

Abstract:

Since what has been termed the New Great Debate of International Relations theory in the 1950s and 60s, structural neo-realism has claimed its theoretical foundations to be grounded in objective political truths derived from an approach called classical realism. This paper suggests the misinterpretation of classical realist writers by neo-realism, with the aim of re-examining conceptual elements of the classical approach as projected by neo-realist authors. Accordingly, this study seeks to use neo-realism as a lens to reflect meta-theoretical enquiry backward upon what Political Science has come to accept as, not exclusively, 'the shortcomings of classical realism,' but also the rarely questioned objectivity of political truth in the realist research agenda. The central theme of this work accentuates distinctions between the classical and neo-realist approaches; however, the primary goal of this study is not to put forward criticisms of neo-realism. More appropriately, the objective of this study is to attempt to clarify conceptual traditions that have become obfuscated throughout the development of IR (see, amongst others, Michael C. Williams 1996, 2004, and 2005).

The method of analysis is to re-investigate conceptual definitions explicitly taken for granted in neo-realist scholarship, such as power, the state, and interest, through conceptual analysis and genealogy. The study will be grounded on an amalgam of post-structural theories to suggest the isolation of paradigmatic traditions in IR into repetitive and limited orders of knowledge.

Introduction

E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau are purported by dominant International Relations literature to be two "founding fathers" of a realist theory of international politics. What is more, these two figures are portrayed as being two strong contributors to the teleology of IR theory (particularly that of political realist theory) leading to the dominant position of neo-realism in American Foreign Policy and institutions since the end of the Cold War. This paper draws from discourse and genealogy studies to re-examine theoretical concepts used in the classical realism of E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau. Additionally, the paper seeks to consider IR theoretical concepts, within texts, in the context that theoretical concepts can be used to extract the underlying narrative of political writings. Specifically, the paper argues that re-examination of functions of traditional concepts in classical and neo-realist theory may contribute in two ways to overcoming traditional interpretations of political realism, firstly, by bringing such theoretical concepts as 'power,' 'state,' and 'interest,' into hermeneutic perspective against contemporary neo-realist interpretations of the terms, and secondly, by widening the perspective of genealogical studies currently undertaken in the field of IR to consider the role of neo-realism in a Foucauldian *pouvoir-savoir* perspective of theoretical creation.

As such, the objectives of analysis and format of this paper are as follows: There is a discussion and clarification of the terms discourse, narrative, and genealogy as they are used in this study. It is argued that a genealogical approach to studying IR is necessary due to the interconnected nature of the development of modern IR (its development since the First World War) with the narrative of political realism. The influence on the development of the IR discipline by the political realist narrative, or what this paper refers to as the ‘Realist Problematique,’ furthermore raises the questions of how this interconnection occurred and what the consequences of the interconnection are. Answering these questions requires a two-fold understanding of, firstly, the development of modern IR as it has unfolded in a series of Great Debates and has been influenced by internal power struggles between academic groups, and, secondly, the error of the contemporary dominant view of the political realist narrative (that the political realist narrative is one whole and single narrative that has developed throughout history). In fact, a definitive break occurred in the political realist narrative between the 1950s and 1960s. Examining theoretical concepts, and their functions within an overall narrative, illustrates the fundamental and irreconcilable differences between the two political realist narratives, that of scientific realism and that of traditional realism, and exposes the magnitude of the political realist narrative break for the discipline of IR today.

1. Discourse, Narrative, and Genealogy

What is first necessary is to differentiate between the frequently used terminology of dialogue, discourse, narrative, and genealogy in order to clarify the usage of these terms within this paper. A discourse, in accordance with Foucault’s definition of the term, is “a practice that systematically forms the objects of which it speaks” (Foucault 1972: 49). However, the

distinction that discourses define objects does not specify what a discourse *is*, rather what a discourse does. A discourse is the communication between sources concerning a central subject (linguistic representation/idealistic representation), the goal of which is to eventually define the subject as, or link the subject to, an object (corporeal phenomena).

Discourses are concrete systems of social relations and practices that are intrinsically political, as their formation is an act of radical institution, which involves the construction of antagonisms and the drawing of political frontiers between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders.’ (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000: 4).

As such, International Relations can also be seen as a discourse in which many competing views communicate through structured antagonisms to form an understanding of the way the world of international politics operates. Through the bringing together of many different viewpoints, a subject (in this case IR) is created. RBJ Walker (1993) elaborates this notion of International Relations as a discourse by stating that modern IR is

...a discourse that both expresses and constantly affirms the presence and absence of political life inside and outside the modern state as the only ground on which structural necessities can be understood and new realms of freedom and history can be revealed” (Walker 1993: IX).

In an additional example, Richard Ashley (1981) uses the term dialogue to refer to IR theory (specifically the theory of political realism) as being comprised of “several differing statements attempting to reflect the nature of society as a whole” (206). In this sense, Ashley is using the term dialogue as one that may be interchangeable with the term discourse as used by RBJ Walker (1993).¹

Regarding the various viewpoints of groups that make up the discourse of IR, this paper proposes that the term narrative is the most appropriate description. Narratives are “human

¹ A multi-level understanding of discourse currently exists in IR, which allows one to speak first of the entire discipline as a whole discourse, or system of thought, and secondly allows specific elements within the whole to be examined developmentally as discourses within the discourse.

experiences fashioned into forms assimilable to structures of meaning” (White 1980: 5).

