

SOVEREIGNTY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
THEORY

Michael Savage

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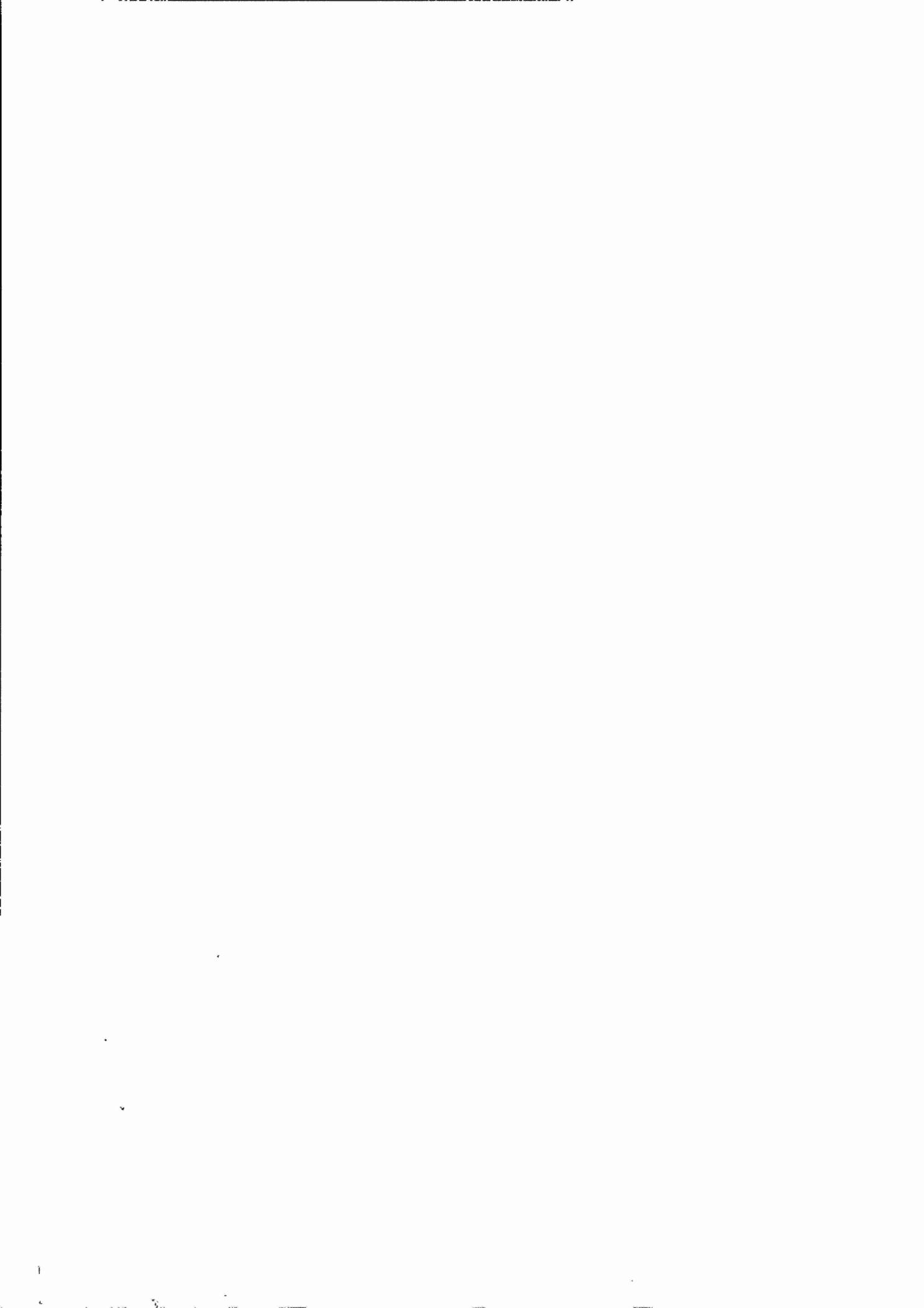
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Sovereignty and International Relations Theory

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PhD Thesis
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Ali Watson

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Introduction

Sovereignty establishes boundaries. Virtually the entire planet is divided into states that claim sovereignty, separating humanity into British, Americans, Japanese and so on. When people try to understand the world, the study of domestic politics and society is separated from the study of international relations, with the concept of sovereignty lying between them. We live, both practically and intellectually, in the world created by this 'inside/outside'.¹ Sovereignty has often been taken for granted as a natural feature of society. But now it seems to be in transition. It is widely argued that social changes are breaking down the barriers between sovereign states, and that the divisions that sovereignty enforced are illegitimate and undesirable. The claim that the study of politics and international relations must be divided into different academic specialities is no longer so persuasive. The idea that globalisation is undermining the ability of states to determine their own affairs is now commonplace. States that once aggressively defended their sovereignty now surrender it more or less willingly to international institutions like the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement. In civil society, nationalism is not the force it once was in the Western world and there is now a plethora of voices calling for the subordination of sovereignty to cosmopolitan values and ethical norms.

Many recent approaches to International Relations from a wide variety of perspectives have tended to disparage the normative value of sovereignty, associating it with negative connotations such as irredentism, aggressive nationalism, particularism, autarchy and internal repression. Although such approaches cannot be assimilated into a common agenda, they share a broad outlook that disparages the virtues of traditional ways of approaching sovereignty. This thesis, by contrast will seek to uphold the idea of the self-determination of collective subjects – which I shall understand as the purpose of sovereignty - as the best way under current circumstances for a progressivist, democratic politics to develop.

Of course, I should emphasise at the outset that I am not arguing that there are no changes taking place at all in the way sovereignty is understood and practised. The dispute is about what underlies them and what they mean. Among those who accept that these changes are taking place, two main sets of explanation can be discerned. Both are sometimes linked under the rubric of globalisation, but one emphasises technological and economic change, and the other sees changing ideas about the rightful sphere of politics and developing cosmopolitan ethics as the main driving force. The aim of this study is to dispute both of these explanations by providing an account both of shifting perceptions of sovereignty and a defence of the idea of sovereignty understood as a certain kind of right. To do this, I trace both the academic discussion and the political practice of sovereignty focusing on the place where these issues have most purchase, the field of International Relations. I start from the thesis that two political processes must be understood in order to grasp these changes; the first is that third world liberation is no longer on the political agenda and the second is that nationalism has ceased to be an organising principle for Western states. Western liberals have lost sympathy for third world regimes, and since the achievement of formal independence no viable movements have emerged in the third world to counter western hegemony. As a result, intervention in the third world is now commonplace, and in some areas the state administration is simply not a viable administrative unit.² Meanwhile, Western states are willing to pool their sovereignty in organisations like the European Union because the defence of their independence is no longer a pressing issue as nationalism has moved from a dominant ideology to a fringe issue. In the literature of International Relations the discussion of these issues is often confused because it is caught up in arcane theoretical disputes. A large part of this study is accordingly devoted to establishing and explaining the shortcomings of other approaches to sovereignty.

¹ The term is RBJ Walker's. See his *Inside/Outside: International Relations as political theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Walker is especially interesting on sovereignty and I will return to his arguments in a later chapter

² Robert H. Jackson *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990)

Yet for all its centrality, there is little consensus about its meaning, history and, increasingly, its legitimacy. Scholars have constructed theories and histories around it, and political actors have argued and fought over its meaning and significance. For much of the early modern period, since its emergence in something like its modern form in the sixteenth and seventeenth century,³ it became central both to the claims of absolutist monarchy and its opponents. During the enlightenment, sovereignty became a radical claim against despotism.⁴ In the twentieth century sovereignty was slowly democratised, as the colonies that the great powers had acquired during the nineteenth century began to assert their own sovereignty against their colonial masters.⁵ As we enter the twenty-first century, however, sovereignty is under attack. The experiments in independence that decolonisation bred appear to have been a catastrophic failure, with despotic rule and economic underdevelopment the rule and successful independence very much the exception. Those very same radicals who joined in solidarity with anti-imperialists abroad have now repudiated sovereignty as part of a new struggle for human rights, democratisation and cosmopolitanism.⁶

In some ways, the study of sovereignty has suffered from an excess, rather than a dearth of scholarship, thus adding to the weight of scholarship on the topic requires some defence. In this thesis I hope to show that in order to understand what is at stake in contemporary discussions of sovereignty we need to stand back from the immediate conceptual issues and look at both the intellectual and the political interests that have shaped such discussions. This is especially true in the discussion of sovereignty in international relations, the main focus of this thesis. Rather than simply being a convenient shorthand description of a state of affairs, sovereignty was a key term around which the discipline was constructed and whose meaning has been

³ The classic account of the emergence of the notion, along with much else in the modern conceptions of the state is Quentin Skinner *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

⁴ A rich discussion can be found in vol 2 of Peter Gay *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (New York: Wildwood House, 1970).

⁵ Decolonisation lacks a standard history as such, though particular episodes are well treated, of course. for an idiosyncratic, but brilliant, reflection see Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, (London: Abacus, 1998)

⁶ This move, witnessed in such as Martin Shaw and Mary Kaldor, are discussed in chapter 5-7.

centrally contested between different theoretical approaches.⁷ A sign of the changing way in which sovereignty is treated today is that this relationship is inverted in a recent history of the discipline, which is organised around the concept of anarchy – the absence of a global sovereign – rather than the positive concept of sovereignty.⁸ As Jean Bethke Elshtain has remarked, “sovereignty generates a number of typical problems – mediations of universalism and particularism; definitions of international relations in terms of presence and absence whereby present sovereign states are ‘primary actors’ but the ‘system itself’ is defined by a lack, and absence of sovereignty.”⁹

Another version of this thesis has been argued by Justin Rosenberg, who argues that, “the disciplinary division of labour between the modern social sciences itself reflects uncritically and thereby naturalizes the distinctive social forms of modernity. States, markets, individuals – precisely the things we need to explain – are already assumed to be natural starting points.”¹⁰ He suggests that, “the rise of modern sovereignty involved not just the growth of a centralised political apparatus but also, more crucially, the abstraction of the political itself from its erstwhile role in constituting the ‘directly social’ relations of pre-capitalist societies”.¹¹ In this thesis I will agree that the organisation and institutionalisation of the social sciences make it difficult to raise certain questions, although I perhaps hold recent critical approaches to account for this more than he does. But just as important as the disciplinary issues in terms of the debate over sovereignty have been the changing ways in which it has been possible to understand and debate state power.

⁷ For a brief discussion of the evolution of the theory of international relations in much of the twentieth century, see Hedley Bull’s ‘The theory of international politics 1919-1969’ in Brian Porter (ed) *The Aberystwyth Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

⁸ Brian C. Schmidt *The Political Discourse of Anarchy: A Disciplinary History of International Relations* (New York: SUNY 1998)

⁹ Jean Bethke Elshtain, ‘Rethinking Sovereignty’ in Francis A. Beer and Robert Harriman (eds) *Post-Realism: The rhetorical turn in international relations* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press 1996) p. 175

¹⁰ Justin Rosenberg *The Empire of Civil Society: A Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations* (London: Verso 1994) p. 4

¹¹ Justin Rosenberg *The Follies of Globalisation Theory: Polemical Essays* (London: Verso 2000) p. 38

At the start of the twentieth century the European states were expanding and consolidating their empires, and the US was engaged in a debate between imperialists and isolationists. Although there were tensions between the great powers that surfaced later, with catastrophic results, there was also a remarkable degree of cooperation between them. Furthermore, they all employed the rhetoric of nationalism and relied on more or less explicit racial arguments to legitimise their empires.

This situation was undermined over time in several ways. Most obviously, there were tensions between the powers. An important consequence of this was that colonial subjects were trained and armed in World War I, encouraging their claims for freedom.. Colonial subjects began to hold western powers to account by their own standards of civilization, demanding the same freedoms for themselves, forming a second challenge to the imperial order. These calls for freedom received support from sections of the public in the imperialist states themselves, especially after they were given focus by Lenin's study of the issue, and the success of the Russian Revolution.¹²

The form of anti-imperialist rhetoric, especially as it was adopted in Europe and the US, is now often seen as misguided. The states that were created through decolonisation often perpetuated the inequalities of colonial administration, which has sometimes been seen as an almost inevitable outcome of creating nation-states. This thesis will be critical of this line of argument because, and notwithstanding all its faults, the sovereign state embodies a form of collective autonomy that is better than any alternative currently on offer.

My argument will be that claims to national self-determination at the present time are best understood as the assertion of collective autonomy. It is the assertion of a right – as we will see a particular kind of right – that a group be allowed to make its own choices about how to organise its affairs. Its value is therefore instrumental rather

¹² V. I Lenin *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press 1996)

than intrinsic in that it is valued for what it produces – autonomy and empowerment – rather than in and of itself. One of the main tasks of this thesis will therefore be to offer some reasons for supposing that, in the contemporary context at least - and whatever might have been true in the past or might be true in the future – the values of autonomy, independence, equality and self rule, those values we might in some general sense refer to as ‘democratic values’, are best secured through the political form of the sovereign state rather than the alternatives that are being widely discussed.

In order to make this case I need to be clear just how sovereignty has been understood both in general and in International Relations. The term ‘sovereignty’ is notoriously hard to pin down, as it has been used in so many different contexts and as part of so many different theories. In 1905, the international lawyer F. H. M. Oppenheim wrote that, “There exists perhaps no conception the meaning of which is more controversial than that of sovereignty. It is an indisputable fact that this conception, from the moment when it was introduced into political science until the present day, has never had a meaning which was universally agreed upon.”¹³ These difficulties persist today. One of the most influential contemporary international relations scholars, Kenneth Waltz, has described it as “a bothersome concept”,¹⁴ and more recently still, Steven Krasner has identified four ways in which the term has been used; international legal sovereignty; Westphalian sovereignty; domestic sovereignty; and interdependence sovereignty.¹⁵ And for sheer obfuscation, the introduction to a recent edited volume discussing sovereignty can scarcely be bettered:

Our understanding of sovereignty links the social construction of agency or identity (in this case, the state) to practice, and it highlights how sovereignty itself can be conceptualized as a set of practices. For example, while

¹³ F. L. M. Oppenheim *International Law* (London: Longman 2 vols, 1905 & 1906), quoted in Hurst Hannum *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination: The Accommodation of Conflicting Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1990) p. 14

¹⁴ Kenneth N. Waltz *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill 1979) p. 95, and widely quoted in the secondary literature

sovereignty is intimately bound up with the issues of recognition, recognition itself is embedded in an array of different practices. While it is generally regarded as a positive, empowering term in discussion of state sovereignty and international law, recognition may be linked to specific cultural practices, resulting in the delegitimation of claims to authority made on behalf of territories and peoples with non-western cultural traditions. Similarly, sovereign recognition is embedded in a network of international political economy practices that, in their liberal form, exclude ethical considerations such as a right to wealth, which may ultimately be necessary if sovereignty is ever to be fully realized by Third World states.¹⁶

The first problem in thinking about sovereignty, then, is what it means and who can have it. The problem is not simply that there are different definitions of the term sovereignty. There are also different ideas about how terms like sovereignty should be defined in a way that is meaningful for social science. At the most basic level, there are commonplace meanings, used in everyday language and catalogued by lexicographers. Beyond that, however, specialists approach the question of definition differently. Some define terms according to the needs of theory building. This approach involves taking a particular meaning of a concept so that it can be used to explain, and perhaps predict, social phenomena. A typical example of this is provided by Kenneth Waltz, who writes that, "theoretical notions are defined by the theory in which they appear".¹⁷ He argues that wherever there are contradictory theories, the meanings of terms will be contested. It is possible to draw out a third approach to defining terms that will be very important for this study. Some critics may argue that a term has no meaning at all for social science, or that its meaning is so bound up with ideological interests that it obscures more than it explains. This may be called the critical approach. To clarify what these three different ways of

¹⁵ Stephen D. Krasner *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1999) p. 3

¹⁶ Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber 'The Social Construction of State Sovereignty' in Biersteker and Weber (eds) *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996) p. 12

¹⁷ Kenneth N. Waltz, op.cit. p. 11

thinking about concepts means, it might help to take a different example. The term 'race' is used all the time often with little precision. However, social scientists have tried to develop more precise definitions of race, and of racial difference. Elaborate theories have been developed to explain social inequalities as the outcome of racial differences. Later critics argued that the term 'race' does not have the meaning that these theorists tried to give it. It was argued that racial difference was constructed, or invented, to explain or justify social inequalities that were the outcomes of different processes. Today, these critics have largely won this battle, at least in academia. This is analogous to some of the criticisms of sovereignty discussed in this thesis.

The difficulty for conceptual approaches to sovereignty is that they are torn between seeing sovereignty in terms of either power and capability, or legitimacy and authority. It is not possible to simply assert one or the other because neither extreme corresponds to ways in which sovereignty is exercised. To reduce it to either extreme is to render it redundant, because the terms power or legitimacy could suffice alone. Weber's classic definition of the state as, "that human community which (successfully) lays claim to the *monopoly of legitimate physical violence* within a certain territory",¹⁸ forms the basis of most attempts to mediate between the two. F. H. Hinsley lifted this definition for his analysis, which has become the locus classicus for discussions of sovereignty in International Relations, calling it "the idea that there is a final and absolute political authority in the political community ... *and no final and absolute authority exists elsewhere*".¹⁹ In the inter-war period, pluralist approaches to sovereignty emphasised legitimacy and consent, as a critique of the glorification of the power of the state that was prevalent at the time. One of the most influential proponents of this approach was Harold Laski, who wrote that, "Where sovereignty prevails, where the State acts, it acts by the consent of men."²⁰ More recently, neo-realists have concentrated on power and capability, although retaining an appreciation of the necessary component of consent. Waltz argues that, "To say

¹⁸ Max Weber 'The Profession and vocation of politics' in Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (ed) *Weber: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994) p. 310-311

¹⁹ F. H. Hinsley *Sovereignty* (London: C. A. Watts and Company Ltd 1966) p. 27, emphasis in original

²⁰ *Studies in the Problems of Sovereignty* London: George Allen and Unwin 1968 [1917] p. 13

that states are sovereign is not to say that they can do as they please, that they are free of others' influence, that they are able to get what they want. ... To say that a state is sovereign means that it decides for itself how it will cope with its internal and external problems."²¹

Although emphases may vary, conceptual approaches tend to use the term sovereignty to describe the attributes of independent territorial units within the international system. The theories that are built upon these definitions then try to account for the ways in which these sovereign entities interact. As a result, these divisions are treated as natural rather than conventional, and it is assumed that politics and international relations are different spheres of human experience that must be understood with different theories. The corollary of this is that the division of humanity into different states or nations is itself treated as natural, and beyond the scope of social scientific inquiry. Justin Rosenberg has developed this line of criticism furthest, arguing that sovereignty is treated as, "an absolute form of rule which never seems to be absolute in practice even though, for some reason, the formal constitution of the international system rests on the assumption that it is so."²² In other words, because International Relations is concerned with relations between states, it has to treat states as absolutely discrete entities. However, scholars recognise that in practice they are never quite absolute, and so they have to maintain a fiction where they study international relations as if states were absolutely autonomous even though they know that they are not, so that they can maintain artificial boundaries between academic disciplines.

Second, it is often argued - as we shall see - that sovereignty is an *undesirable* norm. The division of human society into fully autonomous states is seen as being an irrational, counterintuitive and anyway deeply flawed way of organising human beings, pitting the people of each state against the people of every other state. Furthermore, the idea of sovereign autonomy is often invoked by political élites

²¹ Waltz op.cit. p. 96

²² Justin Rosenberg op.cit p. 127; quoted in Norman Lewis *A New Age of Intervention: Sovereignty under question* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex 1998)

whenever they violate international norms such as human rights, providing a cover for dictatorial or oppressive regimes.

This leads on to the third point, which is the claim that 'globalisation' – understood in a variety of ways – is undermining the autonomy of the state. Although there is no consensus on the meaning or extent of globalisation, a useful working definition would describe it as the intensification of increasingly complex social processes across the globe. This neither limits us to economic changes, nor restricts us to the most recent period. Ideas about globalisation suggest that International Relations should be concerned with the relations between many different kinds of processes and actors, including the state, but only alongside many others. The most extreme versions of the thesis, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 7, suggest that the concept of sovereignty is almost entirely redundant under these circumstances.

To explore these concerns shapes my strategy in this thesis. Thus, the first part of this study is devoted to further exploring the debates in International Relations germane to the discussion of sovereignty. Chapter 1 discusses those traditional approaches that essentially took sovereignty for granted as an ahistorical form of human society and which therefore predicated the 'international system' on a simple assumption of 'sovereign entities interacting'. Here I draw out the weaknesses of these approaches, but also flag up the areas where critics have sometimes misinterpreted the tradition to provide a basis for their alternatives. Chapters 2 and 3 then turns to some alternatives, specifically those that have been grouped together as 'post-positivist', a label that I will argue is in many ways misapplied. These chapters argue that (so-called) post-positivist approaches have followed a common trajectory devaluing ideas of sovereignty based on self-determination. Taking as their starting point a scepticism towards the enlightenment model of society made up of knowing individuals with conscious desires, they have devalued the idea of sovereignty as a collective subjectivity, both in the version of the mainstream in International Relations and in its radical re-appropriation by anti-colonialists and their sympathisers.

Having examined how sovereignty is viewed within the discipline of international relations, chapter 4 then discusses manner in which I suggest we understand sovereignty both historically and as a rights claim. In this chapter I elaborate on my claim that sovereignty should be understood as a right held by a collective subject and situate that discussion in terms of Hohfeld's distinction between a power right and a claim right. Much – perhaps most - contemporary 'rights talk' takes the form, I suggest of a Hohfeldian claim right. But sovereignty, understood as I shall try to understand it here, is a power right which should not, at least in the present context, be overridden by claim rights. If, to use Ronald Dworkin's language 'rights are trumps',²³ my argument in this chapter is essentially that sovereignty's power right trumps other claim rights, at least in the current context.

The third part turns to possible objections to this argument. Essentially, I shall argue that attempts to limit or undermine the status of sovereignty as a power right can take a number of forms. Chapter 5 looks at attempts to justify overcoming sovereignty for reasons that have to do with cultural (and often also therefore political) primacy. Two examples of this are offered: the changing face of imperialism, and the development of multiculturalism in modern western societies.

Chapter 6 discusses the origin and nature of the new interventionism, and arguments associated with it, to the effect that some peoples claim rights (often human rights language is almost wholly couched in terms of claim rights) warrant to overturning of the power right of sovereignty. I will, unsurprisingly, argue against this view. Chapter 7 then examines perhaps the most protean, but also amorphous, thesis that threatens sovereignty, to wit the claim, most obviously associated with various proponents of globalisation, that agency is effectively trumped by structure and that sovereignty even if seen as I have seen it here is powerless to actually generate autonomy and equality, since the power of sovereign entities is heavily circumscribed in any case. Finally, in my concluding chapter, I offer a summary of the argument as

²³ The classic presentation of his thesis is in his *Taking Rights Seriously* (London: Duckworth, 1977)

a whole and explore what I hope might be some more hopeful avenues for international relations scholarship in the light of it.

Some remarks on method

Before I can do any of this, however, I need to say something about the methodological assumptions that will guide the investigation.

The first claim of this thesis is that sovereignty is closely bound up with notions of agency, and debates about sovereignty have tended to follow discussions of agency, though not always very explicitly. I argue that traditional ideas about agency and sovereignty have faced a sustained assault in recent years, both in intellectual debate and in the political and social spheres. Accordingly, the first contribution of this thesis is to establish these links and demonstrate that while sovereignty is being attacked from several different directions, many of the directions emanate from a common source; the denial of the efficacy of agency – either individual or collective – in international affairs. The second claim that I make is that many of the critics are attacking the wrong thing. If their aspiration is for a more progressive system of international relations – and many state, obviously sincerely, that this is indeed, their aspiration – then they are focusing on the wrong target. I argue that a strong sense of human agency and of at least the possibility of sovereign (i.e. collective) agency is essential for a forward-looking approach to international relations.

However, and notwithstanding the fact that this thesis will concentrate on International Relations – both as a field and as a topic – it is obvious that an issue like sovereignty cannot be looked at through a single lens (only from the discipline of International Relations, for example or only through a historical analysis). To understand what issues are contained within such a concept, to look at the interests that are at stake and the ideas that are contested, it is necessary to come at it from different angles, to combine readings that perhaps have different original disciplinary homes. To make these links it is thus necessary to engage with a wide variety of

different material, offering different kinds of evidence. The methodological assumptions that underpin the thesis will doubtless, then, look to some rather eclectic.

If the hallmark of eclecticism is taken to be a refusal to assume that there is only one royal road to epistemic truth it is one that I am happy to concede. However, that does not mean that there is no method in my madness, as it were. My thesis is fundamentally a thesis about how we might, could and should understand sovereignty; why existing theories of International Relations do not understand it that way and why, indeed, many contemporary theories are so very critical of it and how, once we do understand it in that way, we can defend it against certain powerful objections. My 'methods' reflect my concerns.

In section 1, for example, I discuss the treatment of sovereignty in International Relations theory. This section therefore obviously relies heavily on textual exegesis from major contributions to both mainstream and critical theories of International Relations. The material is divided up into a number of major problems that critical approaches set out to address, including agency, democratisation and security as well as sovereignty. Although the discussion of sovereignty plays a large part in these discussions, it is not the sole focus for the simple reason that in trying to convey the character of the theory or theorist in general wider questions than simply the understanding of sovereignty are obviously necessary.

