and collectively shared beliefs and ideas regarding order, stability, and normatively desirable systemic conditions. Unlike neorealism, which insists that balance of power is the natural tendency of states to balance one another, and arises as a consequence of the structural pressures of the anarchic self-help environment regardless of whether states aim to establish it or not, in the synthetic conception, although a distinct systemic tendency, balance of power is a product of collective intentionality in which stability is seen as a normatively desirable end state by the community of states, and so is positively promoted where possible. Although this intentionality may often be subconscious and filtered through a contextual framework of self-interest, at heart it stems from an understanding that 'balance' is a systemic and individual 'good', that is, from a shared value regarding the good of individual states and the community of states. The foundation therefore of this understanding is ideational not

material, and as Donnelly⁶¹⁴ and Mearsheimer⁶¹⁵ agree, status quo balance of power does not necessarily follow from anarchy alone, but as the synthesis would argue, is underpinned by shared values, ideas, and beliefs.

Balance of power is also contingent upon the constitutive identities and relations between states. How states perceive themselves, their relations with other states, and the overall state of affairs within the international political environment, shapes how they behave, and shapes the way they seek to balance power. As example, in perceiving the Soviets as ‘threat’ and ‘enemy’, both materially and ideologically, the United States sought to balance power against them, whereas Britain, France, and Germany for example perceived the United States as ‘ally’ and ‘friend’ and so sought to support them in their efforts against the Soviets. In this instance not only did identity play a significant role in shaping behaviour, but so too did the constitutive nature of the relationship between these states. Not only did the major states seek to balance each other because of how they perceived one another and the material power disparity between them, but in seeking to balance against each other the relationship between them was ‘constituted’ by virtue of who they were. Balance of power does not exist apart from the relationship between the states that defines them as ‘enemies’ and ‘rivals’. The causal powers of the rival states in turn, does not exist apart from their relationship to each other.

The fundamental understanding of ‘power’ in a critical synthesis conception of ‘balance of power’ is also different to that supposed in a realist account. Power in the synthetic position is not merely a material condition, but it infers also the notion of ‘influence’ as discussed earlier. Thus when states act to balance power they are not acting merely to balance material capabilities, military forces, or even economic strength, rather

⁶¹⁴ Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*, p. 60.

⁶¹⁵ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

they are acting to balance the 'power and influence' (most expansively understood) that the opposing state holds within the international system. This 'power and influence' includes the social standing of that state, its ability to have its way in international politics, its cultural, economic and material presence within the international community, and the whole gamut of tangible and intangible forms of influence that the state can exert. In balancing this 'power and influence', stability and order are preserved within the system, which is the ultimate goal of such action. Although undeniably in balancing such 'power and influence', states will often act primarily in the domain of military capability, underpinning such obvious activity is a range of less obvious ideational conditions, which give meaning and context to the material dimension. The Cold War example is again useful in illustrating this point, as during those years not only was a material/military contest being waged, but the 'war' was fought simultaneously on ideological, economic, cultural, ideational and normative grounds in a range of national and international fora.

Balance of power finally within the critical synthesis, is an historically contingent condition. 'How' and 'why' a balance of power operates is critically conditioned by 'where' and 'when' it takes place. The eighteenth century balance of power in Europe was a manifestly different balance to that of the Cold War for example. Although sharing the fundamental premise, of the desirability of stability and order, the means with which these ends were pursued in each circumstance were very different, and so too were the international normative contexts in which they took place. Balance of power therefore, within the critical synthesis account is a more nuanced and ideationally founded conception than the structural realist proposition. It is a coherent and viable alternative to the realist account and provides a richer, albeit less parsimonious, explanation of the mechanisms and values that shape the persistent patterns of state behaviour. The application of this understanding of balance of power to the three case studies discussed in this study would lead to a more nuanced and

multi-causal explanation that would incorporate the ideational and constitutive dimensions, as well as non-structural factors, and produce a more complete and accurate account than that provided by the realist explanation alone.

In Sum...

The theoretical spaces that exist between constructivism and the various forms of realism to varying degree, reflect the dialectic nature of the relationship between these two research traditions – with realism providing the various modes of thesis, and constructivism providing the antithesis to each of these realist positions. The synthesis therefore, that might exist within these spaces is shaped and conditioned by the compatibilities and incompatibilities that exist between the traditions. Only a critical synthesis that re-formulates common political concepts across the traditions is able to provide a new way of understanding the complex and dynamic relations amongst small states in the international environment. Only a critically synthetic approach can adequately account for the three cases of small state intervention discussed here, and it is argued, can account for the dynamics between small states in general. By elucidating the theoretical spaces within which such synthesis might take place, this research has moved at least some way toward the development of that synthesis.

Recommendations

This research has sought to better understand the dynamics between states within the international system. In doing so, through the examination of three cases of intervention between small states, it has illuminated a series of theoretic spaces that exist between the dominant alternative theoretic positions within international relations scholarship. The work is necessarily preparatory to the body of empirical and theoretical endeavour that remains in developing a critical synthesis between the constructivist and realist traditions. However, having described the contours of the spaces of theoretic possibility, and demonstrated the dialectic nature of the relationship between these accounts, the trail has at least been blazed for future projects. Through the examination of the three case studies an empirical foundation has been laid that establishes the possibility and necessity of a new critical way of understanding the relations between states, one that is no doubt less parsimonious than realism, but more concrete than constructivism, and certainly more inclusive of all of the

states that comprise the international system than either account. The three case of small state intervention examined here clearly demonstrate that contemporary realist analysis provides an insufficient account of the dynamics and motivations of the states involved. So too do they highlight that although offering crucial insight into the behaviour of these states, the constructivist approach alone does not provide a comprehensive explanation of the interplay of forces and structure in these examples. Through the detailed analysis of each of these episodes of intervention some of the complexity, contingency, and dynamism of the international system and the behaviour of states within it has been reiterated, and from this it is possible to glimpse the extent of the theoretical enterprise yet to be achieved.

The work that remains is by no means trivial, an outline of an approach, and the rough contours of a theoretic perspective, as has been developed here, are no substitute for a coherent and comprehensive theory. If indeed there is merit in pursuing this critical synthesis, international relations scholars will need to focus their attention on establishing and structuring a 'new way', rather than continuing to argue past each other from mutually exclusive perspectives. The 'synthesis' of realism and the 'antithesis' of constructivism are each research traditions that have attempted to define and give theoretical explanation of the complex reality of international politics, yet each is constrained by the limits of its own ontological and epistemological horizon. These horizons for many scholars represent incompatible endeavours that are separated in both 'what' needs to be explained and 'how' it can be explained. This polarisation of thesis and antithesis, it has been argued here, is neither necessary nor desirable, and acts only to constrain that which can be understood rather than add clarity and certainty to an understanding of the political world around us. A synthesis that acknowledges the different ontological and epistemological perspectives of each tradition, yet seeks to exploit compatibilities and incompatibilities in a critical fashion, is possible, desirable, and necessary, and by elucidating the theoretical spaces in which this synthesis might develop the possibility of progress is strengthened.

The ideational and the material are the substance of our political and social reality. Human activity, as Marx's philosophy of praxis suggests, is the inextricable product of both at the subconscious level. Politics among nations likewise, is the product of the 'thought actions' of states within the particular circumstance of the international environment, and no matter how parsimoniously we try to 'theorise' the dynamics of the interactions between states, to the extent that we wish to 'understand' those interactions we must acknowledge and

give account of this thought- action, ideas – matter, nexus. This is the endeavour of this research and this, it is argued, is the future of international relations theory.