Narratives are not only unavoidable, but they are essential, and present themselves in almost limitless forms – myths, legends, fables, histories, etc. (Barthes 1975: 237). Indeed, the very process of translating knowing into telling is the creation of narrative (White 1980). In understanding academic groups within IR as having their own narrative understandings of the world, the polemics that have driven and characterized the development of the discipline illustrate a *pouvoir-savoir* struggle within the development of the IR discipline between these conflicting narrative viewpoints.

To sum up so far, this paper focuses on the study of IR as a discourse comprised of many competing narrative viewpoints regarding the understanding of international politics. Moreover, this paper also supports Foucault’s statement that discourses, in addition to being processes of language and knowledge, are also processes of materiality and power. Thus, as in Hook (2001), this paper argues that a *discourse analysis of IR must first be a genealogical-historical study of a system of thought, it must second be a study of social historical, and political conditions under which that thought emerged, and finally, it must be a reflection of power-in-dialogue by means of textual and semantic indicators that have developed within the system of knowledge* (542).

Traditional discourse (read “text”) analysis is merely one part of a study that makes up a more genealogical approach toward exposing the underlying mechanizations of an entire developed system of thought.

The foundations of such a genealogical approach to studying IR have already been laid by James Der Derian (1995). Indeed, Der Derian’s methods seem to reflect more closely on a Foucauldian study of the IR discourse, and realism within that discourse, than any that have emerged previously in the discipline. Der Derian echoes Foucault when he states that a

combined approach of genealogy, semiology, and dromology is necessary for the thorough understanding of realism within IR (1995: 386). As Foucault similarly noted, it must be acknowledged that discourse manifests itself in multiple, non-discursive forms that breath life to their semantic counterparts (Foucault 1981). Therefore, understanding the discourse of IR means moving beyond the textual and linguistic misunderstandings that confine the discipline toward a more inclusive look at the manifestations of distinct narratives within the history of the discipline itself, its epistemological designs, and, moreover, in political spaces, and institutional functions that combine to transform the IR system of thought into a functioning academic society of international politics.

2. The IR Discourse and a 'Realist Problematique'

A key to understanding the complexity of the IR discourse is to understand the way in which the discourse has become intertwined with viewpoints of one of its groups – that of political realism. In fact, the link between the discipline of IR and realist theory has become so patent that one cannot separate the “hegemonic force” of a “modern form of realism at –and *as* – the centre of International Relations (Der Derian 1995: 4). Thus political realism has been a driving force in the development of the IR discourse, and also, more notably, some of IR’s more influential epistemological designs.²

However, important questions arise when confronted with the connections between political realism and the IR discourse. How did these connections occur, and what consequences have resulted from the interconnection of the two? Indeed, a ‘Realist Problematique’ of contemporary IR seems to be the task of keeping separate the IR discourse from the realist

² Epistemological designs, in this case, referring to theories of IR that have extended beyond the discipline and, as Foucault (1981) suggests is typical in discourse, manifested in non-discursive forms.

narrative. Understanding and disentangling this interconnection means examining the development of modern IR, as well as examining the political realist narrative itself. Therefore, it is appropriate, first, to begin by considering authors³ who have proposed in depth hypotheses regarding the influences of political realism on the development of a modern IR discourse, and, second, by examining two differing versions of a realist narrative, which are misleadingly projected by neo-realists to represent one unified historical narrative of political realism.

3. Modern IR Historiography

The interconnection of the IR discourse with realism must be examined as a gradual process. Arguably, the point at which the two became enmeshed was during the 1950s and 60s during what is called the New Great Debate of IR.⁴ During this behavioralist challenge to traditional methods of the humanities, Popperian/Kuhnian positivistic methodology was adopted and adapted to the dominant modes of thinking at the time.⁵ As certain accounts of IR claim⁶, realism during the 50s and 60s was rebounding from a hard-won victory over idealist theorists in the inter World War period. According to popular belief of IR between the two World Wars, Woodrow Wilson managed to inspire an eclectic group of thinkers – ranging from political economists such as Leonard Woolf, pragmatic institutional internationalists⁷ such as Alfred Zimmern, to historians such as Arnold Toynbee – into supporting a common solution to international cooperation and collective security through the League of Nations. It is said that in response to the failures of the League and a system of international governance through

³ Authors such as Ole Wæver, Brian Schmidt, Richard Little, and Stefano Guzzini

⁴ The “New Great Debate” terminology originally comes from Hedley Bull, Morton A. Kaplan and others who themselves participated in the debate.

⁵ This logic originated with Karl Popper, but, as pointed out by Wæver (1996: 159), was transported into International Relations directly from the writings of Thomas Kuhn.

⁶ See Wilson (1995), Ashworth (2006), Schmidt (1998), and Guzzini (1998), which refer to specific misleading accounts of IR history following the First World War.