Using the terms 'mainstream' and 'critical' as I have just done, obviously begs a number of questions. Without entering into the theology of theoretical attribution here let me suggest that I shall understand 'mainstream' theory to be those theoretical interpretations which have largely set the intellectual scene in International Relations. This therefore includes both 'traditional' realism²⁴ and its more 'scientific', structural

²⁴ Nomenclature here is always a problem. 'Traditional realism' is taken to be the realism of, inter alia, Hans Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr, George Kennan, Walter Lippman, Henry Kissinger and a host of lesser figures. Of course, there was hardly universal agreement between such individual thinkers but they spoke of themselves as, at least to some extent a 'school' and so may, by courtesy at least, be treated as one. For discussions see Joel Rosenthal, *Righteous Realists: responsible power in the*

successor²⁵ as well as the so-called 'English school' of Martin Wight, Hedley Bull and others²⁶ (now under a vigorous process of revival²⁷).

The point to note about this is that - methodologically speaking - this mainstream itself was remarkably eclectic: a clear positivist focus in the latter neo-realists an equally clear, and absolutely hostile, response to positivism from Morgenthau (whose *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*²⁸ remains one of the best attacks on positivism extant) and from the English school.

This has two particular benefits from my argument here. First, it substantiates the claims that I make about the changing treatment of sovereignty by showing how earlier approaches to international relations have treated the issue. Secondly, it allows me to develop a line of criticism against the 'post-positivist' theories by showing that traditional approaches are rich and varied in their discussion of sovereignty, and are quite different from the caricatures that are presented by post-positivists. I would suggest that there is more in these theories than post-positivists allow, and although some of their claims about the conservative disposition of the writers that I discuss are merited, they are in danger of rejecting too much.

I use the chapter heading 'traditional theories' advisedly, because I want to avoid the fallacy that all traditional theories were 'positivist'. I save the discussion of

nuclear age (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992) and Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought From Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge Louisiana State University Press, 1986).

²⁵ The most celebrated version of which has been Kenneth Waltz *Theory of International Politics* (Reading Ma: Addison Wesley, 1979).

²⁶ For representative samples see Martin Wight, *Systems of States* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (London: Macmillan, 1977), Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (ed) *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1984). A now standard history of the school is Tim Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School* (London: Macmillan, 1997)

²⁷ The revival is taking a number of forms. One might see a more 'traditional' revival (if that is not an oxymoron) in Robert Jackson *The Global Covenant: Human conduct in a world of states* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000) and a rather more radical revival in the work of Tim Dunne and Nick Wheeler. See, especially, Nicholas J Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian intervention and international society* (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 2000). There has also been an organised attempt to restart the school launched by Barry Buzan and Richard Little following the publication of their massive *International Systems in World History: Theory meets history* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

²⁸ See Hans J Morgenthau, *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* (Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 1947).

positivism for the chapter on post-positivism. Here too, naming can be problematic. As I have already said, I think the term 'post-positivism' is in fact a bit of misnomer (I explain why in more detail in section one) but it has now become widely accepted²⁹ and so I follow the now customary usage. However, positivism itself is complex and hardly uncontroversial. Most discussions begin with the early nineteenth century French writer Auguste Comte, who tried to unify the natural and social sciences, developing a common method for both that allowed humanity to move beyond earlier theological and metaphysical conceptions of knowledge. It is ironic that while Comte was concerned to unify human knowledge, he is commonly credited as being among the first to establish sociology as a distinct discipline.³⁰ Later in the nineteenth century, and especially in the twentieth century, the natural sciences took great strides forward while the social and moral development of humanity seemed to take a back seat. Many social scientists were inspired by the natural sciences, and developed methods of enquiry that were explicitly 'scientific' and linked to what was often claimed to be a 'positivistic' conception of science, following Comte.³¹ However, a problem here is that throughout the nineteenth century the term 'science' was used much more loosely than today, implying knowledge or systematic study rather than enquiry into the laws of nature; a classicist, in this sense might be 'scientific'.³² In the twentieth century, and especially after World War II, the division between arts, natural sciences and social sciences became far more entrenched, and the term positivism was narrowed down to suggest a mode of enquiry that employed inductive logic, made extensive use of statistics and tried to isolate specific variables that rational actors could respond to.³³ For the purposes of this study, then, I use the terms 'positivism' and 'post positivism' in the sense that they have come to acquire in International Relations theory. I make no comment on how accurate these claims are

²⁹ It is increasingly seen as a central theme of the so-called 'third debate'. See for example, Steve Smith 'Self images of a discipline' in Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds) *International Relations Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994).

³⁰ This is a point commonly made in introductory texts, for example Mike Haralambos, Martin Holborn *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* 5th Ed (Collins Educational 2000)

³¹ For a very recent argument which repeats some of these canards see John Gray, *Al Qaeda and what it is to be modern* (London: Granta Books, 2003).

³² See the very interesting discussion in J.W. Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European thought 1848-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000)

³³ This point is made by many of the post-positivists discussed in chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis.

as an understanding of Comte or positivism generally. In International Relations anyway, the term has itself come to stand for certain assumptions and it is the assumptions rather than the term that matter. Accordingly, although I defend a number of traditional writers against the charge that they are 'positivists' I am more concerned to rescue them from the calumny that they crudely copied the methods of the natural sciences rather than to deny that they aspired to the rigour of 'science' in some much more general sense. The danger of overreacting to the abuse of the term positivism is to define it so narrowly that nobody is seen as being positivist at all.

In chapter four I look at historical debates about sovereignty and frame my own understanding of sovereignty as a 'power right', introducing this notion from the legal theorist Wesley Hohfeld. I take the opportunity to provide a fuller statement of what I think that sovereignty could be, drawing on earlier theorists who I discuss and evaluate. The methodology of this section is similar to that of part 1 except that it focuses both on debates about how one should understand the historical debates about sovereignty and on a particular argument about rights.

Part 3 then offers a reading of the current political controversies about sovereignty. Demonstrating that the changing views of sovereignty in contemporary International Relations are reflected in foreign policy is essential to my argument. Accordingly, I concentrate on showing how certain aspects of the theories – especially the so called post positivist theories - that I have discussed are reflected in political practice, with a view to undermining some of the evidence that is integral to the theories of sovereignty discussed in the first part of the thesis.

I should emphasise that in the overall structure of the thesis and in the relationship between the separate parts, I am not claiming that the debates that I am engaging with are causally linked to one another. I am not suggesting that the shifting grounds of International Relations theory have inspired the changing political practices of sovereignty, nor that statesmen who are critical of sovereign statehood necessarily betray even an awareness of the existence of the academic debates that I cover in the

thesis. Statesmen are acting in a changed world, and scholars are reflecting on it. This thesis tries to capture both sides of this.

However, in avoiding the claim that there is one particular movement of ideas or practices underlying changing views of sovereignty, I am not suggesting that it is simply a coincidence that so many writers from different areas of study (or indeed, practitioners) have converged around certain themes in discussing it. Rather I would argue that there is an underlying tendency in contemporary International Relations – both academic and practical – towards devaluing human agency that, despite its often-radical claims, is in practice deeply conservative.³⁴ This tendency has been shaped and developed in a number of intellectual contexts and is more familiar in some than in others. However in International Relations, the underlying assumptions have not been questioned systematically. Bringing out some of these assumptions and questioning their consequences is a central aspiration of this thesis, and one of the ways that I do this is by showing how normative aspirations have shaped the presentation of certain situations. An example, in the third part of the thesis, is the discussion of the issues surrounding war crimes. If a particular contemporary writer has especially influenced the assumptions I make in this context and the methods I adopt in developing its key ideas it is probably Slavoj Žižek. He draws on a formidable and often abstract range of sources – Kant, Hegel, Marx, Lacan – but he is also consistent in relating these concerns to much more ‘nuts and bolts’ issues, real political events or figures or aspects drawn from popular culture – such as Alfred Hitchcock, David Cronenberg and Ridley Scott.³⁵ I am not trying to argue that all scholarship should do this but when engaging with current problems it is necessary to think about the context as well as about the method, a point made much of in other contexts by Quentin Skinner, for example.³⁶ Method, after all, is surely something

³⁴ Here in some respects at least, and without subscribing to the more specific aspects of his agenda, I am agreeing with and going further than Jürgen Habermas in his influential *The New Conservatism* (Boston MIT Press, 1986).

³⁵ The most comprehensive statement of Žižek’s approach to date is *The Ticklish Subject: the absent centre of political ontology* (London: Verso 1999).

³⁶ See his reworked methodological essays in vol 1 of *Visions of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002).

that follows on from the problems that are being tackled, not a rigid designator that determines what problems or issues can be tackled.

1 International relations and sovereignty: Traditional Approaches

Sovereignty has been understood in various different ways in different disciplines and different spheres of society, but it is perhaps in International Relations that it has been subjected to the most intensive interrogation. Much of the theorising that has been deployed in international relations since the emergence of the discipline as such¹ has taken the notion of sovereignty as a fundamental given.² Many critical thinkers on international relation over the last few years have therefore assumed that a simplistic approach to sovereignty, effectively locking International Relations into a conservative position viz a viz possible reform of the states system, is a hallmark of 'traditional' International Relations theorising.³

However, as some contemporary scholarship has begun to suggest, the picture is rather murkier than this. The very term 'traditional approaches' implies a coherence that does not necessarily exist, an impression that is reinforced by the now common (and increasing) tendency to refer to the various critical approaches that have sprung up in recent years as 'post-positivist',⁴ thus implying at least that the previous 'traditional' International Relations theory was positivist. Again the position is rather more complex.

¹ Effectively after World War I. The first chair in the subject the Woodrow Wilson chair at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth was founded in 1919, shortly followed by other chairs in both the us and the UK. For a brief discussion see Brian Porter's introduction to Brian Porter (ed) *The Aberystwyth Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

² Often cited examples, though one should add the qualifications that I will discuss later might be F.H. Hinsley *Sovereignty* and Alan James *Sovereign Statehood: The basis of international society* (London: Allen and Unwin 1986). One should also not forget the international lawyers, see especially J. L. Brierly *The Law of Nations: An introduction to the international law of peace* (New York: Oxford University Press 6th edition 1963).

³ See for example, Andrew Linklater, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1982. 2nd edition 1990) and R.B.J.Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). I shall return to both Linklater and Walker in the next two chapters.

⁴ If not initiated by it, this notion was given increasing currency by the influential edited collection published in the early 1990's. See Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds) *International Relations Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994). See especially Steve Smith's essay 'Self images of a discipline'.

This chapter will seek to elucidate the position on sovereignty of three of the most influential so-called 'traditional' theories of International Relations, Hans Morgenthau's realism, the international society approach most associated with Martin Wight and Hedley Bull and the structural or neo-realism of Kenneth Waltz. It will do this both to show how traditional International Relations theory was rather more ambiguous about the value of sovereignty than has often been thought but also to show how and why such theories did consider sovereignty to be a central value (as well as fact) in international relations. The purpose of this is in part to set up the discussion of 'post-positivist' and critical theories, which will be the concern of the next two chapters and which, I want to suggest, have been the chief carriers of the devaluing of sovereignty in International Relations theory over the last three decades. If their understanding of traditional theorising is mistaken, it might be the reasons they have for rejecting sovereignty might be problematic as well. However, there is an additional reason, in that some aspects of the traditional account of sovereignty will be, in fact, reasonably hospitable to the account of sovereignty I shall give in chapter four. How it might be possible to link 'traditional accounts' and the more progressive account I shall offer there is something I shall take up again in both chapter four and the conclusion.

The strategy the chapter will follow will be dictated by these aims. I will first look at perhaps the two most generally influential accounts of sovereignty in international relations, that offered by Morgenthau and that offered by the English school. I shall then take up the theme of positivism and say something in general about it before moving on to its impact of (especially) US International Relations theory and finally discuss the position adopted by Kenneth Waltz. I will then round off the chapter with some concluding remarks that will set up the discussion of 'post-positivist theories' I shall undertake in the next two chapters.

Hans Morgenthau: Sovereignty and the national interest

In much of the critical literature, Morgenthau is widely condemned for his uncritical acceptance of sovereignty as the founding principle of international relations, and of his pessimistic, cynical view of human nature and the 'realism that emerges from it. His critics have often have seen his methodology as unreflectively positivist, dedicated to uncovering scientific 'truths' about international politics, have compounded these criticisms.⁵ All of these assessments are very wide of the mark. In the third edition of *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau himself wrote,

I am still being told that I believe in the prominence of the international system based upon the nation state, although the obsolescence of the nation state and the need to merge it into supranational organizations of a functional nature was already one of the main points of the first edition of 1948. I am still being told that I am making success the standard of political action. Even so, as far back as 1955 I refuted that conception of politics with the very same arguments which are being used against me. And, of course, I am still being accused of indifference to the moral problem in spite of abundant evidence, in this book and elsewhere, to the contrary.⁶

Added to these misperceptions, today his more theoretically oriented critics have focused on his alleged positivism, that is his alleged adoption of natural scientific methods to investigate society. This is particularly ironic, as he was one of the most ardent and effective *critics* of positivism at a time when its influence was growing across the American social sciences. Even J. Ann Tickner, one of his more subtle critics cannot resist this line of attack,

⁵ This is especially true in general textbook accounts of international relations or of realism. See, for example, the accounts given in J Docherty and R Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations : A comprehensive survey* 5th edition (London: Longman, 2000)

⁶Hans J. Morgenthau *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* 3rd edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1962), Preface to the Third Edition (unnumbered page)

Using a vocabulary that contains many of the words associated with masculinity, as I have defined it, Morgenthau asserts that it is possible to develop a rational (and unemotional) theory of international politics based on objective laws that have their roots in human nature. Since Morgenthau wrote the first edition of *Politics Among Nations* in 1948, this search for an objective science of international politics, based on the model of the natural sciences, has been an important part of the realist and neo-realist agenda.⁷

The significant phrase here is at the end of the quotation, where she links Morgenthau's work with that of some of his later followers, although Morgenthau was at pains to distance himself from much of their work. And his view of sovereignty was neither as ahistorical nor as central to his approach as critics have suggested. Often, scholars seem to have formed their whole view of Morgenthau from his 'Six Principles of Political Realism', a brief synopsis of his approach prepared for the second and subsequent editions of his textbook, *Politics Among Nations*,⁸ but not present in the first. To gain any appreciation of Morgenthau's views on sovereignty and international relations it is necessary to look at the full range of his writings, many of which were addressed to an audience beyond academic specialists, and engaged with immediate social and political questions he was, as Mitchell Rologas has called him, an 'intellectual in the political sphere'.⁹ This discussion will start with his critique of positivism, which immediately set him against the mainstream in post-war American social science. The next issue is Morgenthau's view of politics, which was derived from the European conservative tradition and clarifies a great deal about his approach to the management of international relations. Finally, I turn to his specific approach to sovereignty, which can only be demystified in the light of his methodological and political positions.

⁷ J. Ann Tickner, 'Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation' *Millennium* 17 (3) 1988 pp 429-440 p. 431-432

⁸ Hans J. Morgenthau *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* 3rd edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1962) pp 4 – 16; compare 1st edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1948)

⁹ See Mitchell Rologas, *Hans Morgenthau: Intellectual in the political sphere* (PhD thesis, St Andrews University 2001).

Morgenthau on Method: criticising positivism

Scott Burchill has expressed the view that Morgenthau was a positivist with unusual vigour: "Morgenthau took up Carr's challenge to create a 'science of international politics' by applying the positivist methodology of the 'hard' or natural sciences to the study of international relations."¹⁰ The problem with this sort of claim is that it is simply false.

In an attack on positivist approaches that would not be out of place in contemporary critical compilations, Morgenthau claimed that,

The new attitude toward foreign policy stems from an intellectual disposition which is deeply imbedded in the American folklore of social action. That disposition shuns elaborate philosophies and consistent theories. It bows to the facts which are supposed to 'tell their own story' and 'not to lie'. It accepts only one test of the truth of a proposition: that it works. It expects the problems of the social world to yield to a series of piecemeal empirical attacks, unencumbered by preconceived notions and comprehensive planning. If a social problem proves obstinate, it must be made to yield to a new empirical attack, armed with more facts more thoroughly understood."¹¹

Morgenthau's chief attack on positivism, published just after his appointment to the Department of Political Science at the University of Chicago in 1943, was *Scientific Man Versus Power Politics*. The book was seen at the time (and has remained) a major critique of the attempt to turn the study of social affairs, politics especially into a science, praised as such by no less a critic than Michael Oakeshott.¹² It is an unambiguous, articulate and passionate indictment of the positivist methodologies

¹⁰ Scott Burchill 'Realism and Neo-Realism' in Scott Burchill and Andrew Linklater (eds) *Theories of International Relations* (London: Macmillan 1996)

¹¹ Hans J. Morgenthau 'The Perils of Empiricism' in *The Restoration of American Politics*, Volume 3 of *Politics in the Twentieth Century*, 3 volumes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1962) p. 110

¹² See Oakeshott's review of the book, reprinted in *Religion, Politics and the Moral Life* (ed Tim Fuller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

that were dominant in that department and growing in dominance across us social science. An anonymous reviewer for the University of Chicago Press, which ultimately published the book, wrote that “I have little doubt that the book will find a publisher. But I should be sorry to see it published by the Chicago University Press. There is no reason why books attacking the attempt to be rational and scientific in politics should not be published, but a university (or its press) does not seem to me an appropriate sponsor for such a book.”¹³

Unlike more recent postmodern writers, Morgenthau does not attack rationalism as such. He tries to contextualise it against influences on human behaviour: “The philosophy of rationalism has misunderstood the nature of man, the nature of the social world, and the nature of reason itself. It does not see that man’s nature has three dimensions: biological, rational, and spiritual. By neglecting the biological impulses and spiritual aspirations of man, it misconstrues the function reason fulfils within the whole of human existence; it distorts the problem of ethics, especially in the political field; and it perverts the natural sciences into an instrument of social salvation for which neither their own nature nor the nature of the social world fits them.”¹⁴

Morgenthau’s starting point is the Aristotelian insight that we are political animals, and it is from here that he constructs a more ‘truly rational’ account of human activity:

To be successful and truly ‘rational’ in social action, knowledge of a different order is needed. This is not the knowledge of single tangible facts but of the eternal laws by which man moves in the social world. There are, aside from the laws of mathematics, no other eternal laws beside these. The Aristotelian truth that man is a political animal is true forever; the truths of the natural

¹³ University of Chicago Press – Manuscript Report Feb 5 1945 Hans J. Morgenthau papers, Library of Congress Box 145

¹⁴ Hans J. Morgenthau *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1965) p. 5

sciences are only true until other truths have supplanted them. The key to these laws of man is not in the facts from whose uniformity the sciences derive their laws. It is in the insight and wisdom by which more-than-scientific man elevates his experiences into the universal laws of human nature. It is he who, by doing so, establishes himself as the representative of true reason, while nothing-but-scientific man appears as the true dogmatist who universalizes cognitive principles of limited validity and applies them to realms not accessible to them. It is also the former who proves himself to be the true realist; for it is he who does justice to the true nature of things.¹⁵

At times, Morgenthau appears as a traditional German idealist, arguing that, "Facts have no social meaning in themselves. It is the significance we attribute to certain facts of our sensual experience, in terms of our hopes and fears, our memories, intentions, and expectations, that create them as social facts. The social world itself, then, is but an artefact of man's mind as the reflection of his thoughts and the creation of his actions."¹⁶ This claim goes further than many of his constructivist critics today. Furthermore, it is difficult to reconcile this claim with the arguments about immutable human nature and the eternal struggle for power in *Politics Among Nations*. No final answer is possible; as many contemporary Morgenthau scholars have pointed out,¹⁷ Morgenthau himself was not always very consistent about how he understood what he was for, methodologically, though he was always fairly clear about what he was against. It is possible that he adopted the rhetoric of 'human nature' in order to define the social world in a way that forced the conclusions that he wanted to draw, forcing rival, idealist conceptions out of discussions of international relations. *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* expressed the difficulty that he had in squaring his political beliefs with his philosophical beliefs. Much of his later writings took the form of

¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 219 – 220

¹⁶ Hans J. Morgenthau 'The Perils of Empiricism' in *The Restoration of American Politics* (Volume 3 of *Politics in the Twentieth Century*) p. 110

¹⁷ See, for example, Rologas, *Hans Morgenthau*, Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986) and Alistair Murray, *Reconsidering Realism* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997).

essays, the best of which meditate on the tragic nature of the choices that confront the statesman and which also reflect aspects of the same ambiguity.¹⁸

Under normal circumstances, methodological eclecticism would not trouble a thinker as powerful and influential as Morgenthau. But at a time when an approach that was repugnant to him was winning over American scholars, he felt compelled to clarify his approach. After *Scientific Man Versus Power Politics* he leaves us with only tantalising hints, but no fully formed theory to resolve the difficulties that his early book implied.

Politics

Clarifying Morgenthau's general political sensibilities is a much easier task. He has a conservative's natural suspicion of utopian claims, and an emphasis on the eternal challenge of exercising prudential judgement. The influence of Weber comes through very strongly in his commentaries on the nature of politics.¹⁹ His admiration for heroic statesmen seems at times almost Nietzschean,²⁰ and he has a keen sense of the tension between thought and action in a complex modern society: "in th[e] inescapable tension between reason and experience, between theoretical and practical knowledge, between the light of political philosophy and the twilight of political action, is indeed the ultimate dilemma of politics."²¹

His study of history has not led him to an unthinkingly reactionary stance, however. Morgenthau not only sees the possibility of change in the international system, he sees its necessity. He argues that, "the territorial frontier has lost its significance for the expansion of equality in freedom, and we have also seen that the moral, political and technological conditions of the age require a principle of political organization

¹⁸ See, for example *Truth and Power: Essays of a Decade* (New York; Knopf, 1970)

¹⁹ This legacy is emphasised in Michael Joseph Smith *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger*

²⁰ Nietzsche unquestionably was enormously influential on the young Morgenthau. This has now been established beyond question by Christoph Frei's *Hans Morgenathau: An intellectual life* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000).

transcending the nation state”.²² Many people have made these claims in the past, and some continue to do so today. What marks Morgenthau’s approach as distinctive is its refusal to imagine that a utopian scheme for world order could be imposed by dictat. Instead, an understanding of the constitution of the current international order is required, from which incremental steps can be promoted.

Morgenthau conveys a sense of righteous anger at the utopian critics who represent the realist position as immoral:

The contest between utopianism and realism is not tantamount to a contest between principle and expediency, morality and immorality, although some spokesmen for the former would like to have it that way. The contest is rather between one type of political morality and another type of political morality, one taking as its standard universal moral principles abstractly formulated, the other weighing those principles against the moral requirements of concrete political action, their relative merits to be decided by a prudent evaluation of the political consequences to which they are likely to lead.²³

Indeed, for Morgenthau, “power politics, rooted in the lust for power which is common to all men is ... inseparable from social life itself.”²⁴ However, Morgenthau’s approach is clearly distinct from that of most international ethicists, as can be seen in his ‘Six Principles of Political Realism’ in later editions of *Politics Among Nations*.

The first of Morgenthau’s ‘Six Principles of Political Realism’ is that, “Political realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws

²¹ Hans J. Morgenthau ‘The Retrieval of Objective Standards: Walter Lippmann’ in *The Restoration of American Politics* (Volume 3 of *Politics in the Twentieth Century*) p. 67

²² Hans J. Morgenthau *The Purpose of American Politics* (New York: Vintage 1960) p. 308

²³ Hans J. Morgenthau ‘The Problem of the National Interest’ in *The Decline of Democratic Politics* (Volume 1 of *Politics in the Twentieth Century*) Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1962 p. 111

²⁴ Hans J. Morgenthau *Scientific Man vs Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1965) p. 9

that have their roots in human nature.”²⁵ Principles three, four and five claim that the power and interest have historically relative meanings, that realism is aware of the moral significance of political action, and that the moral aspirations of a particular nation cannot be universalised. The sixth principle asserts the novelty of the political realist approach, and its autonomy from other spheres of intellectual endeavour. The political realist, “thinks of interest defined as power, as the economist thinks in terms of interest defined as wealth; the lawyer, of the conformity of action with legal rules; the moralist, of the conformity of action with moral principles.”²⁶

Morgenthau’s ideas about the nature of power and interest are central to his ideas about sovereignty, and his ideas about politics and power are derived from his view of human nature . Human nature will frustrate utopian schemes, and our yearning for security will lead us to try to maximise our power. In advanced, complex societies this individual drive is subordinated to the collective will of the nation. Whatever the aspirations of the nation, it will always seek to maximise its power in order to achieve those aspirations.

One can imagine Morgenthau endorsing Churchill’s famous claim that, “democracy is the worst possible form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time”²⁷ in the sense in which it was intended. Democracies can degenerate into mobs, and great statesmen who are aware of the tragic nature of the choices that they make are needed to lead them, but they do act as a check upon unrestrained power. Moreover, Morgenthau’s later writings are imbued with an American patriotism that never seems forced or false; his belief in American institutions seems real. Indeed, his separation of international relations from domestic politics could perhaps be seen as a normative claim about the separation of powers, rather than the more obvious claim that international relations is conceptually distinct. If only lawyers, economists, politicians and statesmen respected the division of authority between them, then none would become too powerful. Although this is

²⁵ Hans J. Morgenthau *Politics Among Nations*. 4

²⁶ *ibid.* p. 11

²⁷ Hansard 11 Nov 1947 col. 206

not the most obvious textual interpretation, it does seem most in keeping with Morgenthau's own perspective and experience. This leads us to his approach to sovereignty, which can be understood only in the context of these wider methodological and political concerns.