⁷ For clarification of the term “institutional internationalist” see Sylvest (2004)

collective security, E.H. Carr wrote a scathing realist critique of an idealist theory that targeted every branch of political thought encompassed under the utopian umbrella of the League of Nations. It was also believed that Carr's critique succinctly brought together a realist tradition that had existed as far back as ancient Greece into the modern framework of an academic discipline for International Relations. During the New Great Debate, the group of traditionalists, representing what was called the classical approach to realism, referred to certain texts that "systematized international theory on the method of their various precursors" (Bull 1966: 361). Within these systematizations were found the definitions for theoretical concepts for an international theory begun by historical writers such as Machiavelli, Grotius, Hobbes, and Kant. E.H. Carr's *Twenty Years' Crisis*, one of the most influential texts in IR at the time, was said to be one such systematization.⁸ In other words, Carr's analysis organized historical scenarios, and writings regarding the understandings of those scenarios, into a common narrative that traced the theme of power. As such, it was Carr's narrative that was pursued by traditionalists during the New Great Debate, and Carr's own definitions and functions of theoretical concepts became pivotal to traditionalist narrative.

Carr's assessment of the thought processes that inspired the League of Nations was seen as convincing and, hence, damaging to viewpoints that seemed antithetical to what was referred to as the "realist tradition" of thought. Accordingly, from the publication of Carr's *Twenty Years' Crisis* forward, realism gained an advantage in the field of IR. In the short term, realism's appeal to power politics and the balance of powers seemed so straightforward and sensible in the wake of two World Wars that it could not be disregarded when dealing with issues of

⁸ James Der Derian has further noted that, "there is a general consensus that realism in IR was first articulated in its modern form by E.H. Carr in his 1939 polemic, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*" (Der Derian 1995: 385).

international cooperation. In the long term, Carr's work had set the trend for the formulation and usage of narratives during the decades of the New Great Debate and Inter-Paradigm Debate.⁹

As Ole Waever has elaborated, The New Great Debate of the 50s/60s was one of *why* certain methodologies should be adopted in politics: It was a debate of the ontology of IR, epistemology, and methodology (Waever 1996: 157). On the one hand, unlike the previous debate in IR between realists and idealists, the methodologies debate took place under the heading of the 'same' realist philosophical and political approach to international politics. On the other hand, the polemics created during the debate between realists divided the approach into two contending groups, traditionalists and scientists¹⁰, each with distinct ontological views that developed into specific realist narratives.¹¹ Scientists such as Morton Kaplan (1957, 1966), Bruce Russett (1965), Karl Deutsch (1960), and Thomas Schelling (1960) argued that scientific hypotheses could elucidate historical truths and methodologically isolate politics into a theoretical realm through which political scenarios could be represented and outcomes could be proposed. Traditionalists such as Stanley Hoffmann (1959) and Hedley Bull (1966) argued against a scientifically strict agenda towards international politics and, alternatively, for a philosophically open approach to politics.

Although the discrepancy between traditionalist and scientific realists remained unsettled, by the late 60s and throughout the 1970s, during what is called the Inter-Paradigm Debate, realism was no longer the dominant approach to politics. Multiple contending approaches to international relations were argued to present the most effective way of dealing with international politics. Most importantly, IR as a whole system of knowledge had become

⁹ The term "Inter-Paradigm Debate," as seen here, comes from Ole Waever (1996).

¹⁰ These groups named themselves. For a succinct overview of the debate see Morton A. Kaplan's (1966) response, in particular, to criticisms put forward by Stanley Hoffmann and Hedley Bull.

pluralistic¹²; it had become a discourse between contending groups of thought in the truest sense. Throughout the Inter-Paradigm debate, and during the continued Popperian/Kuhnian shift that occurred in the humanities, contending modes of thought struggled for dominance within the discipline of IR. A process of identity assertion collided with a need for epistemological legitimacy. According to the dominant academic trend of the time, varying IR approaches required, as never before, a methodology to solidify a positivistic research agenda. Before methodologies can be asserted, however, narrative assertions, or assertions regarding ontological outlooks of the world, must be made. Adopting a new, positivist approach to politics required ontological security¹³ – for without an objective anchor point in the world, a methodological measurement has no ground on which to base itself. Thinkers within the group of political realism faced a theoretical paradox in the wake of the traditionalist/scientific split within the discipline. On the one hand, the philosophical skepticism characteristic of traditional realists had proven theorists unable (or uninterested) to make ontological statements needed to establish a positivistic method for international politics. On the other hand, the scientific approach to realism lacked the historical legacy of a classical realism – as it had changed the underlying narrative of classical realism¹⁴ – necessary to assert the historically cyclical ontological patterns purportedly exposed by structural theorizing. Realism, as it was splintered, was in danger of becoming one among many discarded approaches to international politics.

In 1979 Kenneth Waltz published his *Theory of International Politics* as a reassertion of the realist political narrative with a more technical methodology to claim epistemological

¹² Ole Waever's explanation (Waever 1996: 155)

¹³ The argument of "ontological security," both in its context and importance is explored in depth in Anthony Giddens (1991) – see in particular (pp. 35-69). To briefly summarize, Giddens argues that circumstances of existential uncertainty create such a need for ontological security that dissonance among varying ontological viewpoints is often ignored, resulting in the formation of limited and exclusive viewpoints. This also fits with discussions of "subjugated knowledge" by Michel Foucault (1980, 2006).

¹⁴ Discussed in depth in the following sections of this paper

legitimacy. While Waltz's theory harkened back to the New Great Debate between contending realists in the 50s and 60s, the theory also seems to have made a revision in the historiography of IR. Namely, it is a neo-realist claim that both competing sides of realism during the New Great Debate were and are parts of the same, whole narrative, reconciled by the successful design and application of Waltz's methodology for structural neo-realism.

4. Narrative and Conceptual Analysis

It has already been argued that the development of modern IR discourse in the New Great Debate of the 50s and 60s and Inter-Paradigm Debate of the 70s became intertwined with the struggle of political realist theorists to assert an identity and epistemological legitimacy in order to establish a methodological approach. It has also been argued that this situation made a necessary environment for the rise of Kenneth Waltz's structural neo-realism.

Thanks to the rise of critical theory¹⁵, the academic priorities that characterized New Great Debate and Inter-Paradigm Debate era of International Relations have been deconstructed and viewed from a different vantage point. Most importantly, two critical factors have changed: Firstly, a Positivist methodological agenda is no longer prioritized in critical studies of IR, relieving the pressure of theorists to make unequivocal claims regarding empirical truths about the world (Linklater 1996: 279-280). Secondly, although there is an acknowledgement of often overlapping conceptual understandings in different instances throughout the history of political theory, these instances of overlapping conceptual understanding do not logically justify the argument for the teleology of any single body of theory in IR (Linklater 1996: 279-280).

¹⁵ For more on achievements of Critical theory see Linklater (1996)

Although a critical eye has been turned toward IR historiography of the Great Debates, and the ways in which historical circumstance have shaped the discipline¹⁶, less critical scholarship has been applied to the ways in which narratives of certain schools of thought have shaped the discipline. In fact, even though criticism of neo-realism questions the objective claims of the structural neo-realist thesis, these critics rarely question the narrative behind the theory or the effects of the creation and endurance of the narrative on the development of the IR system of knowledge. Neo-realist theorists and, in large part, critics operate within the boundaries set by structural neo-realism – using the same parameters of meaning defined by neo-realists, conforming to the existence of a unified definition of ‘realism’, and using the same functions and definitions for theoretical concepts as used by structural neo-realism. *It is therefore necessary to re-examine the realist narrative as it was divided in the 50s and 60s, and as it is currently present within Waltz’s structural neo-realism, in order to generate critical questions regarding accepted interpretations of such a narrative and its effects on the discipline of IR.*

Narrative in IR, as in all disciplines, serves and has served a necessary role in terms of advancing the discipline as we know it today. However, there is a significant difference between the history of IR and narratives of history that exist between groups within IR. Although narrative is a method for studying history, it is a method that is context specific, and its purpose is always to represent the ontological views of a particular group. Generally speaking, narrative serves the purpose of locating identity to the subjects whose views it is said to recount. Strictly speaking, “narratives arise from the problem of translating knowing into telling,” and thus it is

¹⁶ Great debates have been argued to be profoundly influential on IR, so much so that they are seen as part of the structure of the discipline itself. See Waever (1996, 1998, 2004) and Whitley (1984). The functions of debates within the IR discipline are said to be “(1) to focus the discipline; (2) to define a hierarchy of forms at work; and (3) to give a meaningful role to larger parts of what goes on” (Waever 2004: 5).

the purpose of narrative “to fashion experience into assimilable structures of meaning” (White 1980: 5). Narrative is a point of view that presents itself as reality, leaving history susceptible to narrative misdirection, especially in the case that the development of a discipline becomes too closely linked with a particular narrative of a group within the discipline.

According to the argument of the *levels of the description*, it is possible to scrutinize a narrative by “clarifying the enormous mass of elements that go into the making of a narrative” (Barthes 1975: 241).¹⁷ Roland Barthes proposes that there are three levels of any narrative work that bring the narrative into an organized form: the lowest level is function, followed by the level of action, and finally comes the level of narration (Barthes 1975: 243). Everything in a narrative serves a functional purpose; functions determine the agents (agents represent the level of action) of the narrative; agents are the linguistic representation of the narrator’s own view of reality (communication of the view of reality represents the narration level) (Barthes 1975). The terminology of the agents is rendered meaningless unless the entire narrative body, as it comes together to designate how agents function in the overall scheme, is taken into consideration.¹⁸

In political narratives, for example the narratives of scientific and traditional realism, key theoretical concepts serve as the agents of a narrative. They are the tools of narration, as they connect a reader, through linguistic representations, to a view of reality being described beyond the narrative. It is, however, the determination of the *function* of those agents, or theoretical concepts, that ultimately has the most impact on the narrative’s communication of reality.