A Realistic Approach to Sovereignty: The National Interest

Morgenthau had remarkably little to say directly about sovereignty, and what he did say was remarkably conventional. However, if we look beyond his direct discussion of the topic, it is possible to identify many of the concerns that are bound up with the contemporary discussion of sovereignty expressed by Morgenthau in the concept of the national interest.

In Part VI of *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau approaches the concept of sovereignty directly. It was, he claims, established in the latter part of the sixteenth century as "supreme power over a certain territory."²⁸ He goes on to discuss the freedoms that are widely, though erroneously thought to be attached to sovereignty, cataloguing freedom from legal restraint, freedom from regulation by international law, equality of rights and obligations, and actual political, military, economic, or technological independence.²⁹ In discussing the indivisibility of sovereignty and criticising approaches to sovereignty that were popular at the time, he implies that he is saying something new and distinctive. However, there is nothing in this section that has not been said before, and it is derived from a Weberian tradition that was familiar in America in 1948, when he first published *Politics Among Nations*.

However, this does not mean that Morgenthau had nothing of interest to say about sovereignty. Rather, it must be teased out of his writings on other questions. His second 'Principle of Political Realism' is that "The main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of

²⁸ Hans J. Morgenthau *Politics Among Nations* p. 312

²⁹ *ibid.* pp 317 – 318

interest defined in terms of power.”³⁰ In international politics, the power and interest is national. The often contradictory and confusing ways in which he develops these ideas throughout his writings provide the key to his approach to sovereignty.

The concept of the national interest allows Morgenthau to develop an approach to history that is far more sophisticated than his critics allege. Although many writers have implied that state sovereignty is a permanent form of rule that never changes in its most essential elements, Morgenthau uses the concept of the national interest rather than the nation-state. The argument here is that humans are social creatures, and they will make collective arrangements for rule and administration. However, since human nature does not change across history, these collectivities, or nations, will always have an interest in maximising their power over other nations. This approach allows for considerable variation in the concrete forms that these nations take across history, but asserts that they will always be subject to the unchanging character of human nature. This seems to be his most basic argument, and stated in this form seems to be strongest. His case is undermined when he goes beyond this minimalist claim to attribute greater uniformity to society and politics across history.

On the one hand Morgenthau presents the national interest in a historicist form, claiming that, “The relative permanency of what one might call the hard core of the national interest stems from three factors: the nature of the interests to be protected, the political environment within which the interests operate, and the rational necessities which limits the policy.”³¹ Since so much of his argument hinges on the eternal necessity to defend the national interest, it is surprising that he refers here only to relative permanency. Even more damning is the loose definition of the core. It tells us precisely nothing unless we know about the contingent factors that make up the national interest.

³⁰ *ibid.* p. 5

³¹ Hans J. Morgenthau ‘The Problem of the National Interest’ in *The Decline of Democratic Politics* (Volume 1 of *Politics in the Twentieth Century*) Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1962 p. 91

On the other hand, having established the permanency of the national interest, he goes further in claiming that the tools that can be used to achieve these interests are the same across history. "Faced with the necessity to protect the hard core of the national interest, that is, to preserve the identity of the nation, all governments have resorted throughout history to certain basic policies, such as competitive armaments, the balance of power, alliances, and subversion, intended to make of the abstract concept of the national interest a viable political reality."³² By this stage he has gone well beyond a minimal argument about the primacy of survival for social organisations, and his point loses some of its strength when he extrapolates too far from it.

However, at other times he is remarkably sensitive to historical specificity. For example in 1957 he claimed that, "Nationalism has had its day. It was the political principle appropriate to the post-feudal and pre-atomic age. For the technology of the steam engine, it was indeed in good measure a force for progress. In the atomic age, it must make way for a political principle of larger dimensions, in tune with the world-wide configurations of interest and power of the age."³³

Although he was a keen advocate of new international arrangements for the atomic age, Morgenthau was sceptical of the claims put forward about the new international institutions that were developing. He claimed that "The United Nations has become an instrument for the pursuit of national interests which a nation has in common with many others."³⁴ This does not suggest hostility towards international institutions per se. Rather than claiming that they are at best useless, he proposes that there are some things that all states have an interest in that can be fruitfully pursued collectively. This may even be seen as an anticipation of regime theory.³⁵

³² *ibid.* p. 91

³³ Hans J. Morgenthau, 'Nationalism' in *The Decline of Democratic Politics* (Volume 1 of *Politics in the Twentieth Century*) Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1962 p. 195

³⁴ Hans J. Morgenthau 'The Yardstick of the National Interest' in *The Impasse of American Foreign Policy* (Volume 2 of *Politics in the Twentieth Century*) Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1962 p. 125

³⁵ See Stephen D. Krasner (ed) *International Regimes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1983)

A final observation to be made about Morgenthau's concept of the national interest is that it is not amoral, as is sometimes alleged. He argues that, "The choice is not between moral principles and the national interest, devoid of moral dignity, but between one set of moral principles divorced from political reality, and another set of moral principles derived from political reality." Morgenthau is at his most biting when he polemicises against his moralising critics, suggesting that "The moralistic detractors of the national interest are guilty of both intellectual error and moral perversion."³⁶ The defence of the nation is an honourable thing, and in a brutal world it is the best hope for human advancement.

Indeed, there is a whole other side to Morgenthau's thinking on sovereignty. While the writings most frequently cited by international relations specialists concentrate on the national interest, he also addresses the concerns of those still struggling for the recognition of their nationality. One of his most provocative essays, 'Nationalism', makes the claim that "The idea of nationalism, both in its historic origins and in the political functions it has performed, is intimately connected with the idea of freedom and shares the latter's ambiguity. Nationalism as a political phenomenon must be understood as the aspiration for two freedoms, on collective, the other individual: the freedom of a nation from domination by another nation and the freedom of the individual to join the nation of his choice."³⁷ He explains that, "The political and legal principles originally formulated to support and guarantee the freedom of the individual, were applied to the nation. The nation came to be regarded as a kind of collective personality with peculiar characteristics and inalienable rights of its own; and the typically liberal antithesis between individual freedom and feudalistic oppression was transferred to the nation where it was duplicated in the hostility between the national aspirations and the feudal state. The nation should be free from oppression both from within and from without."³⁸ Morgenthau concludes from this that, "the principle of national self-determination fulfils the postulates of both

³⁶ Hans J. Morgenthau *American Foreign Policy: A Critical Examination* (London: Methuen 1952) p. 33

³⁷ Hans J. Morgenthau, 'Nationalism' in *The Decline of Democratic Politics* (Volume 1 of *Politics in the Twentieth Century*) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1962) p. 181

democracy and nationalism.”³⁹ His counter to this is that these aspirations did not reflect political reality. For Morgenthau, World War I and its aftermath revealed “the insufficient, self-contradictory, and self-defeating nature of nationalism as the exclusive principle of international order and justice and its inevitable subordination in fact, and requisite subordination in theory, to an overriding political system.”⁴⁰ He saw that atomic war removed the protective function of state. Furthermore, nationalism has been transformed into a universalist and expansionist ideology. “Not only do the interests of the state now take precedence over the will of the people, but the people themselves – their life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness – count for nothing if they appear to stand in the way of the interests of the state. No longer are national minorities to be protected against the state; it is now the state which must be protected against the minorities.”⁴¹

The main point to be made is that Morgenthau is not as committed to a conventional legal idea of state sovereignty as his critics sometimes imply. He is concerned above all with the national interest, which he considers to be both the organising principle of international relations in fact, and the best guarantee against arbitrary rule. In other words his commitment to sovereignty is instrumental rather than, as was the case in much nineteenth and twentieth century international law, for instance, juristic.⁴² Within this context he is ready to see some scope for ethical criticism and future aspirations, but they must be understood and promoted within the context of competing national interests.

The English School: sovereignty and order international society

In Britain, perhaps the most original account of international relations that emerged in the immediate post war period was that known (now) as the ‘English School’ on

³⁸ *ibid.* p. 182

³⁹ *ibid.* p. 181-182

⁴⁰ *ibid.* p. 184

⁴¹ *ibid.* p. 193

international relations. There is considerable debate about its exact provenance, who was 'in' and who 'out' and what its exact scope was,⁴³ but there is general agreement that the two most influential scholars in the school, at least to begin with were Martin Wight and Hedley Bull. The school especially emphasised the notion of 'international society' and has remained influential. A number of critical scholars take a good deal from it,⁴⁴ some younger scholars seek to radicalise aspects of its agenda,⁴⁵ and perhaps most recently of all, the more formal aspects of its history have been deliberately revived by Barry Buzan and Richard Little.⁴⁶

Sovereignty has been a more important concept for defining the English School's approach to international relations than for classical realists such as Morgenthau. For example, Alan James has seen sovereignty as qualification for membership of international society. Whilst acknowledging that there is some force to the argument that other actors have gained influence in international relations he notes that there is never any doubt where one stands – all the world is controlled by sovereign states. He writes that "If political communities are to have regular and orderly dealing with each other it is necessary that the extent of their competence is clear and accepted by all concerned."⁴⁷

The difference between classical realism and the English School is emphasised in a recent treatment of sovereignty in the classical vein, by Stephen Krasner. He writes that, "The starting point for this study, the ontological givens, are rulers, specific policy makers, usually but not always the executive head of state. Rulers, not states –

⁴² For a brilliant discussion of Morgenthau's relationship to the nineteenth and twentieth century international lawyers see Marti Koskineemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The rise and fall of international law* (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 2000) ch 6.

⁴³ For discussions see Tim Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A history of the English School* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

⁴⁴ Andrew Linklater is perhaps the most obvious here. He is currently writing a book linking the English School and critical international theory with his former Keele colleague Hidemi Suganami.

⁴⁵ Most obviously perhaps Tim Dunne and Nick Wheeler. See especially Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian intervention and international society* (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 2000), to which I shall return in chapter 6.

⁴⁶ Following their publication of Barry Buzan and Richard Little *International Systems in World History: Remaking the study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000)

and not the international system – make choices about polices, rules and institutions.”⁴⁸ Krasner describes four uses of the term sovereignty – domestic sovereignty, interdependence sovereignty, international legal sovereignty and Westphalian sovereignty. These principals have been enduring, but in the absence of an overarching authority to enforce them, they have been violated systematically. He therefore describes sovereignty as ‘Organized Hypocrisy’.

The main claim associated with the English School is that there is an international society that exists to maintain global order despite the absence of rigid, hierarchical institutions associated with internal order. International society is defined by Hedley Bull and Adam Watson as “a group of states (or, more generally, a group of independent political communities) which not merely form a system, in the sense that the behaviour of each is a necessary factor in the calculations of others, but also have established by dialogue and consent common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations, and recognize their common interest in maintaining these arrangements.”⁴⁹ Bull further defines international order as “a pattern of human activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states, or international society.”⁵⁰

Bull adopts a conventional distinction between internal and external sovereignty, “On the one hand, states assert, in relations to ... territory and population, what may be called internal sovereignty, which means supremacy over all other authorities within that territory and population. On the other hand, they assert what may be called external sovereignty, by which is meant not supremacy but independence of outside authority.”⁵¹ He goes on to explain that these two senses of sovereignty exist both

⁴⁷ Alan James *Sovereign Statehood: The basis of international society* (London: Allen and Unwin 1986) p. 267

⁴⁸ Stephen D. Krasner *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1999) p. 7

⁴⁹ Hedley Bull and Adam Watson ‘Introduction’ in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds) *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon 1985) p. 1

⁵⁰ Hedley Bull *The Anarchical Society* (Columbia: University of Columbia Press 1979) p. 8

⁵¹ *ibid.* p. 8

normatively and factually. They both assert and exercise supremacy and independence to varying degrees.

In explaining the existence of international order Bull has to go beyond conventional laws, which only exist in a tenuous sense in international relations; "Order, it is contended here, does depend for its maintenance upon rules, and in the modern international system (by contrast with some other international systems) a major role in the maintenance of order has been played by those rules which have the status of international law. But to account for the existence of international order we have to acknowledge the place of rules that do not have the status of law."⁵² More recent constructivists, who will be discussed in chapter 2, have developed this insight further. Bull's claim that, "agents and spectators are not distinct classes. All agents are partly spectators (of the other agents) and all policy presupposes some theory. And all spectators (above all in politically free societies) are frustrated agents" comes further still towards a constructivist approach.⁵³ The earlier scholars associated with the English School used this claim to establish that there is a kind of international club where the recognition of tacit rules and conventions is essential to the orderly conduct of business. Thus, "A society of states (or international society) exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions."⁵⁴ Bull identifies the common goals of the contemporary international system as the preservation of the system itself, the maintenance of the independence of the individual states themselves, upholding peace, limitation of violence and preservation of property.

The English School, or international society approach, has become associated with radical, or at least critical scholarship in International Relations. However, the group

⁵² Hedley Bull *The Anarchical Society* p. xiii-xiv

⁵³ Martin Wight, 'The Balance of Power' in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (eds) *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press 1968) p. 150

of scholars associated with the original English School were rather more conservative than their latter-day allies assume. Their constant preoccupation was with order, which has always been held up against demands for change. The background to this concern is perhaps the potential upheaval caused by the transformation of the society of states from a small and select club to a much larger association including states which were achieving independence from European colonial empires. Hedley Bull rather disingenuously writes that The Anarchical Society does not assume that order is a desirable or overriding goal, as if his selection of subject matter was quite independent of his political ideals.⁵⁵ He does claim that order is not necessarily overriding, but his example is of “the preoccupation of the poor and non-industrial states with historical change”.⁵⁶ It is surely significant that he adds the rider just to the demand for change, implying that just means must be used to achieve change. And how are we to understand just means? Surely, by their being compatible with order.

The latent conservatism of the English School is sometimes made explicit; “Demands for world justice are ... demands for the transformation of the system and society of states, and are inherently revolutionary. World justice may ultimately be reconcilable with world order, in the sense that we may have a vision of a world or cosmopolitan society that provides for both. But to pursue the idea of world justice in the context of the system and society of states is to enter into conflict with the devices through which order is at present maintained.”⁵⁷ And, further, “international order is preserved by means which systematically affront the most basic and widely agreed principles of international justice... the institutions and mechanisms which sustain international order, even when they are working properly, indeed especially when they are working properly, or fulfilling their functions ... necessarily violate ordinary notions of justice.”⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Hedley Bull *The Anarchical Society* p. 13

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. xii

⁵⁶ *ibid.* p. xii

⁵⁷ *ibid.* p. 88

Another quotation serves to demonstrate the difficulty that Bull finds himself in when trying to reconcile justice and order in international society,

International order, or order within the society of states, is the condition of justice or equality among states or nations; except in a context of international order there can be no such thing as the equal rights of states to independence or of nations to govern themselves. World order, or order in the great society of all mankind, is similarly the condition of realisation of goals of human or of cosmopolitan justice; if there is not a certain minimum of security against violence, respect for undertakings and stability of rules of property, goals of political, social and economic justice for individual men or of a just distribution of burdens and regards in relation to the world common good can have no meaning.⁵⁹

Again, with the English School, as with Morgenthau, sovereignty is central, but largely instrumental. It is just that international society requires sovereignty, and international society is the grounding of international order.

Positivism and American social science: a 'heretical hegemony'⁶⁰?

Both Morgenthau and the English school were, quite clearly, critical of 'positivism' but up to now we have said little directly about this much abused term. Thus, before we move on to more recently dominant forms of International Relations theory and see how they have treated sovereignty, we need to say something about that which critical approaches are supposed to be 'post-'.

Perhaps the best place to start to unravel the meaning of positivist international relations is Robert Keohane's presidential address to the American International

⁵⁸ *ibid.* p. 91

⁵⁹ Hedley Bull *The Anarchical Society* p. 97

⁶⁰ This phrase is Alastair Murray's (he is talking especially about neo-realism). See *Reconsidering Realism*, Introduction.

Studies Association in 1988, which did a great deal to define the parameters of the current debate, at least in the US.⁶¹ In his address, Keohane contrasts the dominant rationalist approach that characterises realist and neo-realist theory with newer, critical approaches that he terms reflectivist. Although Keohane's sympathies are perhaps with realism and rationalism, his address is concerned to emphasise the achievements of reflectivism. Partly because of their dominance in the field, rationalists have developed a clear research agenda, carried out good empirical and historical studies and their approach has the virtue of simplicity. However, he concludes that, "rationalistic theories seem only to deal with one dimension of multidimensional reality: they are incomplete, since they ignore changes taking place in consciousness. They do not enable us to understand how interests change as a result of changes in belief systems. They obscure rather than illuminate the sources of states' policy preferences".⁶² Counterposed to this tradition is the reflectivist approach. Reflectivists seek to understand the historical, cultural and institutional contexts in which supposedly rational choices are made. This approach 'stresses the role of impersonal social forces as well as the impact of cultural practices, norms and values that are not derived from calculations of interests'.⁶³ Keohane suggests that this is a more sophisticated approach which can potentially account for the lacunae in rationalist theory – its failure to adequately explain the circumstances under which international institutions will develop, how successful they will be, and why they sometimes demise. In his conclusion, Keohane argues for the importance of synthesising the sophisticated theoretical approach of the reflectivists with the concrete empirical research programme of the rationalists.

Keohane's address is important for a number of reasons. First and foremost it is significant that such a prestigious address should discuss the reflectivist agenda, forcing rationalist scholars to take it seriously. Second, Keohane expresses some sympathy towards the reflectivists, who he welcomes for introducing new and

⁶¹ 'International Institutions: Two Approaches' in James Der Derian (ed.) *International Theory: Critical Investigations* (New York: New York University Press 1995)

⁶² Keohane, *Two Approaches* p. 298

⁶³ *ibid*, p. 282 - 283

exciting ideas, but he wants to adopt these ideas to revitalise the rationalist approach rather than point the whole discipline in a new direction. The challenge that he sets the reflectivists is to establish an empirical, testable research agenda in exactly the way that the rationalists have. There are two points to be drawn out of this. First, this approach is symptomatic of the bias that still exists towards narrowly defined 'useful' theory – implicitly, theory that deals with the concerns of statesmen. Secondly, and more interestingly for our purposes, Keohane's address suggests a grudging realisation of the limits of the rationalist agenda, which has become moribund in the face of its more exciting rivals. Keohane finds that the rationalist agenda imposes unacceptable restraints on our ability to know the world, while the reflectivists impose unacceptable restraints on our ability to test our knowledge of the world. He therefore occupies an uncomfortable middle ground trying to carry out research with an ultimately untenable compromise between two contradictory positions. So what is the rationalist agenda? Many have taken it to be positivism, and although I have tried to show that there is more to traditional approaches than positivism, this is a good starting point.

The methodological basis for the new positivism in International Relations was provided by the rump of the Vienna Circle in the 1950s, in particular by Carnap, Hempel and Popper. They moved away from the narrowness of earlier positivist philosophy, and saw their role as providing a methodology for misguided social scientists rather than deconstructing philosophy as Wittgenstein had tried to do. Steve Smith suggests that the most influential variant was Hempel's deductive-nomological approach, which argues that events are explained by general laws which are deduced by firstly postulating a general law, then specifying its precondition, and then deducing the explanation of the observed event on the basis of the general law and its antecedent conditions. However, Smith argues that its features "have become somewhat detached from their philosophical roots as they have taken hold in international relations."⁶⁴ A useful summary is given by Mark Neufeld, who has

⁶⁴ Steve Smith *Positivism and Beyond in International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* ed. Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996) p. 15

identified three key methodological characteristics of positivism: “(i) truth as correspondence; (ii) the methodological unity of science; and (iii) the value-free nature of social science. These three tenets rest, in turn, upon three basic assumptions: (i) the separation of subject and object; (ii) naturalism; and (iii) the separation of fact and value.”⁶⁵ The strong version of positivism has not been highly influential in mainstream International Relations, but my argument is that even the weaker versions of positivism have been rejected by some of the most important traditional theorists, as we saw above. Kenneth Waltz, of course has usually been seen as a central figure in positivist International Relations – although it only fair to say that he has rejected the label. So before we turn to Waltz let me just briefly examine an unambiguously positivist International Relations theory, in the sense of being self-affirmed (although with an admixture of other traditions). This is the theory developed by Morton Kaplan.

In *System and Process in International Politics*, he makes a powerful and nuanced case for a game theory approach to international relations. Kaplan introduces the 1964 edition of his book by distancing himself from positivism:

The proponents of scientific positivism saw me as an important cohort. Their antagonists saw me as the enemy incarnate. Few paid attention to what I actually said, to the fact that my philosophy was grounded in American pragmatism rather than in European positivism, that my approach to theory was comparative and empirical rather than general and abstract (for most of those who called themselves comparative theorists also thought of themselves as general theorists) or paid much attention to Part III of *System and Process* and the Appendices, where, in the pragmatist tradition, I outlined a scientific approach to values.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Mark Neufeld *The Restructuring of International Relations Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995) p.38

⁶⁶ (New York: Robert E Krieger 1975). 2nd (unnumbered) page of introduction

We need to take Kaplan's self-description seriously, as from the discussion of positivism above it is clear that the European positivist tradition covers a range of possible positions, but at least in its early stages it avoided the kind of analysis that Kaplan wants to engage in. Although his work can be located in the post-war positivist tradition in the social sciences more easily than in the American pragmatism of James, Dewey and Peirce,⁶⁷ both traditions are present in his work. There is a tendency in post-positivism to characterise anything that they dislike as positivist, without considering the other traditions that they encompass. That Kaplan is self-consciously locating himself within the pragmatist tradition is testament to the sophistication with which he argues for a behaviouralist approach.

Kaplan is well aware that there is a rich historical context to International Relations, but he argues that we must necessarily restrict our analysis to generalisations about a small number of variables, and that "we require models to test the generalizations we must employ at the level of international systems. There is no alternative – no other method to state or to analyze these generalizations."⁶⁸ This is at once a modest and an ambitious project. On the one hand, Kaplan restricts the ambition of the theorist to identifying and understanding a small range of actions in the international system. On the other hand, however, he believes that we can create sophisticated models on the basis of these generalisations that can provide us with a scientific understanding of the operation of the international system.

This claim is the basis of the behaviouralist approach that came to dominate American research on International Relations in the 1950s and maintains a powerful hold today. This form of positivist analysis created a greater division within the discipline than had been apparent before, and was the basis for the contemporary approaches that are explicitly anti-positivist. In the 1960s the classical theorists in international relations, most especially certain members of the English School,

⁶⁷ For a very good discussion of pragmatism see James T Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: European social democracy and progressivism in American thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988)

engaged directly with the behaviouralists, and in doing so were forced to consider the basis of their own positions. The attack from the English School is the most interesting, as they were furthest from the positivist tradition, emphasising instead a more nuanced grasp of the contributions made by other disciplines to our understanding of international affairs.

The opening salvo in this attack on behaviourism was made in Hedley Bull's influential article in *World Politics* in 1966, 'International Theory: The Case for a Classical Approach.'⁶⁹ In this essay Bull advocates

the approach to theorizing that derives from philosophy, history, and law, and that is characterized above all by explicit reliance upon the exercise of judgement and by the assumptions that if we confine ourselves to strict standards of verification and proof there is very little of significance that can be said about international relations, that general propositions about this subject must therefore derive from a scientifically imperfect process of perception and intuition, and that these general propositions cannot be accorded anything more than the tentative and inconclusive status appropriate to their doubtful origin.⁷⁰

As if this was not sufficiently direct, Bull goes on to savage the behaviouralists' work as "in some cases distorted and impoverished by a fetish for measurement"⁷¹ which Bull believes is an absurd and impossible way to approach the complexities of human society. Kaplan's response to Bull is equally withering, and written from the perspective of one who is winning the war. He argues that the traditionalists' "view philosophy as elegant but undisciplined speculation – speculation devoid of serious substantive or methodological concerns. Thus traditionalists repeat the same refrain

⁶⁸ Morton A. Kaplan 'Problems of Theory Building and Theory Confirmation in International Politics' in Klaus Knorr and Sidney Verba (eds) *The International System: Theoretical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1969) p. 9

⁶⁹ Reproduced in Klaus Knorr and James Rosenau (eds.) *Contending Approaches to International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1969)

⁷⁰ *ibid.* p. 20

like a gramophone endlessly playing a single record; that refrain is beautifully orchestrated, wittily produced, and sensitive only to the wear of the needle in the groove".⁷² This rhetorical reposit was perhaps unnecessary, as the positivist approach was securely established in America and the methodological eclecticism of the English School won few converts across the Atlantic⁷³.

Positivism was secure for a generation. The English School declined to the point at which the case was made for closure,⁷⁴ and it was only with the thawing of the Cold War that post-positivists identified themselves as a coherent, if eclectic, group in conscious opposition to positivist methodologies.

Kenneth Waltz and the logic of anarchy: sovereignty ignored

Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* has had an immense impact on International Relations since its publication in 1979. Waltz's realism is consistent with the move to more scientific and objective methods that had become dominant in American social science at that time, even though his version of it is very different (and explicitly critical of) those like Kaplan's. The book quickly became established as a reference point for these debates and inspired a generation of scholars to adopt Waltz's research programme. Like Morgenthau, Waltz has little to say directly about sovereignty. His focus is on the way that the international system is constituted by the balance between the great powers. Other sovereign states position themselves in relation to the great powers, choosing to balance by joining the lesser power, or bandwagoning with the hegemon, or joining the revolutionary power. However, unlike Morgenthau, because of the emphasis on the structure of the system and the downgrading, as a result, of nations of agency, sovereignty simply becomes a given of the system, and not a value either instrumentally or intrinsically important. Again,

⁷¹ *ibid*, p. 33

⁷² Morton A. Kaplan *The New Great Debate: Traditionalism vs. Science in International Relations* in Knorr and Rosenau (eds) *The International System* p. 61

⁷³ Though there are signs that this is now no longer true. 2003 saw the establishment of an 'English School' section in the US International Studies Association.

this section will begin with a consideration of Waltz's methodology, before considering his approach to sovereignty.

Waltz's 'Positivism'

From the publication of his first book, *Man, the State and War*⁷⁵ in 1959, Waltz sought to distinguish his approach from the classical realism associated most with Morgenthau. He wrote that "The attempt to derive a philosophy of politics from an assumed nature of man leads one to a concern with the role of ethics in statecraft without providing criteria for distinguishing ethical from unethical behavior."⁷⁶ Already, we see his concern for theoretical rigour.

One of Waltz's major concerns was to establish International Relations as a credible and independent academic discipline, separate from Political Science. This, he argues, is necessary for the construction of international theory: "first, one must conceive of international politics as a bounded realm or domain; second, one must discover some law-like regularities within it; and third, one must develop a way of explaining the observed regularities."⁷⁷

Waltz sharply divides national and international politics, "National politics is the realm of authority, of administration, and of law. International politics is the realm of power, of struggle, and of accommodation."⁷⁸ Indeed, it seems that he cannot conceive of international theory except as an absolutely distinct realm: "To be a success, such a theory has to show how international politics can be conceived of as a domain distinct from the economic, social, and other international domains that one may conceive of."⁷⁹ He then continues by framing the problem around his own

⁷⁴ Roy E. Jones, The English school of international relations: a case for closure *Review of International Studies* (Vol 7 No 1 pp 1 – 13 1981)

⁷⁵ Kenneth N. Waltz *Man, the State and War: A theoretical analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press 1959)

⁷⁶ *ibid.* p. 37

⁷⁷ Kenneth N. Waltz *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill 1979) p. 116

⁷⁸ *ibid.* p. 113

⁷⁹ *ibid.* p. 79

solution: "To mark international-political systems off from other international systems, and to distinguish systems-level from unit-level forces, requires showing how political structures are generated and how they affect, and are affected by, the units of the system."⁸⁰

Waltz is trying to construct an explanatory theory of international politics. It aims, "to say why the range of expected outcomes falls within certain limits; to say why patterns of behavior recur; to say why events repeat themselves, including events that none or few of the actors may like. The structure of a system acts as a constraining and disposing force, and because it does so systems theories explain and predict continuity within a system. A systems theory shows why changes at the unit level produce less change of outcomes than one would expect in the absence of systemic constraints. A theory of international politics can tell us some things about expected international-political outcomes, about the resilience systems may show in response to the unpredictable acts of a varied set of state, and about the expected effects of systems on states."⁸¹

Sovereignty

Waltz's approach to sovereignty is determined by the demands of his structural account of international politics, which requires that sovereign states be seen as like units performing the same functions, competing for power in an anarchical world. The impoverishment of realist theory from Morgenthau to Waltz is apparent. Waltz shows little interest in the formation of states, the nature of political community, or the significance of the nation. Instead, states are assumed as actors, and the international system is characterised by their interaction – in particular, the actions of major states. While Morgenthau gives his readers a sense of the dilemmas that he faces himself, the difficulties that he encounters, and the wealth of sources that he

⁸⁰ *ibid.* p. 79

⁸¹ *ibid.* p. 69

tries to assimilate, Waltz conveys a certainty that he has discovered the laws of motion that govern the international system.

For Waltz, therefore, sovereignty is dealt with very briefly, in an almost dismissive manner. As noted in the introduction, Waltz claims that “To say that states are sovereign is not to say that they can do as they please, that they are free of others’ influence, that they are able to get what they want. ... To say that a state is sovereign means that it decides for itself how it will cope with its internal and external problems.”⁸² But where Morgenthau sees a range of factors explaining the organisation of international politics around the concept of the national interest, Waltz reduces it to the international system. If only the system is understood, then we will understand international relations. He writes that “National politics consists of differentiated units performing specified functions. International politics consists of like units duplicating one another’s activities.”⁸³ But only some of these units are important for understanding international relations. Once we understand the actions of the great powers, then the little powers only have the choice between bandwaggoning and balancing; they can either join one of the great powers or with the great powers’ enemies.

Waltz leads realism away from its classical roots by introducing the toolkit of modern social science. Such an approach could only triumph to the extent that it has in the context of a depoliticised atmosphere where most theorists and practitioners shared exactly the same prejudices about the larger context of international affairs. And it is for this reason that the critical approaches that have largely shaped contemporary debates about sovereignty in International Relations emerged largely as an explicit reaction to Waltzian neo-realism. And this, of course, in part accounts (as we shall see) for the tendency to read all ‘traditional’ approaches through the lens of that encounter.

⁸² *ibid.* p. 96

⁸³ *ibid.* p. 97

Conclusion

Three points arise out of this chapter. The first is the sheer diversity of traditional approaches. Whereas Waltz develops a social-scientific approach specific to international relations – and in this is followed at least in part by Krasner - Morgenthau drew on a wide range of material to produce a more nuanced theory that was not positivist. The second point is that traditional approaches are not universally guilty of the charge of ‘amorality’ that their critics level at them. Morgenthau, in particular, was keenly concerned with ethical questions. The third point is that although the idea of sovereignty is of great interest to critical writers today, it was not as central to traditional theorists as they imply. Morgenthau discusses the national interest, while Waltz is interested in the balance between great powers. Sovereignty is not the main analytical category for either writer. As the next chapter will go on to show, many critics today lack this sensitivity. This is important, as it suggests that the claim that the critique of sovereignty is a reaction to the direction of previous work in International Relations is not the whole story.

The approaches discussed in this chapter, together with the work of many other scholars, has been widely criticised by critical scholars for employing a positivist methodology that seeks to apply the methods of the natural sciences onto human society. The focus of this chapter has been to explain rather than criticise, but two general criticisms that have been made of positivist approaches should be mentioned. The first is that the data for human society is inadequate. Since society is dynamic, it cannot stop for measurements to be taken. Furthermore, the measurements that do exist are often unreliable, or hard to compare. A classic example of this problem is the scientific study of the causes of war. There exist widely different definitions of what should count as war, and huge discrepancies in the historical data over issues such as casualty rates.⁸⁴ A second, and more fundamental, criticism, is that human society must necessarily frustrate attempts to study it scientifically because it has a

⁸⁴ See Bryan C. Schmidt *The Political Discourse of Anarchy: A Disciplinary History of International Relations* (New York: SUNY Press 1998)

fundamentally different logic from the natural world. There are many different varieties of this argument, but an influential variation claims that humans consciously act upon the data that are produced about their behaviour.

These inform many of the approaches discussed in the next two chapters, which take the story of sovereignty forward to the contemporary critics of traditional approaches, focusing on critical theorists, poststructuralists, feminists and constructivists.

2 New Approaches: Constructivism, Poststructuralism and the Challenge to Positivism

The traditional theories of International Relations discussed in Chapter 1 focus on statesmen and their desire for order. They were aimed at describing and often, not always explicitly, limiting the formulation and execution of foreign policy to a small élite entrusted with identifying and pursuing the national interest. The contrast between these approaches and their modern critics shows a great divergence between high and low politics, and between the rhetoric of elites and peoples. Against the national interest, critics flag up universal human interests. Against the anti-democratic elitism of the realists, they call for popular participation in global politics and for the development of a more cosmopolitan sensibility. However, the next two chapters suggest that the kind of participation that is advocated and the changes that are called for, are an impoverishment of the democratic content of the right to national self-determination that was identified in the introduction. The reason that is identified for this is that the 'self' that is described by the social theories that the critics draw upon is a much reduced version of the active, subjective force that is called for by earlier approaches.

Compared to the empirical bias of traditional theories, the modern critics are conspicuously speculative. In place of the emphasis on power politics, nation-states and empirical research, there has been a proliferation of critical methodologies from postmodernism to constructivism and an expansion of the disciplinary imagination to encompass political economy, the study of non-governmental organisations, the promotion of human rights, the development of ethics, and feminist concerns about inter-personal relations and role of children. While they differ about a good deal, these approaches have been termed 'post-positivist' theories, emphasising a common hostility to 'scientific' or 'rationalist' temper of much contemporary political science and International Relations. There are different brands of post-positivism that will be discussed in the next two chapters, but they share a number of common features. They reject the idea that scholars can step outside of the societies that they are

studying and leave behind their prejudices and preferences to engage in objective research. As a corollary to this, post-positivist scholars tend to have an explicit normative agenda, constructing their research around an investigation into the possibilities for new kinds of international politics to emerge. However, in an important contrast with earlier critical approaches to politics post-positive theorists eschew the idea of basing their thought on an active and self-conscious human subject.

The debate between positivism and post-positivism has been posed as a vital contest over politics as well as method. It is claimed that it goes to the very heart of contemporary International Relations, raising fundamental theoretical and methodological issues, as well as forcing the discipline to confront its own history and question its purpose. It has been described as the third of the 'great debates' which have forged International Relations as a distinct area of academic study, following on from the debates between the realists and idealists, and between the classical theorists and the behavioralists.¹ For a 'great debate', however, there is remarkably little engagement between the two approaches, which continue to engage in parallel research programmes without getting involved in the meta-theoretical disputes that we are told are so important. It is notable that the writers who are opposed to positivism choose to describe themselves as 'post-' rather than 'anti-' positivist, implying that they are building on the ruins of an approach that is already discredited. In spite of this confidence, they work in a discipline where scholars pursuing a positivist agenda still represent a significant, if not dominant, force.

However, if the claims made for post-positivism really were wholly vacuous, there would be no need to engage with it (the course adopted by many of its intellectual opponents). In order to establish the importance of this debate, we need to look beyond the issues that the protagonists have identified as important to show the direction that the debate points towards.

¹ See Yosef Lapid, 'The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era' *International Studies Quarterly* (Vol 33 No 3 1989 pp 235 – 254)

The term 'post-positivist' is an almost accidental epithet, which unites a range of conflicting perspectives against a putative 'positivist' enemy. As discussed in the introductory chapter, the term 'positivist' has always been problematic, and in International Relations its meaning stretches from a narrow description of American behaviouralism to a definition which encompasses all rationalist theories.² The former meaning is used by more conservative post-positivists who reject the extremes of number-crunching positivism, but are not prepared to concede too much ground to the anti-foundationalism of the postmoderns. It is also adopted by some positivists who argue that there has been a long-standing prejudice against positivism, at least in Britain.³ The latter meaning is used by writers who want to challenge what they see as the enlightenment project more broadly. The danger here is that they use this as a rhetorical point by associating sophisticated rationalist theory with mindlessly instrumental behaviouralism. Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, for example, quote Condorcet, the most extreme Panglossian of the enlightenment writers, and note that "writing in the spirit of the enlightenment [he] proposes to apply the methods and assumptions of the natural sciences to the study of human beings".⁴ This is a remarkable claim to make about a man writing in a period before the natural and social sciences had clearly been distinguished from each other at all. It would be more accurate to say that he was contributing to the flowering of human knowledge in all areas which was taking place in that period, rather than try to discredit his enterprise by associating it with 'modern' positivism.

² The former sense is the more usual; a good example of the latter is to be found in Steve Smith 'Positivism and Beyond' in Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski (eds) *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996) and 'The Self-Images of a Discipline: A Genealogy of International Relations Theory' in Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds) *International Relations Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity 1995).

³ In 'The Enigma of Martin Wight' *Review of International Studies* 1981 (Vol 7 No.1 pp. 15 – 22), Michael Nicholson writes that, 'Too many English writers disdainfully produce a list of terms such as "systems analysis", "simulation", "games theory" as if they were a list of diseases which it would be undesirable for a healthy student to catch' (p. 22)

⁴ Martin Hollis and Steve Smith *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon 1991) p. 49

This chapter introduces some of the main themes in constructivism and poststructuralism. My aim is not to give an exhaustive account of the many strands of these approaches, but to isolate some of the more important themes and describe some of the debates that were decisive in their development and elaboration. In the first section I look at constructivism, which has proved to be one of the most influential critical approaches. One reason for this success is its ability to adapt itself to mainstream research agendas, and to take up ideas from other approaches. One of my main aims in this section, therefore, is to define the distinctive contribution that has been made by constructivism. In the next section I turn to one of the most controversial approaches within post-positivism, that of poststructuralism. I treat this more briefly, as it has never established as much of a hold over International Relations as in other disciplines. Tracing all of the components of poststructural approaches would require a weighty thesis in itself, so I limit this study to identifying the most important elements that are pertinent in International Relations. The next chapter continues this analysis by discussing the other two main post-positivist approaches, feminism and critical theory. This part of the thesis concludes by discussing how these four approaches treat the question of human agency, which is important for my overall argument because I claim that a more credible radical approach to sovereignty requires a stronger sense of active agency that can consciously shape society.

Constructivism

The belated incorporation of constructivist approaches into International Relations represents the first serious challenge to the neorealist/neoliberal debate that divided the discipline in the 1980s, and provides a non-positivist alternative that had already been employed in a number of historical and sociological studies of the world polity. Although constructivism was not necessarily the first post-positivist approach chronologically, it is the logical starting point as in the weak sense that they do not believe that the character of the international system is natural or given, but rather that it is shaped by actors and discourses, all of the post-positivist theorists are

constructivists. There is, however, a group of writers including John Gerard Ruggie, Alexander Wendt and Friedrich Kratochwil who understand their own work as constructivist in a narrower sense than this, although it is not always obvious what makes them distinct. Many mainstream theorists are baffled by the interest in constructivism because they take the minimal claims that it makes at face value rather than examine the hidden sources and assumptions that it makes. Lea Brilmayr speaks for many when she writes that "Liberals are impatient with long-winded critical expositions of what liberals see as obvious: that social environment influences personal identity."⁵ This chapter, however, will argue that they do represent a new, distinct and important theoretical approach which has been misrepresented by those who are unwilling to look at their sources in social theory.⁶

The idea that society is determined by the interplay of social forces rather than given by nature has a long pedigree. Recently however, sociologists have developed constructivism into an independent theoretical approach, which has been applied to a range of issues.⁷ These theories offer a radical challenge to the status quo in the sphere of politics as well as social theory, and many of the constructivists seem quite close to postmodern accounts. In discussing their own intellectual roots, however, constructivists are more likely to refer to a distinctive Anglo-American philosophical tradition including, for example, Wittgenstein and his English interpreter, Peter Winch and the linguistic tradition that has been carried on by analytic philosophers like John Searle, rather than Foucault. This is partly for tactical reasons, as continental philosophers get short shrift in American political science departments, but also reflects real differences between these approaches. Discussing continental

⁵ Lea Brilmayr *American Hegemony: Political Morality in a One-Superpower World* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1994) p. 210

⁶ Whilst I recognise that constructivism exists outside social theory – in philosophy, for example – this thesis focuses on its incorporation into social theory and particularly International Relations.

⁷ The sociology of race and sex are the best examples of this, and it is a mark of the success of the constructivist project that we now use the terms ethnicity and gender to refer to the socially determined nature of these phenomena. Many other areas have been discussed as socially constructed, however, including what would appear to be the most natural things in the world, nature and the body. For the former, see Klaus Eder *The Social Construction of Nature: The Sociology of Ecological Enlightenment* (London: Sage 1996) and the latter, Bryan S. Turner *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory* 2nd edition (London: Sage 1996) and Chris Shilling *The Body and Social Theory* (London: Sage 1994).

writers therefore does not expose the unacknowledged sources of constructivism as much as clarify some of the unstated assumptions that they make which are more explicit in writers like Husserl and Mannheim. In International Relations, this conservatism is even more pronounced, and although some writers make unconvincing attempts to read post-structuralism as a subset of their own school, the writers that they are most likely to cite are Wittgenstein, Winch, Searle, Giddens and the critical realist Roy Bhaskar.⁸ However, it is possible to trace the roots of the constructivist approach in continental philosophy and inter-war sociology. Although these sources are rarely cited, at least in International Relations, a discussion of some of these writers clarifies what is distinctive about the constructivist challenge to positivism.

Origins of Constructivism

The starting point for constructivism could be pushed back as far as the renaissance and enlightenment, when Vico established human society as a distinct area of inquiry from natural science.⁹ The nineteenth century hermeneuts undoubtedly also play a part in the prehistory of constructivism. However, it is with Edmund Husserl and Karl Mannheim that we find a recognisably constructivist approach emerging. Husserl established the idea of the intersubjective creation of meaning, and Mannheim linked our knowledge of the world to the social circumstances in which knowledge is created. Husserl was a phenomenologist who is perhaps best known in the social sciences for arguing that certain large philosophical questions can be bracketed out and not dealt with, in favour of smaller problems, many of which are of interest to social scientists. It is not necessary, for example, to have an answer to the question of whether or not there is an external world in order to study the war in Bosnia. For

⁸ Key sources include Ludwig Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell 1973), Peter Winch *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relations to Philosophy* (London: Routledge 1988), John Searle *The Construction of Social Reality* (London: Penguin 1996), Anthony Giddens *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity 1986) and Roy Bhaskar *The Possibility of Naturalism* (London: Routledge 1998).

⁹ Giambattista Vico *The New Science* (London: Penguin 1999)

constructivism, however, his key contribution is the idea that the world is created intersubjectively:

. . . [W]e speak of the “intersubjective constitution” of the world, meaning by this the total system of manners of givenness, however hidden, and also of modes of validity for egos; through this constitution, if we systematically uncover it, the world as it is for us becomes understandable as a structure of meaning formed out of elementary intentionalities. The being of these intentionalities themselves is nothing but one meaning-formation operating together with another, “constituting” new meaning through synthesis. And meaning is never anything but meaning in modes of validity, that is, as related to intending ego-subjects which effect validity.¹⁰

His prose is tortuous, but Husserl’s point is remarkably incipient. He anticipates not only the development of constructivism, but goes a long way towards the Habermasian turn in critical theory, which will be discussed in the next chapter. He argues that as we individually make sense of the world we interact with other people who are also trying to understand the circumstances that they find themselves in. This process creates meaning that did exist prior to the actions of these ‘egos’. These structures of meaning constitute the social world, hence:

Only by starting from the ego and the system of its transcendental functions and accomplishments can we methodically exhibit transcendental intersubjectivity and its transcendental communalization, through which, in the functioning system of ego-poles, the “world for all”, and for each subject *as* world for all is constituted.¹¹

Here Husserl explains intersubjectivity as making sense only from the point of the individual ego. From this we can extrapolate the ‘world for all’. It is notable in both

¹⁰ Edmund Husserl *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1970) p. 168

¹¹ *ibid*, p. 185-186

of these quotations that he uses the term intersubjectivity where society would suffice. This is not just an incidental feature of his prose or an arbitrary choice of the translator. He is making the point that there are no essential determinates that cohere 'society' other than the search for meaning and understanding by individual egos. What we term society is, for Husserl, the networks of meaning between these egos. This is one of Husserl's outstanding contributions to twentieth century social theory, and one, which has infused many other intellectual movements. The idea of intersubjectivity has become so well established that contemporary theorists think it scarcely worth noting, which is why Husserl remains worth reading as he makes explicit the ideas that form the background assumptions of more recent writers. In considering the constructivists' account of agency this will be important, as the idea of intersubjectivity degrades the scope for conscious human action whilst avoiding the extremes of irrationalism that form a separate tradition.¹²

Mannheim is important in the development of constructivist approaches because of his linking of the development of knowledge to social forces. Against the conventional positivist accounts of the time, Mannheim wanted to analyse the relationship between knowledge and existence.¹³ He claims that:

the principal propositions of the social sciences are neither mechanistically external nor formal, nor do they represent purely quantitative correlations but rather situational diagnoses in which we use, by and large, the same concrete concepts and thought models which were created for activist purposes in real life. It is clear, furthermore, that every social science diagnosis is closely connected with the evaluations and unconscious orientations of the observer and that the critical self-clarification of the social sciences is intimately bound up with the critical self-clarification of our orientation in the real world.¹⁴

¹² In Husserl's time this included his student, Martin Heidegger and the fascist social theorists. In our own it is best represented by the post-structuralist project which will be discussed below.

¹³ Karl Mannheim *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co 1936)

This is a decisive refutation of the positivist aspiration to a neutral social science. Mannheim goes on to discuss ideology in the broad sense not of the system of ideas of an opponent, but of an age or a concrete social group.¹⁵ Once knowledge has been linked to group interests in this way it is a small step to claim that, "A modern theory of knowledge which takes account of the relational as distinct from the merely relative character of all historical knowledge must start with the assumption that there are spheres of thought in which it is impossible to conceive of absolute truth independently of the values and position of the subject and unrelated to the social context".¹⁶ Thus Mannheim claims that knowledge is, to employ a slightly anachronistic term, socially constructed. He reflects on his argument by noting that:

We see then that we have employed metaphysical-ontological value judgements of which we have not been aware. But only those will be alarmed by this recognition who are prey to the positivistic prejudices of a past generation, and who still believe in the possibility of being completely emancipated in their thinking from ontological, metaphysical, and ethical presuppositions.¹⁷

In other words, knowledge is intrinsically and inevitably bound up with historically specific circumstances and social groups. The only escape from this is in the utopian thinking which is by definition incongruous with social reality, but which is needed to maintain our sense of the possibility of transcendence. It is a short step from Mannheim's argument about the socially constructed nature of knowledge to contemporary claims that society is constructed from the knowledge which we believe that we have of it.

One final comment that can be made about the relationship between contemporary constructivism and Mannheim is his self-congratulatory identification of the

¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 41

¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 51

¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 70 - 71

¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 79

intellectual as the vanguard of the new society, a point that became more pronounced as he became more conservative.¹⁸ Intellectuals, he argues, are 'de-classed' by their education, and therefore have to choose between voluntary class alignment and "scrutiny of their own social moorings and the quest for the fulfilment of their mission as the predestined advocate of the intellectual interests of the whole". This self-serving argument prefigures a strong tendency in contemporary constructivism towards emphasising the role of the intellectual in framing the perimeters of discourses towards the construction of desirable identities. This is an important part of the uptake of constructivism in International Relations, which I now turn to.

Constructivism in International Relations

Constructivism in International Relations has avoided the extremes of sociology where even the human body is seen as a human invention. Alexander Wendt has defined constructivism in International Relations as "a structural theory of international politics that makes the following core claims: (1) states are the principal actors in the system; (2) the key structures in the states system are intersubjective rather than material; and (3) state identities and interests are in large part constructed by those structures, rather than being determined endogenously to the system by human nature or domestic politics."¹⁹ The aim of this approach is to "analyze how processes of interaction produce and reproduce the social structures – cooperative or conflictual – that shape actors' identities and interests and the significance of their material contexts."²⁰ Constructivism, as defined by Wendt, is explicitly statist, contrary to many of the other post-positivist approaches. His argument is with realism and rationalism, which he argues cannot account for historical change in the international system. The constructivist alternative that he outlines emphasises the way that apparently eternal aspects of world politics like power politics and anarchy

¹⁸ See, for example, *Diagnosis of Our Time: Wartime Essays of a Sociologist* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. 1943), which was also perhaps the first use of the term 'third way'.

¹⁹ Alexander Wendt *Identity and Structural Change in International Politics* in Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil (eds) *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner 1996) p. 48

are shaped by the interrelationship between agency and structure, which he borrows from Giddens' structuration theory. Here he takes a middle ground between the realists and rationalists on one side, who emphasise structure, and the post-structuralists on the other who see these phenomena as entirely constituted by discourse. The continuum between these approaches has been a source of much disagreement among constructivists, who have defined themselves against one another and adopted different strategies for pursuing their various agendas from structuration theory, scientific realism and speech act theory. These are shades of opinion rather than splits, and it is a source of strength that constructivism can accommodate these differences. However, there is a problem with defining a cut-off point, for if constructivism is to incorporate all post-positivist methodologies then it becomes meaningless to discuss it as a separate approach.