Applied to the ‘Realist Problematique’, the traditional realist function of power implies a world of political temporality and corporeal change, while scientific realist theories are devised

¹⁷ The argument of the *levels of the description* (“*a theory*”) as seen in Barthes (1975)

¹⁸ Not coincidentally there is a similar line of reasoning within the study of discourse, where conceptual reference points, or nodal points, bring together parts of a discourse into a structural format (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000: 8).

on the idea of structure, stability, and constancy of the physical world of international politics. This in itself was the fundamental narrative break between realists, but also the fundamental departure of the scientific realist narrative from the classical realist narrative. Most importantly, the scientific version of the narrative changed the fundamental tenet of the original classical narrative, namely, that power itself was no longer functioned as the organizing principle of the narrative, but was now a parameter variable within a constant structure. Changing the conceptual function of power within the scientific narrative also changed other pivotal conceptual roles between the two narratives, such as the role of the state and of interest. *In short, it was the creation of a new and different narrative altogether.* In scientific realism, and later in structural neo-realism, key theoretical concepts function as the linguistic representations of structurally measurable occurrences in the political world. Thus, it becomes possible to examine the corporeal phenomena that these concepts represent, as theoretical concepts function to refer readers back to a world of stability, constancy, and structure. Kenneth Waltz's structural neo-realism is said to be built on the legacy of classical realism, and to complete the methodological tasks that classical and traditional realists had been unable to complete (Waltz 1990: 25, 26). However, a closer examination of the ways in which changing the conceptual function of power changes the function of other key conceptual agents, and thus changes the entire narrative, reveals that Waltz's structural neo-realism is not only a successor to the methodological rigor of scientific realists, such as Morton Kaplan, but also a successor to the scientific narrative.

5. *The Scientific Narrative*

The narrative break between traditional and scientific realism during the 50s and 60s can be summarized using a statement made by Hayden White:

...to many of those who would transform historical studies into a science, the continued use by historians of a narrative mode of representation is an index of a failure at once methodological and theoretical. A discipline that produces narrative accounts of its subject matter as an *end in itself* seems methodologically unsound (White 1984: 1). [Emphasis added]

In other words, as was argued by Morton Kaplan himself, the shortcoming of the realist approach to international politics would be the fact that the form of its historical narrative excludes the possibility of deducing a sound methodological study. The theme around which the narrative is arranged, the agent of action that organizes political structures within the narrative, is immeasurable and irreplicable into a theoretical model. Or, as was later elaborated by Waltz, a shortcoming of traditional realist thought in comparison to neo-realist theory would be the traditional realist portrayal of power as an end in itself.

Unable to conceive of international politics as a self-sustaining system, realists concentrate on the behavior and outcomes that seem to follow from the characteristics they have attributed to men and states. Neorealists, rather than viewing power as an end in itself, see power as a possibly useful means...” (Waltz 1990: 36).

Both for Kaplan’s *System and Process* theory and Waltz’s structural neo-realism, power is a “parameter” factor (Kaplan 1966: 2). Albeit power still affects change within an overall system and structure, it is not the organizing principle, or subject, of the narrative. Rather, structure itself is the subject of the scientific version of the realist narrative. Kaplan’s logic of a structural narrative is formulaic. According to Kaplan, it is impossible to attribute political change in history to a quality of a state because qualities of states vary over time; therefore, it is a logical assumption that there is an overarching system and structure, beyond any varying quality among states, which dictates long-term political trends:

If the number, type, and behavior of nations differ over time...
and if their military capabilities, their economic assets, and their information also vary over time...

then there is some likely interconnection between these elements that different structural and behavioral systems can be discerned to operate in different periods of history... (Kaplan 1966: 8).

Thus traditional “balance-of-power” theory is asserted to apply regardless of the number and kinds of states, variations in motivation, kinds of weapons systems, and so forth. (Kaplan 1966: 15)

Waltz took elaborate steps to improve upon Kaplan’s *System and Process* theory in structural neo-realism. He separated and clarified two important characteristics missing from Kaplan’s notion of an over-arching structure, the environment of the system and the identity of the system’s structure, without which one cannot “distinguish the system from the variables within it and their interactions” (Waltz 1979: 53). Regarding the environment of the system,

International structures are defined, first, by the ordering principle of the system, in our case anarchy... (Waltz 1990: 29).

This is what Waltz refers to as a “self-help” political system (Waltz 1979: 104,105). As to the identity of the structure:

...and second, by the distribution of capabilities (power) across units (Waltz 1990: 29).

At first read, if power defines international structure, this seemingly corresponds with traditional realist accounts that power determines the interaction between states in international politics.

When examined more closely, however, it is not the distribution of capabilities itself that is important to Waltz, but instead the “self-help” mentality of the units. Regardless of the presence of any varying amount of capabilities, and thus its varying distribution, as long as autonomous units exist (and they always will in Waltz’s model, for “autonomy is the unit-level counterpart of anarchy at the structural level” Waltz: 1990: 37) the structural identity of international politics

will be similar to the economic market condition of oligopoly (Waltz 1990: 37; Waltz 1979: 105).¹⁹

Therefore, with the clarification of an environment and identity of a system, from Kaplan's to Waltz's version of theory, the functions of key theoretical concepts of power, state, and interest become parameters that reiterate always back to the system and structure: First, states are units within an anarchic structure; they are the actors within the structure. Second, power is the combined capability of units and the distribution of capability across units that form a balance of the units' "self-help" mentalities within the structure. Finally, interest, though not explicitly defined, is security/protection from, or the balance of, the anarchic system of units. The structure itself is this balance, thus structure is self-maintaining and perpetual, as units will never act against their own interests.