Ruggie has recently classified structuralist approaches in International Relations as consisting of neo-classical, postmodern and hybrid approaches.²¹ This is perhaps the widest definition of constructivism. The neo-classical constructivists, of whom Ruggie is a representative, are committed to the ideal of social science and aim to make sense of intersubjective meanings using a variety of approaches. John Searle's speech act theory is cited as an influence on this school. The postmodern constructivists are influenced by Nietzsche, Foucault and Derrida and include writers like Richard Ashley, James Der Derian and R. B. J. Walker in International Relations. These writers stress the linguistic construction of subjects and, Ruggie claims, are pessimistic about the possibility of a legitimate social science. I treat this approach separately below as poststructuralist. Finally, Ruggie identifies a constructivist approach which lies somewhere between the first two, with intellectual roots in the scientific realism of Roy Bhaskar. Alexander Wendt and David Dessler are cited as International Relations scholars working with this approach. These writers are not concerned with the distinction between insider and outsider approaches described by

²⁰ Alexander Wendt, 'Constructing International Politics' *International Security* (Vol 20 No 1 pp 71 – 81) 1995 p. 81

²¹ John Gerard Ruggie, 'What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge' *International Organization* (Vol 52 No 4 pp. 855 – 885) 1998

Hollis and Smith, but see scientific investigation of the natural and social world as concerned with nonobservables. They believe that since subjects are not conscious of the intersubjective understandings that constitute social life the distinction between insider and outsider is just as invalid as in the study of quarks. We could perhaps add a fourth dimension to Ruggie's taxonomy with international society theorists like Nick Wheeler and Tim Dunne who have tried to fuse constructivism with the English School, which was discussed in chapter one.²² The problem with this sort of classification, however, is that it risks losing sight of what is specific about constructivism. Simply to assert that post-structuralism is a variety of constructivism is to lose sight of what is distinctive in the theory, and to treat it as virtually synonymous with post-positivism in its broadest sense. In what follows, I accordingly restrict my comments to the narrower sense of constructivism in discussing its application to the central problems of International Relations and especially to sovereignty.

Security

Ruggie has significantly modified Sir Arthur Salter's famous description of the idea of collective security arrangements as a permanent potential alliance against the unknown enemy to that of a permanent potential alliance on behalf of the unknown victim.²³ The idea of defending victims is a significant departure from the conception of international politics that Sir Arthur Salter's generation would have understood. However, at this level of analysis in global politics a concern with the unknown victim is perhaps an unsurprising feature of any theory of international relations in an age when great military struggles are fought in defence of the victims of Hussain's Iraq, Milosovic's Serbia and the ragbag armies of warlords in Africa. The international arena is, and perhaps always has been, a fearful sphere. The fact that Ruggie, a consultant to United States government agencies and the United Nations,

²² Timothy Dunne, 'The Social Construction of International Society' *European Journal of International Relations* 1 (3) 1998 pp. 367-389 is typical of this approach.

²³ John Gerard Ruggie *Winning the Peace: America and World Order in the New Era* (New York: Columbia University Press 1996) p. 21

should be concerned with victims abroad points to the critical project that the constructivists are engaged in. The challenge that we face is to identify ourselves with the victims, and if we take the constructivist claim that how we think about society determines its nature then this means accounting for the formation of identity in world politics.

For Wendt, "Processes of identity-formation under anarchy are concerned first and foremost with preservation or 'security' of the self. Concepts of security therefore differ in the extent to which and the manner in which the self is identified cognitively with the other".²⁴ In other words, identity is formed around the idea of self-preservation from an 'other' that is constituted as an enemy. This approach has been used extensively in social theory to explain the marginalisation of certain individuals and groups.²⁵ In this case, the 'self' is the state, and Wendt applies this framework to state security, identifying the state as an actor that constructs an identity against other states, and derives its interests from its identity. This makes an assumption that the behaviour of a corporate body like a nation can be understood in the same way as an individual ego. Although Hegel used the idea of the master-slave dialectic to explain society through the idea of selves and others, it is not quite clear how Wendt can adapt this to deal with the collective self of the state, which he does not open up for analysis. Instead the idea of self and other is used as an analogy for other processes which he describes.

Law

In International Relations the constructivists have made perhaps the most significant contribution to our understanding of law. Whereas in legal theory an array of approaches have coalesced around similar themes to create a school of critical legal theory, and in social theory feminism, postmodernism and critical theory have all had a major impact upon thinking about the relationship between law and society, in

²⁴ Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is what states make of it: the social constructions of power politics' *International Organization* 1992 (Vol 46 No 2 pp 391 – 425) p. 399

International Relations the constructivists have mounted the most sustained and theoretically rigorous challenge to legal positivism. In opposition to the dichotomy between a communitarian insistence on the importance of attitudes and values and an individualist advocacy of rights and rules, Kratochwil sets the basis for a constructivist approach to law which emphasises the inter-determination of the two.²⁶ Law is both a determinate of society (at the global as well as the national level) and determined by social practices. In this section I discuss how this mediated relationship is described by constructivists.

The main aspect of constructivist thinking about law is the expansion of the term to include not only written rules but also tacit understandings and certain modes of reasoning. Kratochwil defines law as the application of existing norms to a controversy by a third party.²⁷ This, clearly, is very different from the lay understanding of law as a body of rules that are enforced by an external agency. It is, in Kratochwil's reading, "better understood as a particular style of reasoning with rules".²⁸ This opens the floodgates to consider a whole host of relationships at the global level as forms of law. Rather than being a body of enforceable rules, law encompasses understandings, regimes and agreements. Once this definition is accepted, law can be seen as constitutive of international society and identified as the arena in which norms should be contested. Sovereignty is constituted through law, through the recognition of internal legitimacy by other international actors, and it is through the legitimation of sovereignty that internal hierarchy is justified.²⁹ The positive and negative aspects of this reading of international law become apparent from Kratochwil's conclusion, where he argues that,

²⁵ Edward Said *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin 1995) is the classic statement of this approach, but it is an important element in critical theory and poststructuralism.

²⁶ Friedrich V. Kratochwil *Rules, Norms and Decisions: On the conditions of practical and legal reasoning in international relations and domestic affairs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989) Chapter Two.

²⁷ *ibid* p. 210

²⁸ *ibid*, p. 211

²⁹ *ibid*.

It would be a legalism of the worst kind to reduce the problem of compliance to the technical problem of ensuring norm-conformity at the least cost through the elaboration of repressive techniques, while leaving the issue of justifying actions in terms of broader principles, demands for justice, and pleas for peaceful change to history and philosophy.³⁰

These are noble sentiments, but they only make sense in relation to the expanded notion of law that Kratochwil endorses. His argument is almost tautological in the context of his earlier remarks. A narrow understanding of law could quite legitimately indulge in the kind of 'legalism' that he castigates, adopting a purely instrumental approach to enforcing decisions that have been made in another sphere. This is defensible if we allow that 'broader principles, demands for justice and pleas for peaceful change' can all be made at a level of decision making that is apart from the legal process itself. However, once all agreements are held to be law, and once law becomes a form of reasoning rather than a body of enforceable rules, then these principles must play a role in the legal process.

For an account of how norms emerge we must turn to the work of Nicholas Onuf, who was one of the first international relations scholars to explicitly identify himself as a constructivist in his influential book, *World of Our Making*.³¹ Onuf gives a wide-ranging account of the diverse elements that constitute the constructivist approach in social theory before applying it to International Relations. Anthony Giddens' structuration theory is a particular influence on Onuf's approach, but he has also applied the speech act theory developed by John Searle in dealing with particular issues in international relations, including an important section on law and language. Against the legal positivists who argue for the primacy and legitimacy of statute law, and the natural law theorists who believe that there are imperatives which exist outside specific social and historical settings, Onuf argues that rules emerge and are justified through social convention. He is aware of the problems that this poses for

³⁰ *ibid*, p. 256

³¹ Nicolas Greenwood Onuf *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press 1989)

conventional accounts of law as well as for international relations: "The possibility that legality is not what it seems to be poses a far greater challenge to legal theory. It calls into question the ontological presumption that rules at least in the hard core of law are positivities of a kind and thus the paradigmatic claim that law is a distinct phenomenon – an operative paradigm – worthy of its own discipline."³² The important element of this claim for our purposes is not that it undermines the basis of law as a distinct academic discipline, but that it tears law away from the lawyers and plants it firmly in the discipline of International Relations as a central constitutive element of the international order.

Onuf explains this in terms of the constitutive role that law plays in society, and particularly in international society, by setting the background against which choices are made: "rules do not 'govern' all that is social. People always have a choice, which is to follow rules or not. Instead rules govern the construction of the situation within which choices are made intelligible".³³ This is an interesting parallel with Marx's famous point that men make history, but not in circumstances of their own choosing.³⁴ Whereas Marx believed that human subjects had the potential to change their circumstances, the intersubjective constitution of society that Onuf and Wendt describe limits the scope of human action to compliance or non-compliance with the discourse ethics which are imposed by his understanding of the nature and scope of legal reasoning. Their expanded notion of law, therefore, serves not to democratise the legal process but rather to legalise the political process. Action is limited to attempts to influence the direction of the discourse, but this is constrained by the insistence on compliance with legal reasoning. David Dessler, for example, argues that in the context of the scientific realist model of constructivism that he espouses, "all social action depends on the preexistence of rules, implying that even under anarchy, rules are an essential prerequisite for action."³⁵ This approach, he claims,

³² *ibid*, p. 71

³³ *ibid*, p. 261

³⁴ Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte' in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels *Selected Works* (London: Lawrence and Wishart 1991) p. 93

³⁵ David Dessler, 'What's at stake in the agent-structure debate?' *International Organization* (Vol 43 No 3 1989 pp 441-473) p. 458, emphasis in original

“provides the conceptual basis not only for explaining current practices but also for situating possibilities of action that might lead to freedom from unwanted sources of structural determination.”³⁶ There is a tension between the legalism of Kratochwil and the claims made by Dessler about agency that needs further probing. In the next chapter I will return to the constructivist account of agency and argue that the possibility for human action is limited by this theory.

Sovereignty

The normative critique of sovereignty is central to the constructivist challenge in International Relations, and one which they have enthusiastically pursued in arguing that it is a norm which is potentially detrimental to the global polity if it is not restrained by extra-territorial norms and institutions, and that it is possible to make these changes because it is a socially constructed norm that requires the tacit consent of those bound by it if it is to continue to exist. The form that the argument takes, however, is as an argument about anarchy rather than sovereignty. This is a result of the influence of neo-realism in North America, where many of the constructivists are writing, which gives particular emphasis to the anarchical nature of the international system rather than to the sovereign units which it comprises. Nevertheless, it will be argued here that the critique of sovereignty is the more important aspect of the constructivist critique, and it is their questioning of the nature of sovereignty which has ramifications beyond academic disputes with neo-realism. It is at the level of sovereignty that the international system is being remade.

The first stage of the constructivist account is to explain the historical nature of the state system. This is a familiar point in history and sociology, and these discussions have been freely borrowed by the constructivists.³⁷ Although this idea is almost

³⁶ *ibid*, p. 473

³⁷ From the constructivists, see John G. Ruggie, ‘Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations’ *International Organization* (Vol 47 No 1 1993). For the debate on the emergence of the nation-state see T. H. Aston and C. H. E. Philpin (eds) *The Brenner Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989), Perry Anderson *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso 1989). Ellen Meiksins Wood *The Pristine Culture of Capitalism* (London: Verso

received wisdom in other disciplines, it does run contrary to the realist prejudice about the eternal nature of the state, and prepares the ground for the more substantial claims that the constructivists make about the constitution of the international system and the possibilities for its reconstitution.

Although there is much borrowing from historical work on the construction of sovereignty, the theoretical basis of constructivist theory in philosophy and sociology does lead to some quirky idiosyncrasies in constructivist writings. Ruggie writes that “The concept of sovereignty . . . was merely the doctrinal counterpart of the application of single-point perspectival forms to the spatial organization of politics.”³⁸ This is an astonishing claim. He links the political development of sovereignty to the artistic development of single-point perspective by Brunelleschi, and gives priority to the work of Brunelleschi. Inverting materialist explanations, Ruggie believes that the development of political organisation can only proceed within the confines of how we conceptualise the world that we live in. This makes his point about Brunelleschi seem rhetorical rather than absurd, but although it sounds like an exaggeration the logic of his position demands that we accept it as literal truth. If we accept that Brunelleschi was an important part of the self-understanding of Florentine society (and he undoubtedly was), then his work on perspective really is the precondition for the actions of state-building princes. However, Ruggie is no post-structuralist. There is still room to develop an account of agency from this history, as we will see in the next chapter. For a start, people like Brunelleschi were more or less conscious of what they were doing, as were the intellectual systematisers of these ideas like Machiavelli. Above all, these developments empower certain social actors who are faced with real choices about what to do. Ruggie believes that “central rulers became more powerful *because* of their state-building missions,”³⁹ that they acquired political power through their ability to translate the artistic development of single-point perspective into political and social transformations. As a result, “this process of

1991) offers an incisive critique of this approach, without losing sight of the historical nature of the state.

³⁸ *ibid*, p. 159

³⁹ *ibid*, p. 161, emphasis in original

social empowerment was part of the means by which the new units of political discourse were inscribed in social life to produce new units of political order.”⁴⁰

Of course, as with all historical typologies of this sort Ruggie is not trying to improve our understanding of the past so much as to clarify the situation that we find ourselves in today. Marx’s universal history was based on the conflict of classes that he recognised in his own society and Hegel’s account of the philosophical zeitgeist reflected the philosophical idealism that emerged in a nation with the greatest universities in the world but which was being left behind by the huge social, political and economic developments in Britain and France. Ruggie’s account of history is based on his understanding of the importance of how we think about the world for the way it is today. Two points can be culled from the preceding discussion. First, his account of the historical development of the nation-state culminates in his analysis of the contemporary development of multilateralism which points beyond the absolute sovereignty of the nation-state. Secondly, his claim about empowerment forms the historical justification for the identification of progressive groups who can be charged with the task of implementing the ideas of the academics, just as the renaissance princes were responsible for implementing the programme of Brunelleschi. To develop the analysis of their understanding of the contemporary nature of sovereignty, we must now turn to Alexander Wendt’s discussion of anarchy.

Wendt’s article, ‘Anarchy is what states make of it’⁴¹ is the most famous statement of the constructivists’ approach to sovereignty. He argues that sovereignty is a social practice rather than an eternal fact: “Sovereignty is an institution, and so it exists only in virtue of certain intersubjective understandings and expectations; there is no sovereignty without an other. These understandings and expectations not only constitute a particular kind of state – the ‘sovereign’ state – but also constitute a particular form of community, since identity is relational.”⁴² The state, therefore, is “an ongoing accomplishment of practice, not a once-and-for-all creation of norms that

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 163

⁴¹ Wendt, *op. cit.*

⁴² *ibid*, p. 412

somehow exist apart from practice.”⁴³ The normative case that he is making is that by bridging liberal concerns with the transformative potential of international institutions with constructivist insights into the intersubjective creation of identities he can make a more convincing case for a form of liberal internationalism than the liberals have been able to because of their privileging of structure over process.

This approach is contrasted with mainstream theoretical assumptions about sovereignty. His primary target is the one-sided emphasis on structure in neo-realism, and its claim that this necessarily gives rise to power politics, but he argues that neoliberals fail to offer a convincing challenge to this approach because they ‘privilege realist insights about structure while advancing their own insights about process’.⁴⁴ The neoliberals assume the institutionalised form that International Relations has taken rather than accounting for its creation and above all its maintenance through intersubjective understandings. Wendt believes that constructivism offers a more distinctive and convincing alternative to neoliberalism by challenging the fundamental basis of neorealism. He claims that, “self-help and power politics do not follow either logically or causally from anarchy and . . . if today we find ourselves in a self-help world, this is due to structure, not process. There is no ‘logic’ of anarchy apart from the practices that create and instantiate one structure of identities and interests rather than another; structure has no existence or causal powers apart from process”.⁴⁵ Wendt ties structure and process together, as *interdeterminate*, against the idea that one could change one but not the other. The same rhetorical strategy is employed when he puts power and institutions together, arguing that ‘anarchy and the distribution of power only have meaning for state action in virtue of the understandings and expectations that constitute institutional identities and interests’.⁴⁶ Indeed, after his iconoclastic tour of contemporary International Relations theory, the only constitutive features of the international system that remain

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 413

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 393

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 395

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 401

are agency and a desire to survive, by which he means merely to preserve their agency.⁴⁷

Wendt's famous article on sovereignty established him as one of the main thinkers within the constructivist school of International Relations. He has since tried to cement his reputation with a hugely ambitious but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to create a grand theory in *Social Theory of International Politics*.⁴⁸ This is less important for the purposes of this thesis than his earlier articles, which focus more directly on sovereignty. The book incorporates a wide range of theories, but is on occasion guilty of making theory out of the obvious. Here we learn, for example, that "autonomy is always a matter of degree and can be traded away when the benefits of dependence outweigh the costs."⁴⁹

Wendt's discussion is an effective corrective to the structural prejudice of much research in International Relations, but two criticisms can be raised. The first is that his emphasis is still too one-sided, albeit in a different direction from the conventional accounts that he criticises. Although he claims that agency and structure are inter-determined, he does not make it entirely clear the processes by which this takes place; rather, he emphasises the importance of ideas as a corrective to the structuralist bent of mainstream theory. This indicates the exploratory character of constructivism in International Relations, where it is still trying to develop its critique rather than develop a fully-fledged theory of its own as Waltz did in *Theory of International Politics*. The second criticism, which we will discuss below, is that his constitutive account of agency is inadequate. The constitutive basis of international relations in agency may or may not be accurate, but it does undermine the status of International Relations as a distinct discipline. The only difference between International Relations and sociology or politics is in the body of literature that one positions oneself against and the department that one works in. All social relationships begin with units

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 402

⁴⁸ Alexander Wendt *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999)

⁴⁹ *ibid.* p. 236

concerned with their self-preservation, and so the only question that can be put prior to this idea of pre-existing agency is essentially a biological one about the conditions for the development of human consciousness. Wendt therefore still evades the question of how the units of international relations evolved, which is to the detriment of his theory of sovereignty. Ruggie's historical account, as discussed above, suggests how states emerged as the units of international relations, but Wendt seems content to restrict his analysis to methodological problems. He ends with the observation that constructivists can offer "a systematic communitarian ontology in which intersubjective knowledge constitutes identities and interests" but cautions that they "have often devoted too much effort to questions of ontology and constitution and not enough effort to the causal and empirical questions of how identities and interests are produced by practice in anarchic conditions. As a result, they have not taken on board neoliberal insights into learning and social cognition."⁵⁰ This suggests that he doesn't actually want to say a great deal about sovereignty because there are other questions that are more important for the constructivist agenda. It is, in a sense, a ground-clearing operation which opens up more interesting lines of enquiry. Against the neo-realists, he wants to say that anarchy and sovereignty are not the most important issues in international relations, but he realises that he must give an account of why this is the case before developing alternative lines of enquiry.

The relationship between structure and agency that the constructivists have established through their discussion of sovereignty points to a new focus in international relations to account for the processes by which international relations are maintained. One way in which this has been done is through the discussion of law, which acquires a new importance for constructivists as a channel through which society is constituted at the national and international level through ongoing discursive practices which range from the statute law that legal positivists recognise to shared norms which they argue are an equally important element of law. My criticism of this – which will be developed in the next chapter when I turn to the issue

⁵⁰ Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It'

of agency – is that scope for people to consciously shape the political landscape of international relations is, in practice, circumscribed by constructivist accounts.

Poststructuralism

In International Relations there is a deep-seated hostility to poststructural approaches, not least because of the self-marginalisation of the poststructuralists. In opposition to mainstream approaches, they castigate the very subject matter of security studies as contributing to a culture of militarism and are scathing about dominant approaches like neo-realism. Nevertheless, poststructural writing has become part of the canon of International Relations through the thoughtful contributions of writers like R. B. J. Walker, James Der Derian, Richard Ashley and David Campbell. A collection of essays edited by James Der Derian and Michael Shapiro, *International/Intertextual Relations*,⁵¹ and special issues of *International Studies Quarterly* and *Millennium* have contributed to the notoriety of poststructural approaches.⁵² This chapter will situate these writings in the context of a much larger canon of dissent writers who have developed a poststructural approach to social theory. However, partly because these writers have attracted so much critical attention I will have less to say about them. In a sense, the role of poststructuralism in International Relations is that of the 'other'. Critical theorists are able to define themselves as part of the reasonable mainstream by emphasising their difference from the poststructuralists and traditional theorists can ridicule the poststructuralists and convince themselves that they are dispatching all other critical approaches with them. In this sense, it is analogous to the role of Marxism in an earlier era.

⁵¹ (Lexington: Lexington Books 1989)

⁵² 'Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissidence in International Studies' ed. Richard K. Ashley and R. B. J. Walker, *International Studies Quarterly* 34: 3 1990 and *Millennium* 17: 8 1988, introduced by James Der Derian. Der Derian's introduction, 'Introducing Philosophical Traditions in International Relations' (pp 189 – 193) makes it clear that the contributors come from a variety of critical

Debates about modernity have been taking place since before the development of poststructural thought. The nineteenth century French novelist Baudelaire is generally credited with coining the term 'modernity', and the prolific writer on international relations Arnold J. Toynbee is credited with being the first to use the word 'postmodern'. Even earlier than this, Marx noted that in capitalist society "All that is solid melts into air".⁵³ However, the terms modernity and postmodernity are notoriously difficult to pin down, and can be used as descriptive as well as analytical concepts.⁵⁴ The foremost theorist of 'postmodernity' is perhaps Jean-Francois Lyotard, whose definition of postmodernism as "an incredulity towards metanarratives"⁵⁵ is repeated with tiresome regularity by those who want to discredit poststructuralism as well as academics who want to attach their research to an approach which seemed like the wave of the future in the 1980s. This section will concentrate on poststructuralism, which is a narrower and more intellectually rigorous strand of thought developed by French thinkers like Jacques Derrida, Giles Deleuze, Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault. However, it should be noted that poststructuralism is also a problematic term and writers such as Foucault repudiated its label while others who would claim it for themselves are no more than relativists in search of a respectable title.

A major theme of poststructuralism is its return to thinkers and strands of thought which have been marginalised in contemporary debate. In discussing the history of ideas there is always a tendency towards what Butterfield called the Whig interpretation of history,⁵⁶ where contemporary ideas are seen as an inevitable

perspectives and are not exclusively poststructuralist. It still had the effect of raising the profile of poststructuralism in the discipline.

⁵³ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Penguin 1985) p. 83. Marshall Berman adopted this quotation as the title of his book (London: Verso 1995), which captures the ways in which the solid has been turned into air and the sacred profaned in different ways in capitalist society.

⁵⁴ In international relations, for example, Christopher Coker employs the term 'postmodernity' to describe the contemporary world without being a 'postmodernist' in the sense of following the theoretical approach of writers like Foucault and Lyotard. See 'Post-modernity and the end of the Cold War: has war been disinvented?' *Review of International Studies* (1992) No 18 pp 189 – 198

⁵⁵ Jean Francois Lyotard *The Postmodern Condition* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press 1984)

⁵⁶ In his eponymous book, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: Norton 1965)

progression from earlier thought. This marginalises other voices which were important in historical debates. Poststructuralists have a slightly different agenda from the Cambridge School's historical reconstructions. On the one hand, they are searching for intellectual inspiration and self-clarification through a re-reading of classic texts. On the other, they are engaging in what Foucault termed a 'history of the present',⁵⁷ which rejects conventional teleologies in favour of a genealogical approach. Writers like Spinoza have been important elements in this enterprise, but the most important thinker in the poststructural canon is Friedrich Nietzsche. This section will concentrate on the poststructural reading of Nietzsche not because this is the essence of poststructuralism, but because it gives us a way into a complicated range of approaches. It also allows us to concentrate on the social and political aspects of poststructural thought rather than going into the literary side of the theory for which it is perhaps best known to a popular audience.⁵⁸

Gilles Deleuze is one of the most important poststructuralists who has developed an independent approach to political thought derived from his engagement with Bergson, Nietzsche and Spinoza. In collaboration with Felix Guattari he has been responsible for an influential account of human action which has inspired an 'agonistic' approach to democracy which emphasises the performative.⁵⁹ However, the decisive point in the development of Deleuze's thought came through his book on Nietzsche, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*.⁶⁰ Although it is at best controversial as a guide to Nietzsche it tells us a great deal about Deleuze's own concerns. In common with much poststructural

⁵⁷ see, for example, Michel Foucault *History of Sexuality Volume I: The Care of the Self* (London: Penguin 1998)

⁵⁸ This is not to downplay the importance of this strand of poststructuralism, and they cannot be fully separated. A good introduction to the two strands is Madnan Sarup *An Introductory Guide to Post-structuralism and Postmodernism* (London: Longman 1993). On the literary side of the theory Jonathon Culler's *On Deconstruction* (London: Routledge 1983) is old but still a very useful introduction, and of course Derrida's substantial corpus of early work is central to this approach.

⁵⁹ Deleuze and Guattari collaborated on a number of volumes, but the peculiar pair *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press 1983) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (London: Athlone Press 1988) contain their most important reflections on agonistic democracy.

⁶⁰ London: Athlone Press 1983

thought, his emphasis is on embracing nothingness, the rejection of ideologies without trying to replicate their errors with new utopias:

Active destruction means: the point, the moment of transmutation in the will to nothingness. Destruction becomes *active* at the moment when, with the alliance between reactive forces and the will to nothingness broken, the will to nothingness is converted and crosses to the side of *affirmation*, it is related to a *power of affirming* which destroys the reactive forces themselves.⁶¹

In this quotation Deleuze sides with Nietzsche in claiming that we can derive a certain paradoxical power from positively embracing nothingness, that is an existence without foundational myths, be they religious beliefs or political utopias.

Foucault is a difficult case within poststructuralism as he self-consciously rejected labels. Nevertheless, he has many affinities with poststructural thought and his account of genealogy relies heavily on Nietzsche, as he explains in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*.⁶² He uses Nietzsche to show that, "if the genealogist refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics, if he listens to history, he finds that there is 'something altogether different' behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms."⁶³ History is not made by people; "no one is responsible for an emergence; no one can glory in it, since it always occurs in the intersice."⁶⁴ This leads to a rather pessimistic assessment of human progress: "Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination."⁶⁵ Foucault explains his approach through Nietzsche's contrast between

⁶¹ *ibid* p. 174, emphasis in original

⁶² in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected essays and interviews* ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1977)

⁶³ *ibid*, p. 142

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p. 150

⁶⁵ *ibid*, p. 151

traditional and effective history. Traditional history, "is given to a contemplation of distances and heights: the noblest periods, the highest forms, the most abstract ideas, the purest individualities", whereas effective history, "shortens its vision to those things nearest to it – the body, the nervous system, nutrition, digestion, and energies; it unearths the periods of decadence and if it chances upon lofty epochs, it is with the suspicion – not vindictive but joyous – of finding a barbarous and shameful confusion."⁶⁶ This echoes Deleuze's embrace of the negation, a celebration of our hopeless situation which derives its strength from standing up to the inevitable paradoxes of our existence. But Foucault approaches the problem slightly differently from Deleuze. Deleuze is telling us how we can live; Foucault is telling us how we can study. His essay on Nietzsche contains a programme for research that starts from the point that there are no subjects, but only power. This is an important element that has been assumed, though not always digested, as these ideas have been carried over into disciplines like International Relations.

Approaching poststructuralist thought through its reading of Nietzsche has allowed us to concentrate on the social and political elements of the theory which are most relevant to International Relations. It is more commonly approached through its approach to textual analysis, most closely associated with Jacques Derrida and literary criticism. However, it is not necessary to discuss this literature in depth to appreciate the incorporation of poststructural approaches into International Relations. The starting point for these approaches is the analysis of the independent power of discourse. A good example of this is in David Campbell's analysis of U.S. foreign policy which links the politics of security and the sociology of risk:

To talk of the endangered nature of the modern world and the enemies and threats which abound in it is ... not to offer a simple ethnographic description of our condition; it is to invoke a discussion of danger through which the incipient ambiguity of our world can be grounded in accordance with the insinuations of identity. Danger (death, in its ultimate form) might therefore be

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 155

thought of as the new god for the modern world of states, not because it is peculiar to our time, but because it replicates the logic of Christendom's evangelism of fear.⁶⁷

Here he is arguing that when the spectre of danger is invoked in discussions of security, it is not a simple reflection of real dangers, but an imaginary creation of dangers harnessed to a particular agenda. Turning to poststructuralist accounts of sovereignty we can this further developed.

Sovereignty

The basis for a poststructural account of sovereignty can be found in the foundational myths of the state. Jim George explains how the fusion of sovereign man and that sovereign state, "prefigures the modern logic of power politics and the state-centric view of an anarchical world of Otherness. It gives identity to the sovereign state, as the site of modern reason, in opposition to a world of anarchy 'out there', always threatening to undermine rationality and truth, with its false beliefs and counterpractices."⁶⁸

Post-structural re-readings of international relations challenge the assumption that world politics is best understood in terms of relations between nations, a claim which they regard as merely a discursive strategy which is itself partly responsible for shaping global politics. R. B. J. Walker expresses this idea well: "I offer a reading of modern theories of international relations as a discourse that systematically reifies an historically specific spatial ontology, a sharp delineation of here and there, 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

⁶⁷ David Campbell *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the politics of identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1992) p. 55

⁶⁸ Jim George *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner 1994) p. 202

structural necessities can be understood and new realms of freedom and history can be revealed.”⁶⁹

An important element of Walker’s argument is its profound ethical dimension. Through a reading of classic texts as much as poststructural ones he develops an approach to world politics which refuses to recognise the territorial state as the limit of our community. This, he notes, is a limit on many emancipatory movements: “Whatever avenues are now being opened up in the exploration of contemporary political identities, whether in the name of nations, humanities, classes, races, cultures, genders or movements, they remain largely constrained by ontological and discursive options expressed most elegantly, and to the modern imagination most persuasively, by claims about the formal sovereignty of territorial states.”⁷⁰

Another aspect of Walker’s approach is its theoretical eclecticism. He claims that, “it is often just as helpful to engage with, say, Hobbes, Spinoza, Rousseau, Hume, Kant, Hegel and Marx in order to appreciate the problematic character of modernity as to those who have absorbed the lessons of Nietzsche, Foucault and Derrida.”⁷¹ Although this makes it problematic to characterise him as a poststructuralist, it demonstrates a willingness to engage with a wider canon of writing than most are prepared to consider, and it is very much to his credit that he tries to apply these thinkers to particular problems rather than attempting to create his own theory out of them.

Many writers conclude that sovereignty is an artificial construct, and leave their analysis at that point. An honourable exception to this is found in James Der Derian, who has developed an original historical analysis of a central institution of the state system, diplomacy, and shown how it cannot be simply equated with the emergence of states. He sums up his analysis thus:

⁶⁹ R. B. J. Walker *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995)

⁷⁰ *ibid*, p. 162

⁷¹ *ibid*, p. 20

the uniformity attributed to the origins of diplomacy is partially explained by the modern political theories (that is, liberal and Marxist) which accord the state a near-monopoly of power. In contrast, my argument was that the origins of diplomacy and of diplomatic culture, and their discontinuous history outside the domain of state sovereignty, could not be fully understood unless one investigated the multiple strategies and sites of power which produce and are sustained by the diplomatic discourse.⁷²

Der Derian traces the genealogy of diplomacy from the earliest biblical myths, through medieval proto-diplomacy to the diplomacy associated with a system of states and on to its potential undoing through anti-diplomacy, a theme developed in a subsequent book.⁷³ Diplomacy, he argues, emerged from the contradictory forces of a new solidarity emerging between political units estranged from an earlier suzerain states system and a new tension arising from the pursuit of particular interests by individual states.⁷⁴ He claims that, "state power and diplomatic culture emerge interdependently when mutually estranged and formally equal states constitute a system, in which the universalization, secularization and normalization of culture, and the alienation, organization, and regulation of power, support one another reciprocally and act mutually as particular means to a systemic end."⁷⁵

This quotation shows the strengths and the weaknesses of his work. Through his historical investigation of the origins of diplomacy he makes a powerful case for a poststructural approach. He also goes beyond familiar platitudes about the importance of discourse and actually analyses a concrete case, setting an example which will have to be followed by others if poststructuralism is to continue to contribute to research in International Relations. However, it becomes problematic when it goes beyond the historical and attempts to explain his intellectual debts and

⁷² James Der Derian *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1987) p. 200

⁷³ James Der Derian *Antidiplomacy* (Oxford: Blackwell 1992)

⁷⁴ Der Derian *On Diplomacy*, chapter six

draw out theoretical lessons. When he discusses 'mutual estrangement' and 'formal equality', Der Derian is drawing on a range of literature in political theory which is not always clearly explained or drawn together. The point he is making is a valid one, but it can be made without reference to Sartre, Nietzsche and Marx on alienation and estrangement in the way that Der Derian does in his introductory chapters. As a result it hovers between intellectual history, political theory and history.

Conclusion

Poststructuralism has its strengths. The theorists discussed in the introduction have re-read many important classical theorists, and their approach has been adopted by critics like Lupton to subvert dominant ideological trends of our time. In International Relations, writers like Der Derian have reconceptualised some of the central themes of the discipline, such as diplomacy. The question that must be asked, however, is whether we need a post-structural framework to provide these insights. One can pose the polemical question: Do we need Foucault to tell us that prisons are unpleasant places? We can further suggest that, in the light of our discussion of the (non-) account of agency provided by poststructuralists, the theory could be a barrier to a more thorough critique, and their might in fact be more substance to the claim that poststructuralists fail to provide an alternative than was allowed in the introduction.

This claim can be substantiated with reference to James Der Derian. In the subtitle of *On Diplomacy* he claims to be offering '*A genealogy of western estrangement*',⁷⁸ but he also offers a genealogy of his own theoretical approach. The development of the theory adds little to his historical analysis, which could be equally plausibly explained through another framework, such as a variation of constructivist thought. Furthermore, his discussion of poststructuralism is used to justify a cavalier approach

⁷⁵ *ibid.* p. 127

⁷⁶ Ferdinand de Saussure *Course in General Linguistics* (London: Duckworth 1990)

⁷⁷ For example, Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar *Reading Capital* (London: New Left Books 1970)

⁷⁸ Der Derian *On Diplomacy*

to reading other political theorists. When he turns to Marx, for example, he is simply wrong: “*qua* commodity, the object has only an exchange-value, or a power of exchanging against different quantities of commodities. Consequently, says Marx, it does not ‘contain an atom of use-value.’ In the context of a modern society, the result is ‘a definite social relation between men, that assumes in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things.’”⁷⁹ Compare this with what Marx wrote: “As use-values, commodities are, above all, of different qualities, but as exchange-values they are merely different quantities, and consequently do not contain an atom of use-value.” He continues, “If then we leave out of consideration the use-values of commodities they have only one common property left, that of being products of labour.”⁸⁰ Marx is clearly saying the opposite of what Der Derian’s ‘Marx’ is saying. For Marx the commodity is defined by its possession of *both* use-value and exchange value. Having trivialised the categories which Marx proceeds from he then engages in bizarre speculation about commodities: “nuclear weaponry is the ultimate commodity of and impetus behind techno-diplomacy. Nuclear production is fetishized and alien, in effect, identical with destruction; it does not ‘contain an atom of use value.’ And in the context of the Cold War, it has deformed human relations into ‘the fantastic form of a relation between things.’”⁸¹ This is an appalling misuse of political theory which adds nothing to his analysis, misreads his source and confuses his audience. The terrible irony is that *On Diplomacy* contains a wonderful account of the emergence of diplomacy. It is unfortunate that a good historian feels the need to justify himself with references to undigested texts that are fashionable in certain radical circles.

This critique of Der Derian is central to the case against poststructural analysis. The best applications of poststructuralism in social science would be strengthened if the theory was removed. This is partly because of its wilful obscurantism, a common criticism, but one which fails to engage with the substance of the theory. However it can be a devastating critique when applied to the close study of a particular text as

⁷⁹ *ibid*, p. 206. Footnotes omitted.

⁸⁰ Karl Marx *Capital* Volume 1 (London: Lawrence and Wishart 1983) p. 45

⁸¹ Der Derian *On Diplomacy* p. 206

this section has attempted to do with Der Derian. There is, however, rather more at stake than this. The reason for the obscurantism can be found in the poststructural assault on the subject, which will be discussed further in the next chapter. The problem which is addressed by poststructural social science is how to carry out critical research in the absence of the subject.

The strength of poststructural approaches in International Relations rests on the strength of poststructuralists like James Der Derian and R. B. J. Walker, but they are at their best when not being poststructural. They unwittingly (at least in Der Derian's case) make a strong case for a more flexible approach to International Relations which flows from its subject matter rather than from a pre-determined theoretical framework. Poststructuralism developed as a critique of subjectivity and an account of a post-humanist age. In the hands of great thinkers engaged in these intellectual struggles it scored many successes, but is perhaps being sidelined by other approaches which are less absolutist and more amenable to application in the social sciences. However, the heterodox methodology of many writers associated with poststructuralism is comparable to my own methodological eclecticism as outlined in the introduction.

This chapter has examined two influential strands of post-positivism, both of which emphasise the way that the sphere of international relations is constructed by forces that we do not have as much conscious control over as we might like to imagine. Ideas from both of these approaches have their place as correctives to the ahistorical absolutism of some traditional approaches. However, precisely because they emphasise our lack of control, they are of limited value in developing a progressive critique of International Relations because they must undermine any idea of a conscious agency for positive change, relying instead on more uncertain forces. I will build upon this claim in the conclusion to the next chapter, where I extend this discussion by looking at two other post-positivist approaches, those of feminism and

critical theory. In particular, the next chapter ends with a fuller discussion of agency, which will return to the theories discussed here and explain in some detail why their account of progress is hampered by their lack of an adequately strong notion of agency.

3 New Approaches: Feminism and Critical Theory

In this chapter I turn to two other broad churches within post-positivism. First I look in some detail at feminist approaches. In this section I develop a discussion of certain strands of feminist thinking about International Relations. This necessarily simplifies to a certain degree, as feminism can attach itself to any of the other approaches to the discipline, and is not necessarily free-standing. However, a distinction can be drawn between approaches that aspire to be specifically feminist, with a distinct methodology or political approach, and those which try to incorporate arguments for women's rights, or the perspective of women, into a broader theory. Neither of these strategies can be rejected a priori; both need to be assessed on their specific merits. In this section, however, my focus is on the possibility of a specifically feminist approach to International Relations. In the next section I look more briefly at the impact of Frankfurt School critical theory, which is perhaps less controversial. This section concentrates on Andrew Linklater, who has been most closely associated with the incorporation of the Frankfurt School into International Relations theory.

My survey of the main critical challenges to the discipline then concludes with a discussion of how the four challenges – constructivism, poststructuralism, feminism and critical theory – deal with agency. This allows me to develop a critique of the major critical approaches in International Relations, clearing a space for my own approach which makes sovereignty and agency central.

Feminism

Feminist theory draws a certain moral authority from its marginal status and from the links that it creates with the political struggles of the oppressed. However, far from being a marginalised ideology, which could be derided or ignored by mainstream thinkers, feminism has moved to the centre of normative social theory over the last few decades. It is also taken seriously by policy-makers at the national and international level. International Relations, however, has been slow to incorporate

these ideas, in spite of important contributions by writers like Jean Bethke Elshtain and Cynthia Enloe. Many mainstream (or 'malestream' as some prefer¹) writers in International Relations have been able to get away with dismissing feminist writing because they ignore this sophisticated basis for feminist thought, concentrating instead on their conclusions, which appear ridiculous when measured against their own beliefs. Some of these scholars explain their neglect of feminism as a result of its tendency to address other feminists in a jargon inaccessible to outsiders, or the banality of feminist research. The former explanation certainly points to a real issue, although all sub-disciplines and theories have their own jargon. The latter explanation smacks of prejudice, but should not be dismissed too hastily as it is a commonly held prejudice among writers who have made serious contributions to their own areas. Bad writing and sloppy scholarship is common to many areas of research, however, and is especially true of areas perceived as fashionable, particularly globalisation, post-structuralism, and of course the 'third debate' in International Relations. But there is still a particular hostility to feminism, perhaps because it is seen as representing a sectional political interest group, or because of defensiveness towards certain feminist claims about masculinity.

However, the case for the marginalisation of feminism can be overdone, and hostility co-exists with an exaggerated sympathy from the politically correct (and from those afraid of the effect of political correctness).² Although feminism has tended to be marginal to the conventional concerns of International Relations, it has been influential in a number of sub-disciplines. In development studies, there has been a long-standing interest in women in development (WID),³ which has been reflected in

¹ For example, Marianne Hester, Liz Kelly and Jill Radford (eds) *Women, Violence and Male Power: Feminist Activism, Research and Practice* (Buckingham: Open University Press 1996)

² It would be unfair to level specific accusations here. However, three male scholars in International Relations who have taken feminist claims seriously are Terrell Carver, 'A political theory of gender: Perspectives on the "universal subject"' in Vicky Randall and Georgia Wagler (eds) *Gender, politics and the state* (London: Routledge 1998), Fred Halliday *Rethinking International Relations* (London: Macmillan 1994) and 'Gender and IR: Progress, Backlash and Prospect' *Millennium* (Vol 27 No 4 1998 pp 833-846) Robert O. Keohane, 'International Relations Theory: Contributions of a Feminist Standpoint' *Millennium* (Vol 18 No 2 1989 pp 245-253)

³ It is symptomatic of the development of feminist thought in International Relations that the term now used is Gender and Development (GAD), implying a socially constructed idea of femininity rather than an essential 'woman'.

the policies of international institutions. In particular, Esther Boserup's *Women's Role in Economic Development*⁴ set out an agenda that has influenced the discipline since its first publication in 1970. In the field of environmentalism, the writings of Vandana Shiva and others have established an ecofeminist approach that has been important in environmental thought as well as International Relations. And, perhaps most visibly, feminists have been important and vocal contributors to peace studies, which developed explicitly in opposition to conventional 'high politics' approaches to International Relations. More recently, these concerns have migrated from the margins to challenge the traditional interests of International Relations scholars, and feminist theorists have tried to view issues like security and sovereignty through 'feminist lenses'.⁵ Although some important studies of these themes have been produced, much of the writing in this area bears the hallmarks of its recent birth and it sometimes lacks the theoretical depth and rigour of feminist contributions in other disciplines. To get a better understanding of feminist work, it is important to understand something of how feminist thought has developed.

Feminist Epistemology

Feminist theory began with the struggle for formal political equality for women. This can be traced back at least to Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792,⁶ and was continued in the political sphere by groups like the suffragettes well into the twentieth century. However, this tradition was not a significant challenge to mainstream political theory. It merely extended the claims of citizenship to women, which may have challenged certain prejudices about biology but which did not seek to recast social thought. This tradition continues today in liberal strands of feminist thinking, which have been contemptuously referred to as 'add-women-and-stir' approaches.⁷ More recently, feminist thinkers have claimed

⁴ London: Earthscan 1989

⁵ Jill Steans *Gender and International Relations: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity 1998) reviews the literature which tries to do this.

⁶ Mary Wollstonecraft *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Mineola: Dover 1996)

⁷ A thoughtful (though perhaps a little ahistorical) critique of these aspects of Wollstonecraft is found in Moira Gattens, 'The Oppressed State of My Sex': Wollstonecraft on Reason, Feeling and

that there can be a distinctly feminine approach to social issues, privileging the insights that women have by virtue of their subordinate position in society. This body of work fundamentally challenges positivist methodologies, and offers a quite distinctive approach to studying society. The starting point for these feminist epistemologies is a critique of masculine values like competitiveness and control, which are linked to a particular way of thinking which has dominated western thought for the last three hundred years. This recasts the conventional division of feminist thought into liberal, radical and socialist by putting epistemology rather than politics at the centre of debate. Liberal, radical and socialist feminisms are becoming less important as the ideologies on which they were based wane.⁸

A more interesting way of understanding contemporary feminism than the socialist, liberal and radical trichotomy is suggested by Sandra Harding, who classifies feminisms by their epistemological approach rather than their politics, dividing them into feminist empiricism, standpoint feminism and postmodern feminism.⁹ Feminist empiricism is roughly equivalent to liberal feminism, and involves researching the role and experiences of women in areas from which they have been excluded. This was an important part of the groundbreaking feminist work in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁰ Standpoint feminism argues that there is a distinctly feminist way of thinking which is based on different patterns of female socialisation. This will be discussed below in relation to the work of Nancy Hartsock. Postmodern feminism is radically antifoundational, holding that gender distinctions are based on discourses. These ideas will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, which will look at poststructuralism, the philosophical foundation for postmodernism.¹¹ Although these

Equality' in Mary Lyndon Shelly and Carole Pateman (eds) *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity 1991). This essay raises many of the themes of this chapter, starting from the identification of a problem in the *Vindication* 'in its uneasy alliance with the suspect notion of the essential sexual neutrality of the rational agent' (p. 122).

⁸ See Anthony Giddens *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics* (Cambridge: Polity 1994) for an account of this process

⁹ Sandra Harding *The Science Question in Feminism* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press 1986)

¹⁰ The work of Jean Bethke Elshtain, who is discussed below, is an important example of this approach.

¹¹ On the specifically feminist elements of this debate see Linda J. Nicholson (ed.)

Feminism/Postmodernism (London: Routledge 1990), and the formidable contributions of Judith

epistemological positions are vigorously contested, both at the meta-theoretical level and in relation to research programmes, some general points about the direction of feminism can be drawn out.

Feminist accounts of epistemology tend to argue that Cartesian rationality legitimises masculine authority by forcing us to think in terms of rigid distinctions between pairs of terms. This tradition is based on fundamental dichotomies between, for example, reason and emotion or care and justice, which many feminists claim are ideological and untenable. All of the characteristics that society has traditionally identified as positive, they argue, are associated with masculinity. The dichotomy between masculine and feminine defines the other divisions, and so a holistic and inclusive approach is only possible through a feminist critique.¹² Unfortunately, masculinist ways of thinking and acting have been accepted as universal, and so their link to our conception of masculinity has been obscured, and the concerns of women marginalised. Ideas of abstract or universal reason are all based on the imposition of masculine norms. Alison Jaggar notes that this myth of dispassionate enquiry “promotes a conception of epistemological justification vindicating the silencing of those, especially women, who are defined culturally as the bearers of emotion and so are perceived as more ‘subjective’, biased, and irrational. In our present social context, therefore, the ideal of the dispassionate investigator is a classist, racist, and especially masculinist myth.”¹³ The alternative epistemology that she develops is based on a recognition of the importance of emotion in the development of knowledge, and the claim that women are particularly well placed to reconcile this particular dichotomy. Although this is sometimes essentialised as a natural attribute

Butler – for example, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge 1999) and *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1997)

¹² A good account of how these dichotomies were established is provided by Genevieve Lloyd, ‘The Man of Reason’ in Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall (eds) *Women, Knowledge and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy* (New York: Routledge 1996). Hers is a thoughtful and nuanced account that shows greater historical sensitivity than many in its awareness of the emergence of the rationalist tradition from the renaissance, and its subsequent mediation through the romantics, among others.

¹³ Alison M. Jaggar, ‘Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology’ in Alison M. Jaggar and Susan Bordo (eds) *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 1990)

of women, feminists' political experience has cautioned them against approaches that claim to represent any 'natural order'. More often, it is grounded in the particular experiences of women, either qua women or qua the oppressed,¹⁴ as Alison Jaggar has explained: "Women's work of emotional nurturance has required them to develop a special acuity in recognizing hidden emotions and in understanding the genesis of those emotions. This emotional acumen can now be recognized as a skill in political analysis and validated in giving women a special advantage in both understanding the mechanisms of domination and envisioning freer ways to live."¹⁵

This approach reaches its apotheosis in feminist standpoint theory, most cogently developed by the Marxist feminist Nancy Hartsock. She argues that, "The concept of a standpoint structures epistemology in a particular way. Rather than a simple dualism, it posits a duality of levels of reality, of which the deeper level or essence both includes and explains the 'surface' or appearance, and indicates the logic by means of which the appearance inverts and distorts the deeper reality."¹⁶ This is an ingenious fusion of the feminist critique of dichotomous thinking and the Marxist critique of ideology, but Hartsock synthesises these elements into an original theory incorporating psychoanalysis, which starts from women's socialisation. Her use of Marxist categories is largely analogous, as she tears them away from their roots in materialist social theory and recasts them in the context of feminist thinking about socially constructed gender roles. Marx identified the proletariat as the agency for change because of its role in the production of commodities; Hartsock discusses the social importance of women as deriving from their role in the reproduction of human beings. She then adds psychoanalysis to this synthesis, claiming that,

¹⁴ The details of this debate are beyond the scope of this study, but it illustrates the variety of feminist approaches. See, for example, Alison M. Jaggar, 'Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology' in Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall (eds) *Women Knowledge and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy* (New York: Routledge 1996). See also the debate between Helen E. Longino and Kathleen Lennon in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Supplementary Vol. LXXI 1997, 'Feminist Epistemology as a Local Epistemology'

¹⁵ Jaggar Love and Knowledge p. 105

¹⁶ Nancy C. M. Hartsock, 'The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism' in Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka (eds) *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology and Philosophy of Science* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company 1983)

The more complex female relational world is reinforced by the process of socialization. Girls learn roles from watching their mothers; boys must learn roles from rules which structure the life of an absent male figure. Girls can identify with a concrete example present in daily life; boys must identify with an abstract set of maxims only occasionally concretely present in the form of the father.¹⁷

Her conclusion is that the process of socialisation leads men to view the world in terms of hostility and opposition, whereas the female experience leads women to view the world relationally. Hartsock believes that relational experiences are more valuable, and should be generalised across society.

A distinct feminist epistemology creates a secure basis for feminism as a distinct way of theorising about the world, rather than a merely political claim for equal rights on the basis of another ideological system, be it Marxism or liberalism. The centrality of epistemology is well expressed by the legal scholar Catherine MacKinnon, who has claimed that, "The point of view of a total system emerges as particular only when confronted, in a way it cannot ignore, by a demand from another point of view When seemingly ontological conditions are challenged from the collective standpoint of a dissident reality, they become visible as epistemological. Dominance suddenly appears no longer inevitable. When it loses its ground it loses its grip."¹⁸ This makes a strong and clear case for the importance of understanding feminist theory on the basis of its epistemology, but it also flags up the issue of agency, which will be discussed in more detail below. Previous radical approaches have tended to be based on the idea of active agency, engaging with and transforming the world. This approach is quite fundamentally challenged by feminist epistemology, which bases its claims at least in part on the fact of subordination rather than the possibility or capability of transcending that subordination. The model for feminist political

¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 295

¹⁸ Catherine A. MacKinnon *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press 1991) p. 239-240

practice thus emerges as the marginalised victim possessing the characteristics of caring and nurturing, rather than the active agent engaging and transforming.¹⁹

Taking feminist epistemology seriously shifts the ground of politics and provides a new basis for thinking about what constitutes political action. Of course, there is always the danger that the study of epistemology becomes an end in itself, but writers like Nancy Fraser have consistently reminded feminists of their political responsibility towards the issues of injustice and inequality.²⁰ Even in International Relations, which was noted as a comparatively retarded discipline in terms of the impact of feminism, we can see evidence of political commitments deriving from epistemological positions.