Through the establishment of the system's environment and its structural identity, and thus the definition and function of the theoretical concepts of power, state, and interest as dependent variables within the system and structure, Waltz's structural neo-realism reiterates the same narrative as Kaplan's *Systems and Process* theory. Waltz's theory, like Kaplan's before him, communicates the story, first and foremost, of the presence and affect of structure in the world by means of a systemic model. Because the systemic model is dependent on perpetual structure, Waltz did what Kaplan could not – he created a theoretical model of a perpetual structure in which theoretical concepts operate in accordance to the systemic environment and structural identity. In effect, through the creation of a theoretical systemic model, it became possible to deduce about the present and future political situations by referring back to the

¹⁹ Waltz borrows a page from economic theory in order to once again revise Kaplan. International politics is anarchical and thus, by nature, cannot be hierarchically structured as is suggested by Kaplan's balance-of-power theory (Waltz 1979: 104).

theoretical model (which represents a view of reality) instead of referring to historical events themselves.²⁰

6. The Traditional Narrative

In comparison, through the traditionalist writings of Carr and Morgenthau, let us now examine a narrative of power. It has briefly been touched upon that the classical narrative is an examination of the world by means of examining history and, more importantly, “fundamental concepts of perennial interest” (Skinner 1969: 5) present throughout history.²¹ Noted by Kaplan and Waltz as a weakness, traditional realism also relies upon the perennial concept of power as a theoretical end in itself. Power, not structure, ultimately organizes states into political scenarios. Furthermore, when arrangements of states resembling structures are present in history, they are entirely ephemeral and dependent on the historical context and circumstance of power.

In scientific and neo-realism all theoretical components refer back to the premise of system and structure, allowing for the design of an empirical method that replicates system and structure in order to measure the forces inside it. In traditional realism, on the contrary, theoretical components are linked to, but not bound to the premise of power. This, consequently, also changes the definition and function of other pivotal theoretical concepts between traditional realism and scientific/neo-realism: the concept of state, and the concept of interest.

The concepts of state and interest, as defined by Carr and Morgenthau, take on internal characteristics, separate from the external organizing force of power, that ultimately determine their functions. For Carr, societies are groups of individuals sharing certain similarities and coming together of their own accord to form an organized community. A state, however, is the

²⁰ This is what traditionalists meant when it was suggested that a scientific model of realism could not be reconciled with history (Kaplan: 15,16).

²¹ Morgenthau also calls power a perennial concept (Morgenthau 1985: 11).

term historically used to understand the formation of societies in our world, and therefore can be understood as elaborated by Thomas Hobbes (Carr 1965: 148). For the purpose of understanding, the term of state, throughout history, has been personified. This personification includes the representation of the community as a whole by a supreme authority that reflects the values and beliefs of the individuals that make up the society. What is more, through this personification, states may be understood in terms of an organization with rights and duties (Carr 1965: 148). The individuals transfer rights and duties to the state – the individual accepts the state as his/her representative as well as expecting that this representative will look out for the individual wellbeing of its members (interests). The state then transfers rights and duties back to the individuals – the individual ascertains a certain amount of security from the state with the expectation that, if/when the state is threatened, it is the duty of individuals to protect the state as they are, in that, protecting their own interests. Interests of the state become interest of the individuals and *vice versa*.

A state, for Carr, is the organization of society throughout history as it has developed according to circumstance, necessity, and understanding. It is not, however, a necessary understanding of societies, and the existence of the societal organization of individuals does not dictate that there must be states.²² A further crucial factor regarding the developed understanding of states is that neither historical circumstance nor necessity required an understanding of international politics, but the twentieth century, according to Carr, did. Thus the debate over approach to international politics during the interwar period was further complicated by the fact that proposals for an international society were understood on the same basis as understanding of states. This, argued Carr, could never work, as individual allegiances to a society of states or world community of states would supersede the states themselves. Thus,

²² See Carr's version of the argument, the "fiction of the group-person" in (Carr 1965: 148-152)

a society of states would be an irreconcilable conflict of interests, not only between states in the society, but also between states and the society itself.

It (The notion of the world community) falls short in mainly two ways: (i) the principle of equality between members of the community is not applied, and indeed is not easily applicable in the world community, and (ii) the principle that the good of the whole takes precedence over the good of the part, which is a postulate of any fully integrated community, is not generally accepted. (Carr 1964: 162).

An international society, as such, cannot exist, but a system of international politics based on the governing principle of power can and does exist. Power reflects the accumulated benefit of a state. It is an indivisible whole made up of military force, economic capability, and the ability to propagate and mobilize citizens (Carr 1965: 108). It has been a constant presence throughout history as individuals have made up societal organizations known as states. States and the interest of states is only a reflection of those individuals of which it is comprised. In the absence of a higher authority in the international realm, and the inability of individuals to designate the same legitimacy to a society of states as to a single state, power is the tool by which states in the international realm communicate.

Similarly for Morgenthau, a state, or nation, is first and foremost a consensual conglomeration of a group of people with similar linguistic backgrounds, moral and ethical values, and domestic socio-political arrangements.

What is a nation? What do we mean when we attribute to a nation aspirations and actions? A nation as such is obviously not an empirical thing. ... What can be empirically observed are only the individuals who belong to a nation. Hence, a nation is an abstraction from a number of individuals who have certain characteristics in common, and it is these characteristics that make them members of the same nation. (Morgenthau 1985: 117).