The Feminist is International?

Characterising feminism in relation to debates about epistemology helps to understand the nature of feminist theory today, but it is not at all obvious how this relates to International Relations. At one level, it is important to consider ideas at the highest level of development before considering their incorporation into the study of particular issues and debates. However, the connection is explicitly drawn out in the work of Kimberly Hutchings, who has incorporated an understanding of feminist epistemology into the study of International Relations. She discusses the work of standpoint theorists like Nancy Hartsock, which she rejects as counterposing one exclusive approach to another. Instead, she argues that, "Knowledge has to be

¹⁹ This contrast is clearest in the case of Marxism, but historically liberalism has also had a strong sense of agency, developed through the idea of, for example, civil rights campaigns. More recently, as suggested in chapter 4, liberalism has understood agency in a more emaciated way. A possible counter-example is feminist ideas about citizenship, and particularly Hannah Arendt's work on the *vita activa*, (see *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1999) which has generated a large secondary literature and informed much feminist writing on democratic theory. Space does not permit a full discussion of this issue, but a critique can be developed along the lines suggested in the discussion of democratisation in chapter 7, arguing that many writers understand democracy as a process of educating citizens rather than of citizens actively shaping the direction of their polity.

²⁰ Nancy Fraser, 'Equality, Difference and Democracy: Recent Feminist Debates in the United States' in Jodi Dean (ed) *Feminism and the New Democracy: Re-siting the Political* (London: Sage 1997) makes this point in the context of the debate about 'difference' feminism, concluding that, "cultural

redefined as a partial and tentative thing, because the subject/object of knowledge is never complete and is always shifting."²¹ Hutchings suggests that, "This is not going to make a universal theory of the international possible, but it does ground the possibility of a meaningful dialogue, because the relation is already concretely in place, mediating both the subject and object of knowledge."²² This brings us back to the title of her article, which links the personal and the international. Although a totalising theory may be impossible (and perhaps undesirable), we can engage in the normative investigation of social phenomena, an approach inspired by phenomenology, but developed in the context of an understanding of Foucault.²³ Following from this approach, the first question that must be considered is the nature of the political community that we are intervening in. Feminism, as discussed above, has a built-in hostility to dichotomous and exclusionary thinking, and this has often led feminist scholars in international relations to adopt a cosmopolitan approach.²⁴ Before making a hasty jump into International Relations, however, it is helpful to consider the analogous feminist writing on the division between the public and private spheres, which could be considered a more developed form of a similar argument.

Traditional accounts of politics have rested on an often unstated assumption about the division between a public sphere of political action and social interaction where norms are derived and enforced, and a private sphere of family life where our most intimate relationships are conducted and where we set our own standards and rules, albeit in the context of social pressures. This haven in a heartless world was the environment in which children were socialised and families conducted their own

differences can only be freely elaborated and democratically mediated on the basis of social equality" (p. 107, emphasis in original).

²¹ Kimberly Hutchings, 'The Personal is International: Feminist epistemology and the case of International Relations' in Kathleen Lennon and Margaret Whitford (eds) *Knowing the Difference: Feminist Perspectives in Epistemology* (London: Routledge 1994) p. 160

²² *ibid*, p. 160

²³ This approach is developed in *International Political Theory: Rethinking Ethics in a Global Era* (London: Sage 1999), Part II.

²⁴ See Kimberly Hutchings, 'Feminist Politics and Cosmopolitan Citizenship' in Kimberly Hutchings and Roland Dannreuther (eds) *Cosmopolitan Citizenship* (London: Macmillan 1999).

affairs.²⁵ In the public sphere, by contrast, we learn to be distrustful, to expect perfidy and dishonesty as well as honour and righteousness. Feminists have challenged this account in a number of ways. On the one hand, they have argued that the public sphere has been defined so as to exclude women. On the other, they claim that the private sphere is far from being a harmonious haven; rather, it is an arena where women and children can be abused, and men are protected from public sanction. By challenging the strict division between the public and private spheres, feminists have been able to rethink ideas the nature of the political community and about the nature and scope of politics, questioning rigid divisions between the state and civil society and implicitly undermining traditional accounts of international relations and the politics of security. Whereas conceptions of politics have been historically based on the possibility of external threats or internal subversion that threaten the very basis of the polis (usually the state), the feminist challenge to the public/private division suggests that we should re-focus our attention on interpersonal risks.²⁶ The best example of this is the discussion of domestic violence, which involves the exercise of the most basic form of power, brute force, at the most basic level, the interpersonal. Feminists have politicised this issue by arguing that it has gone unchallenged because of the division between public and private.²⁷ A form of harm which predominately affects women is allowed to happen because the public/private distinction dominates our understanding of the political. If we now extrapolate this insight to the international, we can see that the discourse of sovereignty also embodies a particular understanding of what is inside and what is outside the political. It assumes that the internal exercise of sovereignty should not

²⁵ See Christopher Lash *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: W. W. Norton 1995)

²⁶ Of course, there has been a great deal more to politics than this, but the protection of the political community has always been fundamental, from early modern political theorists who were immediately concerned with the threat of disintegration (Machiavelli, Hobbes), to nineteenth century writers who were either concerned to bring down the state (Marx, Bakunin) or with the defence of traditions against subversion (Burke, de Maistre) or extending liberties to expand the pool of people loyal to the state (Mill, Bentham).

²⁷ There is a huge literature on this. Some of the most important writings are, Marianne Hester, Liz Kelly and Jill Radford (eds) *Women, Violence and Male Power: Feminist Activism, Research and Practice* (Buckingham: Open University Press 1996), Sue Lees *Ruling Passions: Sexual Violence, Reputation and the Law* (Buckingham: Open University Press 1997)

be challenged externally; the implication is that sovereign states should not get involved in 'domestics' like female circumcision.

Feminists can challenge this in two ways. Some simply reverse the male/female dichotomy, placing the 'feminine' virtues ahead of the 'masculine' virtues – opening the private sphere, developing an ethic of care rather than right, and promoting values of nurturing and peace instead of conflict and war.²⁸ The other, more moderate, approach is to balance the discussion by incorporating feminist insights into mainstream concepts. This involves a more inclusive politics that brings together both sides of the male/female dichotomy, synthesising elements of both debates. Within feminist political theory, and especially in women's studies, the former approach is influential, not least because of the nature of academia and the siege mentality which has developed as a result of mainstream academia taking a long time to seriously consider feminist contributions.²⁹ In International Relations, however, the latter approach is perhaps more important. Two writers who stand out, for very different reasons, are Jean Bethke Elshtain and Cynthia Enloe. Elshtain has explicitly called for mediation between feminist and mainstream debates, in relation to the discussion of the public and private spheres. Enloe has applied feminist ideas to empirical investigations of security, expanding the agenda to take into account the wider understanding of politics that feminists have developed. The next section will consider the successes of feminist scholars in getting across these ideas in International Relations. It will begin by looking at security, as this has traditionally been one of the most important aspects of International Relations, and so it is a basis for assessing the impact and success of feminism in setting a new agenda. A discussion of law will follow, as feminists have been extremely important in the

²⁸ For example, Sara Ruddick *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (London: Women's Press 1990)

²⁹ See Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge *Professing Feminism: Cautionary Tales from the Strange World of Women's Studies* (New York: Basic Books 1994) and Christina Hoff-Summers *Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster 1994) for a critique of the discipline of women's studies. Two other celebrated critics of mainstream feminism are Camille Paglia *Sex, Art and American Culture* (London: Penguin 1993) and Katie Roiphe *The Morning After: Sex, Fear and Feminism* (Boston: Little, Brown 1994) and *Last Night of Paradise: Sex and Morals at the Century's End* (New York: Random House 1998). All are generally regarded as anti-feminist by many that they criticise.

development of critical legal theory, which has already had a considerable impact on the legal processes in Britain and North America. This has many implications for International Relations, and for international relations, as international law is rapidly developing in new directions and critical legal theory is having a significant role in its framing. Then the main theme of this study, sovereignty, will be considered. Two more general issues arising out of feminist work will be considered in the conclusion; the re-definition of International Relations, and the possibility of basing critical social theory on subaltern epistemology.

Security

The extension of the definition of security that is associated with post-positivist approaches is particularly marked in feminist writings. It is often claimed that conventional accounts of security are profoundly gendered, excluding the concerns of women in favour of a macho culture of militarism. As one prominent feminist writer has argued, “ ‘national security’ is particularly and profoundly contradictory for women.”³⁰ One does not need to be versed in feminism to accept that security is one of the more obviously gendered concepts in International Relations. International Relations has traditionally worked with an assumption that security should be understood primarily (even exclusively) in terms of the military defence of the state. Against this, feminists argue for a more rounded and inclusive understanding of security which emphasises the denigrated values of care and compromise that have been discredited by their association with femininity and hence with weakness. This approach to security requires a “more accurate understanding of existing insecurities: it requires politicizing structural violence as historically constituted – as contingent rather than natural – and specifying some of its implications and consequences.”³¹ It now becomes clear why feminist epistemology is so important. The broad definition of insecurities that feminists have adopted is similar to the ideas of risk that Ulrich

³⁰ V. Spike Peterson, ‘Security and Sovereign States: What is at stake in Taking Feminism Seriously?’ in V. Spike Peterson (ed) *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory* Boulder: Lynne Rienner 1992 p. 32

³¹ Peterson, Security p. 49-50

Beck and Anthony Giddens propose,³² but the feminists derive them specifically from the experiences of women. Since women have historically been excluded from the public sphere, they have not had a stake in national security, and the insecurities that they have perceived have been interpersonal and local. Feminists suggest that we shift the focus of security away from grandiose notions of protecting the nation and dispense with our myths of noble warriors in favour of a more feminised and holistic approach which takes seriously the experiences of women and bridges the dichotomies between public and private, local and global. It is a theory which owes a great deal to the study of radical feminist politics, such as the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, and is a concrete example of how theory can derive from the experiences of women. Another dimension to the feminist critique of security, however, is that it implicates the discipline of International Relations through its close ties with security studies. The fact that the (predominately male) discipline of International Relations accepted a narrow definition of security uncritically points to the need to pay more attention to feminist writings than many in the International Relations community have been prepared to do.

Among feminist writers, Elshtain's writing is closest to mainstream concerns, and her call to incorporate women's experience is posed in terms that those with a more conventional approach to security can relate to. She argues that masculine approaches to security are embodied in academic International Relations:

Characteristic of modern professional discourse in its most recent incarnations . . . is a proclamations of scientific knowledge; a presumption that politics can be reduced to questions of security, conflict management, and damage control; a patina of 'aseptic, ahistorical and anodyne terminology' ('window of vulnerability,' 'collateral damage,' 'crisis management,' 'escalation dominance') and a profound insouciance concerning the will to power,

³² see Chapter 7

including the promise of control over events, embedded in the concepts and tropes that comprise the discourse in the first place.³³

Although she is well aware that women – and feminists – have been implicated in the legitimization of the horrors associated with armed civic virtue, Elshtain offers us an alternative based on the incorporation of women into civic life, stretching as far as conscription in times of crisis. Her conservative disposition means that she has less of a problem with essentialised womanhood than other feminist writers do, and she believes that by adding feminine virtue to a civic ethos we can achieve a more humane and secure society.

Elshtain is a well-respected political theorist, but is treated with suspicion by some feminists for her alleged conservatism. For a less controversial feminist account of security, we must turn to one of the first feminists to look at International Relations, Cynthia Enloe, who goes further than Elshtain in trying to apply a feminist approach to security to expose the hidden biases and fill the lacunae of International Relations from a feminist perspective. She re-writes the conventional stories about security by giving voice to the excluded actors who are unacknowledged in conventional accounts. More than this, she has played an important part in broadening anti-war politics to include the forgotten victims, like the military wives whose plight is described in *Does Khaki Become You?*³⁴ Although her work is less theoretical than Elshtain's, we can derive a number of theoretical implications from her studies. In *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*,³⁵ she has discussed actors like diplomatic wives and banana growers whose activities are essential for the operation of the supposedly 'higher' politics of diplomatic negotiation, international finance and war. Concluding her discussion of these issues, she writes that, "Ideas about 'adventure', 'civilization', 'progress', 'risk', 'trust' and 'security' are all legitimized by certain kinds of masculine values and behavior, which makes them so potent in relations between

³³ Jean Bethke Elshtain *Women and War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1995) p. 89

³⁴ Cynthia Enloe *Does Khaki Become You?: The Militarisation of Women's Lives* (London: Pluto 1993), chapter 3

governments.”³⁶ Enloe’s feminist critique is remarkably similar to the accounts of risk developed by sociologists such as Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck, which I discuss in chapter 7, which raises the question of whether these ideas are simply accounting for changed circumstances rather than embodying a distinctive feminist approach. Indeed, a common criticism of Enloe is that her empirical bias prevents her from justifying her adoption of a feminist perspective. Discussing the Iran Contra Investigation, for example, she claims that the men who were testifying defended themselves by claiming that it is a dangerous world, implying that they need to protect it. She notes that,

No one questioned this portrayal of the world as permeated by risk and violence. No one even attempted to redefine ‘danger’ by suggesting that the world may indeed be dangerous, but especially so for those people who are losing access to land or being subjected to unsafe contraceptives. Instead, the vision that informed these male officials’ foreign-policy choices was of a world in which two super-powers were eyeball-to-eyeball, where small risks were justified in the name of staving off bigger risks – the risk of Soviet expansion, the risk of nuclear war. It was a world in which taking risks was proof of one’s manliness and therefore of one’s qualification to govern.³⁷

Perhaps this was true of this investigation, but today the high politics of the great powers is characterised, at least in part, by the feminised approach to risk that Enloe is proposing.³⁸ This is a theme that she has developed, and in her most recent book she has claimed that women require a level of “elemental security” in order to engage in theorising, suggesting that safety is a prerequisite for emancipatory politics, and

³⁵ Cynthia Enloe *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1990)

³⁶ *ibid.* p. 200

³⁷ *ibid.* p. 12

³⁸ Of course, *realpolitik* has not disappeared. However, great-power foreign policy is increasingly showing signs of adopting a more feminised approach, which goes deeper than mere rhetoric. See, for example, the concern about rape in war, the proliferation of apologies and the increasing emotionalism of leading politicians, and the politicisation of female circumcision and third world domestic violence, discussed in chapter 6.

perhaps even that it is a basic right.³⁹ In this argument, she is implicitly going a long way to answer this criticism, and pointing the way towards an approach that is specifically feminist.

Through these arguments, security is thus recast as the outlook of individuals rather than an abstract measure of the nation's safety. Through this lens, issues like domestic violence are likely to have as much impact on security as the balance of terror between two opposing states. Enloe argues that,

Nowhere is men's violent behavior toward the women and children in their households merely private. As Central American women are making clear, nowhere is such behavior merely national, either. Domestic violence is international insofar as it has become integral to any regime's attempt to assert its control over those sectors, which may want their society to develop quite a different relationship to the international order. Thus, to reform any country's police force to make it part of a genuine international peace process will require placing domestic violence on the agenda of new police training and development.⁴⁰

Following on from the discussion of public and private above, this quotation shows how the issue of security is used to redraw not only the boundaries between public and private, but also between national and international. This turn away from a strict division between politics inside and outside the state is an important dimension of the feminist approach to sovereignty, but before developing this analysis, a discussion of feminist approaches to law will provide a more secure foundation from which to understand the discussion of sovereignty.

³⁹ Cynthia Enloe *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1993) p. 38. There is a large literature on the idea of basic rights, but the most influential recent work is probably Henry Shue *Basic Rights: Subsistence, Affluence and US Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980)

⁴⁰ Enloe, *Morning After* p. 127

Feminist scholarship has been particularly important in the sphere of legal theory, with writers like Catherine MacKinnon inspiring legal reforms as well as reconceptualising legal relations.⁴¹ The basis of the feminist critique of law lies in the recognition that formal (legal) equality can coexist with actual inequality. At this level, the point is unarguable. By and large, women in the west enjoy full legal equality with men, and yet they continue to receive less pay, on average, than men. This sort of inequality cannot be explained in terms of the denial of formal rights. This is why feminists like Catherine MacKinnon and Carol Pateman argue that social inequality raises questions about the adequacy of legal equality, and legitimises their demands for partisan legal intervention on behalf of victims such as women.⁴² Both theorists have re-told stories from conventional political theory through feminist lenses to make this point, in MacKinnon's case adopting Marxist categories and in Pateman's book, *The Sexual Contract*,⁴³ re-writing social contract theory. Pateman argues that, "Juridical equality and social inequality – public/private, civil/natural, men/women – form a coherent social structure. If the complicity of feminists and socialists with contract is to end, attention must turn to subordination and the contradiction of slavery."⁴⁴ Pateman's argument derives its power from the fact that in spite of the success of the early feminist programme of achieving formal equality, inequalities clearly persist. She moves on from this insight to attempt to show that formal equality is a chimera that actually forms a barrier to the achievement of equality. Alongside the social contract, she argues, we must be able to tell the story of the sexual contract and the slave contract.

Canadian feminist Catherine MacKinnon has developed an approach to law that is distinctly feminist, reposing the central categories of legal theory in feminist terms. She argues that, "abstract rights authorize the male experience of the world.

⁴¹ With Andrea Dworkin, she helped to draft an anti-pornography ordinance in Minnesota and the Canadian legal codes against pornography.

⁴² This point is held in common with many critical legal theorists whose work is discussed in below.

⁴³ Carol Pateman *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity 1988)

Substantive rights for women would not. Their authority would be the currently unthinkable: nondominant authority, the authority of excluded truth, the voice of silence."⁴⁵ She is aware of the arguments against using the law to secure equality, but she counters with emotional testimony from victims rather than a substantive response that takes seriously the question of addressing feminist claims to a masculinist legal establishment.

MacKinnon does, however, go even further than Pateman in sketching out what a society would look like if we adopted a legal approach which rejects formal equality. She is quite prepared to argue against guarantees of formal equality like free speech in order to "open a space for subordinated voices, those shut down and shut out through the expressive forms inequality takes."⁴⁶ In her schema, the law is a political tool which can either remain a fig leaf disguising the operation of male power, or it can be harnessed for an oppositional politics by oppressed groups. After the Canadian government adopted an anti-pornography law which she drafted with Andrea Dworkin she concluded that, "this was not big, bad state power jumping on poor powerless individual citizen, but a law passed to stand behind a comparatively powerless group in its social fight for equality against socially powerful and exploitative groups What it did was make more space for the unequal to find voice."⁴⁷

The basis of this argument is her distinction between radical legal theories based on ideas of difference and those based on inequality. In her first book she argued that, "Where difference doctrine searches for the perfectly balanced rule, an inequality theory reaches for a political strategy to guide legal intervention on behalf of the powerful against those who are not likely to relinquish their place. If the problem is inequality, the target is determinate acts, however unconscious, which preserve the control, access to resources, and privilege of one group at the expense of another.

⁴⁴ Pateman op.cit. p. 229

⁴⁵ *Toward a Feminist Theory* p. 249

⁴⁶ Katherine A. MacKinnon *Only Words* (London: Harper Collins 1994) p. x

⁴⁷ *ibid.* p. 74

The only remedy is redistribution.”⁴⁸ Redistribution sounds like a conventional leftist argument about political economy, but MacKinnon takes categories derived from socialist and Marxist discussion of economic inequality and re-poses them in terms of legal inequalities. Indeed, throughout her writings MacKinnon never seriously examines the argument that the law could be an inappropriate arena for the fight for substantive equality.⁴⁹ Instead, she responds to criticism with emotive testimony from abused and mistreated women, gaining the moral high ground, but never questioning that her approach is the correct response to their plight. This form of political correctness has gained her many enemies, who find it easy to dismiss her work. This is unfortunate, as it is extremely creative and interesting, although, as will be argued later, inimicable to the ends that she espouses.

Nancy Hirschmann has adopted a similar approach to formal equality in re-writing the history of political theory from a feminist standpoint: “the phenomenon of unequal starting points or bargaining positions raises serious problems for consent theory that go beyond gender to race and class. Since liberal consent theory works from stated premises of formal equality, gross substantive inequality will ensure political inequality, not only in political voice in determining the laws but also in the ways the laws apply to people.”⁵⁰ Her argument draws strength from the fact that the operation of law is unequal in societies marked by inequality. Not only do the disadvantaged have less opportunity to participate in the political process of formulating laws, but the law discriminates against them in practice. The judiciary generally penalise oppressed groups more severely, and this can only partly be explained by their having relatively less access to the law, dispensed as it is by expensive lawyers and barristers. This is the point of Anatole France’s claim, invoked by Elizabeth Kiss, that ‘the law, in its egalitarian majesty, forbids rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges’.⁵¹ But the final point that Hirschmann makes

⁴⁸ Catherine A. MacKinnon *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1979) p. 127

⁴⁹ For example, taking up the arguments of Neumann and Kirchheimer, discussed below.

⁵⁰ *Rethinking Obligation* p. 115

⁵¹ Anatole France *Le Lys Rouge* (New York: French and European Publications 1964), quoted in Elizabeth Kiss ‘Alchemy or Fool’s Gold?: Assessing feminist doubts about rights’, p. 14 in Mary

implicitly raises a problem with the feminist approach to law that she does not draw out. Since the formally equal legal system discriminates against the socially disadvantaged in practice, MacKinnon and others argue that the law should be changed to reflect inequality. However, if they are right that the most important thing is social inequality, then there is no reason why the law will not continue to reflect inequalities while the social inequality that it is based on goes unchallenged.⁵² The argument here is that there is a logical separation between formal and informal discrimination. It is still worth striving for formal equality alongside other, extra-legal interests. This is, of course, diametrically opposed to MacKinnon's approach because she limits herself to reforms that can be achieved using the law as her tool, rather than appealing directly to citizens. As it must be conceded that substantive equality cannot be achieved through legal equality, she is forced to argue against legal equality itself rather than see it as part of a bigger project involving her fellow citizens.

It is noteworthy that these ideas have only just begun to filter into International Relations, and that the theorists that have been discussed in this section are from different disciplines. They have, however, begun to be incorporated. Feminists in International Relations have not yet discussed these ideas in any depth, but MacKinnon has discussed some of the international implications of her work in her Oxford Amnesty Lecture.⁵³ She argues that human rights are based on male experience, and so, "when men use their liberties socially to deprive women of theirs, it does not look like a human rights violation. But when men are deprived of theirs by governments, it does."⁵⁴ Following on from the theory of law that she developed in *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, MacKinnon argues that state power legitimises the exercise of male power. In International Relations, a feminist

Lindon Shanley and Uma Narayan (eds) *Reconstructing Political Theory: Feminist Debates* (Cambridge: Polity 1997)

⁵² Ironically, this is exactly what happened with the Canadian anti-pornography law that MacKinnon drafted with Andrea Dworkin. John Fekete *Moral Panics: Biopolitics Rising* (Montreal: Robert Davies 1995), explains that these laws were used against the same groups who have always been victimised by the legal authorities – initially a lesbian bookshop in the case of the anti-pornography legislation.

⁵³ Catherine A. MacKinnon, 'Crimes of War, Crimes of Peace' in Stephen Shute and Susan Hurley (eds) *On Human Rights: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 1993* (New York: Basic Books 1993)

response to this is to take seriously the issues currently outside current international law like domestic violence. Given her penchant for bellicose rhetoric, however, MacKinnon concentrates her argument on the issue of rape as a war crime, which is a more logical extension from current international agreements regulating the conduct of war. Developing Susan Brownmiller's argument that men hold power over women through rape,⁵⁵ MacKinnon believes that rape is not an incidental by-product of war but a weapon used by men against women during war.

Feminists are defensive at the accusation of cultural imperialism, but once law is seen as a tool to remedy inequality then intervention becomes less problematic. This paradox is even more acute in discussions of sovereignty, which will be considered below. Although she endorses the value of cultural diversity, MacKinnon claims that, "cultural survival is as contingent upon equality between women and men as it is upon equality among people."⁵⁶ This claim, clearly following her discussion of law, leads to the dismissal of the significance of sovereign boundaries, as sexual equality is implicitly seen as trumping claims to self-determination. Hence, the idea of sovereignty is eroded in the interests of other, more important ends. This is closely linked to the feminist discussion of law in the domestic context, where the legal subject is undermined in the interests of defending group rights and achieving equality. In international relations, the 'subject' of the sovereign state is undermined, in MacKinnon's argument, in the interests of cultural groups within and across state boundaries, and certain goods like sexual equality, which she values above legal equality between legal subjects and sovereign states. This is the context for the feminist discussion of sovereignty in International Relations, although as we will see many of the most interesting writers here have mediated these demands with a greater sensitivity to the charge of cultural imperialism that many legal scholars have demonstrated. However, the legal discussion provides an important context as the (limited) defence of sovereignty by writers like Elshtain does not involve a defence of

⁵⁴ *ibid* pp 92-93

⁵⁵ Susan Brownmiller *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1975)

⁵⁶ Catherine A. MacKinnon *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press 1987) p. 68

sovereignty, but sensitivity to cultural diversity. This implies a deep cosmopolitanism, which accepts sovereignty in so far as it is consistent with the defence of cultural diversity, but disallows it when it contravenes certain standards of behaviour. The next section will look at how these themes have been developed in discussion of sovereignty in International Relations, and the conclusion will assess the implications of this approach.