There is a more important significance of the nation as a representation of individuals; namely, as seen in Carr's writings, the grouping of individuals with like characteristics endows a

nation with its independence and its autonomy due to the fact that internal political arrangements reflect national mores based upon common morals (Morgenthau 1934: 135). The legitimacy of nations comes not from any external or structural force, but from within the nation itself.²³

Because there is no externally true force to govern nations, and each nation sets its own values, there exists a paradox by which autonomous nations in the international realm have no basis on which to come to cooperative arrangements. Thus Morgenthau acknowledges,

What sets international society apart from other societies is the fact that its strength – political, moral, social – is concentrated in its members, its own weakness being the reflection of that strength. (Morgenthau 1966: 55).

However, there is a common factor by which nations may organize themselves, and that factor is power. Power is the force that determines international political scenarios in the absence of divine truth, and is located among the representatives of a nation whose responsibility it is to oversee foreign affairs. It is the interest of these representatives, as it is in the interest of the nation, to accumulate as much power as possible in order to gain more influence in international political scenarios. As such, “the main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power” (Morgenthau 1985: 5). Interest, as a theoretical concept for Morgenthau, functions as does the concept of nation – to ultimately refer the reader back both to the individuals that make up the nation, as well as to power, the organizing tool of international political scenarios.

Re-analyzing key theoretical concepts in Carr and Morgenthau indicates that the functions of the concepts of power, state, and interest within the classical narrative of power, continued by the traditional realists, differs greatly from the functions of these concepts in the scientific narrative of structure in three critical ways: Firstly, the internal dependence of a state

²³ Only the “legal organization,” by which “agents act as representatives of the nation” is referred to as the state (Morgenthau 1985: 118).

on its citizens, or the “such likes,”²⁴ is the creator of both the autonomy and the interests of states, not an external system or structure. Secondly, morality on the state level, an ever-important factor to both Carr’s and Morgenthau’s theories, creates a vacuum of governance on the international level. Thirdly, due to that vacuum of governance, power is the organizing principle of the international realm as long as states exist.

Thus, there is also the important role of temporality and change to consider in the classical/traditionalist narrative of power. The classical/traditional realists look to history to study the realm of politics. “The world of politics is the world of history. No valuable political activity can be carried on without that knowledge of conditions and possibilities which history affords” (Carr 1951: 118).²⁵ This focus on history serves the purpose of bringing about an understanding of *why* and *how* the circumstances of politics, domestic and international, have come to exist in the present and make theories about these conditions possible (Morgenthau 1962: 65).²⁶ More importantly, it is not solely for the sake of understanding present conditions that these historical examinations are made, but for the sake of progress in the face of these conditions.²⁷ It is the classical/traditional conclusion, as illustrated through examinations of both Carr and Morgenthau, that it is historical circumstance that has created the reality of power in the political realm. This reality, however, is both temporal, as it is continually contingent upon circumstance, and changing, as the reality of power is not fixed once and for all. “Political realism does not assume that the contemporary conditions under which foreign policy operates,

²⁴ Quoting Bull (1966) and later referred to by Waltz (1975) as the characteristics of men and states

²⁵ See also Morgenthau 1962: 65, “The theoretician...makes the theory explicit and uses historic facts in bits and pieces to demonstrate his theory.”

²⁶ Morgenthau concedes the conditions (the recurrence and repetition of international politics) are configurations of the balance-of-power, which lends itself to theoretical systematization.

²⁷ This notion of progress in the face of change is not to be confused with what Martin Wight called “the argument from desperation” (Wight 1966)

with their extreme instability and ever present threat of large-scale violence, cannot be changed” (Morgenthau 1985: 10-11).

In contrast, temporality and change are excluded from the scientific/neo-realist narrative due to its reliance, not on history, but on a theoretical model of permanent system and structure. Even if both circumstance and power change in the model of structural neo-realism, the overarching system and structure remain that anarchy and self-help. States in this narrative are fated for never-ending struggle, with no hope of progress in the face of their condition.

Conclusions: Overcoming a ‘Realist Problematique’

The circumstance of ontological security created by the polemics of the Inter-Paradigm Debate in International Relations – the culmination of the need for group identity and the need for epistemological legitimacy – led to the creation of Kenneth Waltz’s structural neo-realism. In a struggle for identity, rather than reconcile the narrative break that occurred between realists during the New Great Debate, structural neo-realism merged all “realist” theorists together in one unified heading without narrative reconciliation. The consequences of this realist unification without narrative reconciliation for IR are that the classical/traditional narrative has been repetitively overlooked, causing an inconsistency in the legacy realism as well as the large-scale misunderstanding and misinterpretation of classical and traditional realists such as E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau. The narrative break between classical/traditional realism and scientific realism, the reconciliation of which never occurred, both supports and sheds further light on arguments made by other authors attempting to clarify misconceptions of political realism in contemporary IR. Richard Ashley (1981) draws from John Herz (1976), by introducing the Habermasian dialectical notion that differing practical and technical interests drive thinkers to

form the various statements that comprise political realism (Ashley 1981: 208). Ashley acknowledges the obvious discrepancy between thinkers such as Morgenthau and thinkers such as Waltz. Such “interests” are only the surface-level of a deep inconsistency noted between writings of classical/traditional authors and contemporary perceptions of those authors as influenced by neo-realism. An additional criticism of neo-realism is that the important roles of history and of ideas in the classical tradition have been misrepresented (or, indeed, not represented at all). Ashley (1984), Cox (1981), and Walker (1987) argue for the reassessment of a historical approach to classical realism. Walker (1987), especially, connects notions of historicity and historical circumstance with notions of temporality, change, and progress in classical realism. Williams (2004, 2005) summarizes the consequences of a misconceived classical realism by neo-realism as an eschewed view of morality, a reduction of freedom to determinacy, an ignorance of domestic politics, and a denied possibility of progress.²⁸ Furthermore, Behr (2005, Forthcoming) and Williams (1996) put philosophical arguments against contemporary perceptions of classical realism into theoretical context by re-examining key elements of structural neo-realism such as anarchy and state autonomy through the classical realism of Thomas Hobbes. Findings suggest that neo-realist anarchy and autonomy are predicated on a false notion that state autonomy automatically ensures anarchy on the international level.²⁹ In fact, as is an above argument of this paper, though state autonomy ensures a lack of moral authority at the international level, it does not mean there is a lack of authority and governance all together. As is argued by Morgenthau and emphasized by Williams

²⁸ Not coincidentally each of these arguments are echoes from the New Great Debate. Carr argued that a scientific realism created the notion of determinism in politics and excluded the notion of progress, while Morgenthau argued that morality, while not the authority of politics, still played an important role in politics, which was evident when examining politics at the domestic level.

²⁹ See Williams (1996) and Behr (2005)

(2004), politics is its own, separate sphere in which authority and governance come in the form of power.

The most alarming consequence of the misconception of classical and traditional realism is that the “modern form of realism (neo-realism and its successors) at – and *as* – the centre of International Relations” (Der Derian 1995: 4) facilitates the view that neo-realism has come to represent IR itself, a view which also excludes all alternative viewpoints and conflicting narratives from the discourse. Overcoming this view of neo-realism and truly understanding IR as a discourse requires an understanding of the role of *pouvoir-savoir* in IR historical development and theoretical creation. First, it must be acknowledged that political realism is not a unified approach to international politics that has developed teleologically throughout history. Realism, before the First World War, did not exist, but was a scattered mass of occasionally overlapping philosophical and political propositions. E.H. Carr brought these overlapping propositions together in order to examine the historical role of power in politics. Traditional realists continued Carr’s narrative of power, while scientific realists broke apart to form a new and methodologically improved narrative. Contrary to the neo-realist implication, these two narratives have never been, and indeed cannot be, reconciled. Political realism is not one whole viewpoint, or narrative within the IR discourse. In the wake of post-modernism and the advent of critical approaches to IR it is possible to see that, rather than by teleology, the creation of structural neo-realism, and the view of political realism as a unified whole, has been shaped by the power struggles within the discipline. The “mutual enwrapping, interaction, and interdependence of power and knowledge” (Gordon 1980: 233) within International Relations has meant that dominant approaches, or the groups with power, often dictate knowledge, which has manifested itself in non-discursive forms such as political institutions. In other words,

polemics have dictated accepted and dominant narrative viewpoints of reality and, in turn, accepted and dominant narrative viewpoints of reality have come to shape the institutions and mechanisms by which international politics is conducted. Examples of this can be seen in structural neo-realist manifestations in American Foreign Policy – both economic and political – during and since the Cold War. The US, especially in the later part of the twentieth century, believed in and acted according to its own hegemony as influenced by such notions of “great powers” and “structural balances” from structural neo-realism.

A first instance of this can be seen in the protectionist tendencies of American trade policy, and the ways in which those protectionist tendencies have shaped international trade agreements in the GATT and, later, the WTO. As US hegemony has shaped the multilateral trade agreements of the WTO, it has also dictated the terms of international trade and “multilateralism” has become merely a euphemism for the consensual international support of the hegemonic state’s own interests (Sen 2003).³⁰ Similarly, US perceptions of hegemony and a protectionist mentality have influenced US-UN relations since the Cold War. It has been noted that the US has been both “ambivalent” and often “negative” toward the UN promotion of values over interests (Malone 2003). The result of such wavering support of the UN from the US often led to a UN power vacuum, and the dependence of the UN on the US in cases of international crisis.

Perhaps no one person in IR has understood the *pouvoir-savoir* circumstance better than E.H. Carr, whose *Twenty Years’ Crisis*, as this paper attempts to explain, portrays the role of power in politics as a direct consequence of circumstance, development and understanding of societal formation throughout history. As more recent critical, postmodern, and constructivist

³⁰ See also Hegemonic Stability Theory originally elaborated by Charles Kindleberger in 1973 and further discussed by such authors as Robert Gilpin and Stephen Krasner.

schools of IR indicate, the key to International Relations is not in seeking objective and methodologically measurable truths in reality, but in discovering how and why our current situations have been shaped by *understandings* of reality. Only then is it possible to comprehend how current understandings of reality will shape future situations.

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