Sovereignty

Although feminists have been perhaps more muted in their criticisms of sovereignty than other post-positivists they still reject the rigid dichotomies of inclusion and exclusion that historically have characterised the discourse of sovereignty. Ecofeminists have been particularly hostile to the invocation of sovereignty as a defence against evolving international environmental norms, but their criticism is tempered by the realisation that processes of globalisation are accelerating environmental degradation as well as undermining sovereign autonomy. One reason for this is that of the feminists writing about sovereignty in International Relations are fairly conservative by comparison to those writing about epistemology and law. Elshtain is the exemplar of this, with her Catholic background and promotion of a limited form of patriotism based on civic identity. More important is the sensitivity of feminists to difference, and their reluctance to countenance anything that might be thought of as culturally imperialist. However, most of these feminists do not respect sovereignty over issues like female circumcision, which suggests that their defence of sovereignty may be more muted than a superficial reading would indicate. The biggest difficulty in reading this work is that it is not clear which elements are specifically feminist, and which are simply part of a wider cosmopolitan tradition. Hutchings has argued that feminism should be cosmopolitan, but it is not clear what is distinct about a feminist understanding of cosmopolitanism.⁵⁷ It could refer to the

⁵⁷ Kimberly Hutchings, 'Feminist Politics and Cosmopolitan Citizenship' in Kimberly Hutchings and Roland Dannreuther (eds) *Cosmopolitan Citizenship* (London: Macmillan 1999). This chapter develops an understanding of a feminist concept of citizenship, and why it is most appropriately understood as cosmopolitan citizenship, but its development of a feminist cosmopolitanism is a

normative basis that their cosmopolitanism derives from, or to the issues that they identify as important.

Cynthia Enloe's application of feminist thought to empirical studies concentrates on the issues that feminist should be concerned with. She hints at one reason why feminists might be more sympathetic to the idea of sovereignty than many of the other post-positivist approaches that have been discussed in this thesis:

Nationalism has provided millions of women with a space to be international actors. To learn that one's culture is full of riches, to learn that outsiders depend on coercion not innate superiority to wield their influence, to recognize bonds of community where before there were only barriers of class and party – this has been empowering. National consciousness has induced many women to feel confident enough to take part in public organizing and public debate for the first time in their lives. Furthermore, nationalism, more than many other ideologies, has a vision that includes women, for no nation can survive without culture being transmitted and children being born and nurtured.⁵⁸

Although many third world women would probably prefer to partake in the benefits of western civilization rather than indulge themselves in Enloe's cultural relativism, she surely has a point when she claims that national liberation movements schooled women in the practice of politics, and broke down parochial patriarchy. Even in countries where women are treated appallingly today, like Algeria, women played a full and active role in the struggle for liberation.⁵⁹ Just as the Leninist demand for self-determination was premised on the belief that nationalism was a progressive force when nations were oppressed, Enloe realises that third world feminism emerged

secondary concern. It argues that a fuller understanding of citizenship demands a reconceptualisation of political community. In other words, we can gain a richer feminist understanding of citizenship if we adopt a cosmopolitan approach, but it is less clear that we can reach a specifically feminist position on cosmopolitanism.

⁵⁸ Enloe, *Bananas* p. 61

out of the struggles for national independence, and that this can continue to play a progressive organising role for women. However, Enloe does not draw out any general feminist lessons about the importance of sovereignty for normative International Relations. Her writing is an interesting and useful correction to the biases of other approaches, and is a salutary warning against dismissing every aspect of nationalism as backward, but it does not amount to a theoretical discussion of sovereignty.

Elshtain has written more directly on the role of sovereignty in the modern world. She puts forward a partial defence of sovereignty based on an account of civic patriotism. In an article that can be read as a postscript to *Women and War*, Elshtain traces the genealogy of ideas about sacrifice. She concludes that,

the sacrificial political identity I have traced is very much a relational, embedded, interdependent self. Care – *caritas* – sacrifice: these are ancient themes, not new ones; primal constructions not modern discoveries. What we require is a complex moral universe, a world of justice *and* mercy, autonomy *and* caring, particular ties *and* moral aspirations. In such a universe, one adumbrated in the world of a Michnik or a Havel, freedom and responsibility are living possibilities; the self is very much a modern identity, at once committed yet aware of the irony and limits to all commitments; prepared to sacrifice, but wary of all calls to sacrifice. This identity is, in the main, antiheroic. The hero emerges, when it does, as a modern form of ‘*Hier ich stande. Ich kann nicht anders.*’ The stress is on the ‘*Ich*’, and the presumption is that none should be commanded to do the supererogatory; none should be *required* to give the last full measure of devotion. But to live in a universe in which no one was prepared, in which no such ‘*Ich*’ was any

⁵⁹ I can think of no better illustration of this than the depiction of women liberation fighters in Guilio Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers*, which was closely based on the events of the time.

longer constructed and nothing was worth sacrificing for, would be to live in a moral universe impoverished beyond our poor powers of imagination.⁶⁰

This rousing conclusion puts paid to many a mindless caricature of feminist International Relations. Elshtain is certainly not guilty of merely inverting 'masculine' values. She proposes a sophisticated and attractive vision of civic patriotism, and although it is rooted in an idea of a feminist ethic it is compatible with other approaches. Although her civic ethic is derived from an understanding of the feminist tradition, it also owes a great deal to a long tradition of writing about civic virtue in political theory going back to Plato. Elshtain is trying to create a dialogue between feminism and political theory by bringing different values together, echoing Beck's political programme in *The Reinvention of Politics*, where he quotes Kandinsky to argue for a politics of 'and' rather than 'or'.⁶¹ She does this with great verve, drawing strength from a sustained engagement with both traditions and developing an interesting analysis of sovereignty. For all this, however, there is little there that could be described as a feminist approach in the way that, for example, MacKinnon represents a feminist approach to law.

In the end, it does not much matter that there is little from a distinctly feminist perspective on the role of sovereignty in normative International Relations. It would be more fruitful to understand it as a disposition towards cosmopolitanism that derives from a suspicion of rigid divisions between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' and a certain alienation from state politics that excluded (and in some cases still excludes) women from its political processes for so long. Indeed, feminism can draw strength from the fact that it can freely adopt ideas from other perspectives, and develop an approach to international relations that takes cosmopolitanism as its starting point. A more important aspect of feminist thought, and one linked to its cosmopolitan disposition, is its approach to agency, which will be considered below.

⁶⁰ Jean Bethke Elshtain, 'Sovereignty, Identity, Sacrifice' in V. Spike Peterson (ed.) op.cit. 1992 pp 152-153, her emphasis

⁶¹ Ulrich Beck *The Reinvention of Politics: Rethinking Modernity in the Global Social Order* (Cambridge: Polity 1997), chapter 1.

Conclusion

One of the main intentions of this section is to highlight the most interesting and important feminist work that has a bearing on International Relations. For this reason, I have saved most of my criticisms until the end, and concentrated on building up a strong case for feminist approaches and clarifying the issues at stake. Given the feminist emphasis on individual insight, I feel justified in ending with a more personal response than is usual in academic writing. First, however, it is important to acknowledge its strengths. The most interesting feminist work in international relations has introduced material from political theory that remains unfamiliar to the discipline. Elshtain, in particular, has shown the relevance of political theory for international relations as much as she has made a case for feminist theory. Furthermore, feminist scholars have played an important role in enriching our understanding of what counts as International Relations. However, although a number of examples of this were approvingly cited above, a note of caution should be sounded here, for although many scholars in the discipline still work with a rather emaciated conception of what it should be about, some feminists have gone too far the other way, and taken the approach of 'anything goes'. A popular introductory text exemplifies this problem: "feminists claim that International Relations are about numerous phenomena which fundamentally affect the lives of women and men throughout the world and which, because of the primacy given to the 'high politics' of peace and security policy, have gone largely unnoticed, unrecognised and unanalysed."⁶² All sorts of problems affect women and men around the world, but International Relations becomes meaningless if we include all of them. There is plenty of scope for different understandings of what it might constitute – political relations between states versus an economic emphasis, for example – but there is a trajectory in feminism towards denying the importance of global determinants altogether in favour of a focus on the interpersonal. There is a disturbing irony that at a time when global determinants like Western foreign policies or the behaviour of the international market have a greater impact than ever before in human history, feminist

⁶² Sandra Whitworth *Feminism and International Relations* (London: Macmillan 1997) p. xi

scholars turn their attention to the most immediate inter-personal issues. It is not my intention to (re)define a set of issues that International Relations 'should' be concerned with – there is plenty of room for contestation – but including everything is as corrosive as excluding everything.

This brings me to the main criticisms of feminist approaches, one based on its epistemology and the other on its account of agency, although they are closely tied together. First, an obvious criticism of feminist epistemology that any approach that privileges the insights of either women or the oppressed is even more exclusive than the putatively universal approaches that preceded them. This trivialises the approach somewhat, as they could argue that the main point is that the way that oppressed groups understand their own experiences is important, and should be taken into account in scholarly studies – after all, no feminist scholars yet have based academic books or articles entirely on their own experiences. However, it still denigrates the activity of scholarship and has a corrosive effect on our attempts to understand the major dynamics of international relations. If we start from the accounts of diplomatic wives and banana growers we certainly get a new and interesting angle on international relations, but if we take feminist epistemology to its logical conclusion then we would all have to write exclusively from these perspectives.⁶³ Banana growers and diplomatic wives have no special understanding of the global dynamics that shape their circumstances; indeed, the whole point of International Relations is that it looks at many different kinds of evidence to arrive at understandings that transcend the necessarily partial experiences of different groups. There is no clear basis for judgement in feminist accounts of epistemology. In the end, this means that they have to be exclusive, and it is hard to imagine how they could be combined with other approaches to International Relations.

⁶³ This is not meant in any way as a criticism of Enloe. Her studies of banana growers and diplomatic wives are valuable contributions to our understanding of the world, and she does not make a case for feminist epistemology. I am merely arguing that the kind of work that she does is not incompatible with more traditional diplomatic history.

The second criticism of feminism is its account of agency, which will be discussed in more detail below. Against the idea of the human subject acting upon the world, feminists propose that we are interconnected through society, and owe duties to one another. Whilst this is a corrective to some banal and unmediated celebrations of agency, it produces a rather disturbing model of politics. Instead of acting upon the world on the basis of an understanding of our own interests, and with the presumption that we can make it better for ourselves, either as individuals or alongside others who share our priorities, a feminist understanding of politics suggests that we should act on others' behalf. This brings us back to epistemology, since we are asked to try to understand the world on the basis of the experiences of the oppressed. This suggests a philosophically idealistic approach that understands the world as in some way identified with the experiences of victims, without any possibility of an external or universalist reference point. The politics that this creates consists of people contesting different good intentions towards the oppressed, but with no way of judging between them. Perhaps most worrying of all is that among all of these little narratives there seems to be no room left for challenges to dynamic global forces that determine all of our lives, since we have no way of accessing knowledge about them. It is perhaps a cheap shot, but it seems telling that feminist epistemologies have developed in universities at a time when women enjoy more formal equality than ever before, and middle class women in the West are barely worse off than men. Above all, endorsing this approach to politics demands a rather negative view of the prospects for equality, since it assumes that there really are no universal human interests, and that the politics of interest must necessarily lead to oppression. A critical universalist theory, on the other hand, would assume that, qua humans, we have many interests in common, and that it is by appeal to interest rather than pity that the world can be changed for the better.

In spite of these criticisms, it must be conceded that feminism has established itself as a vibrant and dynamic approach to international relations, and it has much more to offer than many of its detractors realise. Of course, my own reservations might simply derive from my socialisation as a man, and my prejudice towards

universalism. But I think that it is right to maintain a sceptical attitude towards theories that allow no judgement on the basis of universal criteria. Anyone with an orientation towards humanism cannot but be moved by many of the classic works in the feminist canon, such as Wollstonecraft, or Marilyn French's classic novel, *The Women's Room*, which can be readily understood by any human being. Although this chapter has attempted a balanced analysis and offered some considered criticisms, one's attitude towards these ideas seems necessarily to come down to a particular disposition, and so the task at hand is one of clarifying the fundamental issues rather than trying to formulate a decisive refutation.⁶⁴ I have suggested that the main issues at stake concern how we understand politics and how we think about the nature of knowledge itself. These are issues that will never (and, perhaps, should never) be resolved, but it seems to me that the feminist legacy of struggling for equality is best carried forward on the basis of the traditional values of universalism, agency and sovereignty that today's feminists are attacking.

Critical Theory

So far I have been using the term 'critical theory' to lump together all of the recent radical approaches to international relations. But it also has a more specific meaning, referring to the writers associated with the Frankfurt School for Social Research, which was established in 1923 under the directorship of Karl Grünberg. I do not intend to cover the history of critical theory exhaustively as it is less controversial than the other approaches that I have discussed, and it has been better served by other studies.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ On the development of the Frankfurt School see Martin Jay *The Dialectical Imagination: A history of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1996), David Held *An Introduction to Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Polity 1989) and Seyla Benhabib *Critique, Norm and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press 1986)

Initially the school was associated with the Marxist tradition, but it was more receptive to other strands of social theory such as Freudianism. Writers like Heinrich Grossmann developed the Marxist critique of political economy in his neglected masterpiece, *The Law of Accumulation*.⁶⁶ In 1931, however, Max Horkheimer became director of the institute and it developed a more distinct approach to social theory through the writings of men like Eric Fromm and Herbert Marcuse. Above all, Horkheimer's successor Theodore Adorno established a critical approach to social theory that owed very little to the Marxist roots of the institute. This tradition of critical theory has had remarkably little impact in International Relations, in marked contrast to disciplines like psychology and cultural studies which are heavily imbued with their imprint. It is Adorno's renegade research student, Jürgen Habermas, who has dominated the critical literature on International Relations.

Habermas offers a highly developed utopian scheme for an ideal society based on the norm of free and uncoerced communication.⁶⁷ It is against this ideal that we can measure the legitimacy of our own society. Habermas begins by distinguishing two different kinds of rationality which are appropriate to different spheres of human activity. Instrumental reason is concerned with the most effective and efficient means for implementing objectives that have already been decided upon. This type of rationality is to be found in literature on management, for example, which is concerned to achieve the objective of maximising profits. Against this rationality Habermas counterposes communicative action which is appropriate for determining the ends which a society aims for. This rationality is appropriate for the public sphere of deliberation where political and moral issues are determined. The history of the last two hundred years is read by Habermas as the extension of instrumental rationality into ever-expanding spheres, going beyond its legitimate application and squeezing communicative action out of the public sphere. To remedy this, Habermas proposes a model of communicative action that sets out the ethical demands on

⁶⁶ Heinrich Grossmann *The Law of Accumulation and Breakdown of the Capitalism System Being also A Theory of Crisis* (London: 1992)

⁶⁷ This is developed in *Theory of Communicative Action*. On the development of Habermas's thought see Thomas McCarthy *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (London: Hutchinson 1978)

speakers. To qualify as legitimate, statements must be intelligible, true, justified and sincere.⁶⁸ By this he means that statements conform to the technical requirements of grammar to the extent that they can be understood, that the factual content is correct, that they embody a claim to normative rightness and that there is no intention to deceive.

Critical theorists believe that positivism's mimicking of the natural sciences is not merely misguided or wrong, it is dangerous and reactionary. Max Horkheimer explains that,

The traditional idea of theory is based on scientific activity as carried on within the division of labour at a particular stage in the latter's development. It corresponds to the activity of the scholar which takes place alongside all the other activities of a society but in no immediately clear connection with them. In this view of theory, therefore, the real social function of science is not made manifest; it speaks not of what theory means in human life, but only of what it means in the isolated sphere in which for historical reasons it comes into existence. Yet as a matter of fact the life of society is the result of all the work done in the various sectors of production.⁶⁹

Traditional theory is concerned with solving technical problems, with formulating general laws, but not with reflecting on its own ideological role. The distinctive feature of critical theory is its of ideology. Apparently neutral scientific theory in fact disguises particular interests and bolsters the authority of a particular conception of social order. Critical theory exposes the ideological nature of these ideas with the aim of increasing human freedom. More recently Jürgen Habermas has posed critical

⁶⁸ Anthony Giddens, 'Jürgen Habermas' in Quentin Skinner (ed.) *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Canto 1997) p. 128

⁶⁹ Max Horkheimer *Traditional and Critical Theory* in Max Horkheimer *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Herder and Herder 1972) p. 197

theory, which aims at emancipation, against technical methodologies in the natural sciences and interpretative methods in the historical/hermeneutical sciences.⁷⁰

These ideas have their roots in the French Revolution, when intellectuals allied themselves with the various competing factions which were divided into right and left. The very word ideology was coined in this period, and acquired its current negative connotations when Napoleon turned against the republicanism of the ideologues.⁷¹ In the nineteenth century this culminated in Marx's identification of ideology as false consciousness, and his linking of the concept to class interests that laid the basis for a critical social theory with an explicitly emancipatory intent. This theoretical tradition became caught in the political and intellectual mire of Stalinist orthodoxy, and in the 1920s and 1930s the basis for contemporary critical theory was established. In Germany, members of the Frankfurt School like Horkheimer fused Marxist theory with Freud's work on the subconscious, and in Italy Antonio Gramsci wrote from his fascist prison cell of the need for cultural revolution and the development of a proletarian counter-ideology. Both of these theories have undergone a great number of revisions and re-workings, but they form the basis of contemporary critical theories. This chapter will concentrate on the German version of critical theory that has been the most influential in International Relations through the work of Andrew Linklater. This by no means exhausts the possibilities of critical theory, however, and there are also writers like Cox who have turned to Gramsci for a critical approach to contemporary international relations.⁷²

The application of critical theory to International Relations is a quite recent development. On one level, of course, these critical theories all have a critique of positivism, and the Frankfurt School in particular developed in self-conscious

⁷⁰ Jürgen Habermas *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Cambridge: Polity 1986). Although Habermas has since moved beyond this formulation, it shows the self-understanding of the critical theorists

⁷¹ See Jorge Larraín *The Concept of Ideology* (London: Hutchinson 1979), Terry Eagleton *Ideology* (London: Verso 1991)

⁷² Robert W. Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory' *Millennium* (Vol 10 1981 pp 126 – 155) and 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method' *Millennium* (Vol 12 1983 pp 162 – 176) Both of these essays are reproduced in

opposition to positivism. However, the account of post-positivism given in this thesis has emphasised the coherent normative vision shared by post-positivists over the methodological disputes that engage so much of their energy in debate with one another. From this point of view, critical theory would seem to assume much less importance as it derives from ideas that have been around for a very long time. Indeed, Frankfurt School writers like Neumann and Kirchheimer were used in an earlier section to defend traditional conceptions of sovereignty against post-positivist critics. The answer lies in the way in which contemporary critical theorists have rehabilitated their revolutionary legacy in an age devoid of revolutionary challenges. Marxism was based on concepts like human subjectivity, historical transformation and universalism. Today's critical theorists are concerned with linguistic analysis and social inclusion.

Linklater's writings will be the focus of this section. His work will be discussed together, although the emphasis in his writing has changed over his career. His first book, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations*⁷³ developed a post-Marxist theory which drew on earlier writers like Kant and Pufendorf, and this was followed with *Beyond Realism and Marxism*⁷⁴ which pursued this theme with a discussion of realism which focussed on the English School. A postscript was added to his first book in 1990 dealing with Foucault and Habermas,⁷⁵ and these thinkers have influenced his thinking in his latest contribution to critical international theory, *The Transformation of Political Community*.⁷⁶ In this book he has moved a long way from the Marxist theories that were his foil in earlier works, and he draws instead upon the Habermasian turn in critical theory. This section will begin by introducing this tradition, before turning to the themes of critical theory in international relations, which will be discussed with one eye on the Marxist theories that they turned against

Robert W. Cox with Timothy J. Sinclair *Approaches to World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999)

⁷³ 2nd edition (London: Macmillan 1990)

⁷⁴ *Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations* (London: Macmillan 1990)

⁷⁵ In *Men and Citizens*, op. cit.

⁷⁶ *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge: Polity 1998)

as the writers discussed in this section acknowledge a greater debt to Marxism than Habermas perhaps does.

Critical Theory and Order

There are a number of parallels between critical theory and the English School, which become particularly apparent in their concern for order. Habermas writes that, "Because popular sovereignty no longer concentrates in a collectivity, or in the physically tangible presence of the united citizens or their assembled representatives, but only takes effect in the circulation of reasonably structured deliberations and decisions, one can attribute a harmless meaning to the proposition that there cannot be a sovereign in the constitutional state. But this interpretation must be carefully defined so as not to divest popular sovereignty of its radical-democratic content."⁷⁷ He is arguing that the law should no longer represent the general will as it was conceived by classical liberal theory. He believes that times have changed, and the legal and constitutional system must adapt itself to the fact that citizens express their political will in a different way. The law, essentially, should uphold a discourse ethic that constrains parties towards agreement and does not allow any one group to exclude any other. Once the sovereign has been removed, Habermas is able to say that: "The discrepancy between, on the one hand, the human-rights content of classical liberties and, on the other, their form as positive law, which initially limits them to a nation-state, is just what makes one aware that the discursively grounded 'system of rights' points beyond the constitutional state in the singular toward the globalization of rights."⁷⁸ In Habermas's version of law the discourse ethic becomes the impersonal arbiter in every conflict situation. As it is above challenge, Habermas excludes any group that wants to challenge the rules of the game – and in his vision of democracy it really is reduced to a game. Moreover, it is an idea which is

⁷⁷ Habermas *Between Facts and Norms* p.136

⁷⁸ *ibid*, p. 456

amenable to co-option into the risk society thesis as it would have the practical effect of concretising the very prejudices that Beck and Giddens celebrate.⁷⁹

The reduced horizons of today's critical theorists sharply contrast with the Promethean visions of Marx and the other radical thinkers of earlier ages. This reflects the character of our age, as outlined in chapter two. On the level of individual behaviour, the risk consciousness that Beck and Giddens have describes leads to a stultifying cautiousness and aversion to even the most obscure risks. Theorists of reflexive modernity have consciously incorporated this outlook into their social theory, but critical theory perhaps represents the best unconscious assimilation of the politics of caution. International relations is an instructive example of this. Marxists have never developed a normative theory of international relations as they have followed Marx in believing that inequality and barbarism would only be ameliorated by the establishment of a global communist state. Marxists have instead analysed the relationship between economic exploitation and political oppression at the global level. Of course, there has always been a strong reformist element in Marxist thought, but they have never developed an independent theory of international relations, drawing instead upon a liberal tradition of the amelioration of inequality by western paternalists. Linklater stands outside both of these traditions. He writes that, 'a post-Marxist critical theory of international relations must concede that technical and practical orientations to foreign policy are inescapable at least at this juncture. Such an approach must appreciate the need for classical realist methods of order and legitimacy in the context of anarchy.'⁸⁰ This seems to follow Habermas's distinction between instrumental and communicative action only to conclude that at present we must be content to apply instrumental reason to many problems in international politics because, he continues, 'the project of emancipation will not make significant

⁷⁹ This has been put into practice in the procedures for the Northern Ireland Peace Talks, which allowed unpopular groups who were more interested in consensus, like the Women's Coalition a disproportionate influence and forced parties towards a consensual solution. The important point to note is that the whole process was forced through by the British and American governments, whose presence could not be challenged.

⁸⁰ Andrew Linklater p. 32

progress if international order is in decline.⁸¹ It is at this juncture that Linklater brings together Frankfurt School critical theory with ideas about international society developed by the English School in International Relations. By claiming that order is the precondition for progress he moves decisively away from Marxist critical theory and almost to conservatism. Certainly, it is the very opposite of Marx's insistence on the importance of international revolution proceeding from below.

Linklater's privileging of international order should not be understood as simply a conservative project; we cannot doubt the sincerity of his desire for international justice. It does, however, undermine the possibilities for this change taking place, as he is relying on the agency of those with power in the international order as it is presently conceived. It is a surprising starting point for a 'critical' theory to say that its priority is the maintenance of order. The only way that we can make sense of Linklater's bizarre statement is by contextualising his critical theory within the discussion of risk. Marx was only marginally concerned with the victims of his society, who he treated in a strikingly instrumental fashion. The poorest of the poor, termed the lumpenproletariat, were disdained by both Marx and his followers. People in the periphery were treated as uncivilised in the main, and Marx welcomed the idea that the benefits of western civilization could be extended to them through colonisation. Even the working class were treated instrumentally, as the universal agency that could bring about the revolution that he hoped would occur, raising the position of all classes in society. Linklater, in contrast to Marx but alongside many other critical theorists today, bases his criticisms of society on the kind of moralistic attachment to victims that Marx and Engels ridiculed as utopian socialism.⁸² The term that Linklater uses for these victims, in common with the New Labour government in Britain, is the 'excluded'.

Theorising exclusion has become a growth industry in recent years and has been accelerated by the British Economic and Social Research Council prioritising it as an

⁸¹ *ibid*, p. 32

⁸² Most famously in Fredrick Engels *Anti-Dühring* (Moscow: Progress Publishers 1977), and especially in part three which has frequently been reprinted on its own as *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*

area that they are keen to fund and the New Labour government establishing the Social Exclusion Unit.⁸³ It is particularly important in the kind of post-Marxist project that Linklater is engaged in, as it de-prioritises Marx's one-sided emphasis on class oppression in favour of the valorisation of the experiences of other oppressed groups. It also breaks the link between radical theory and historicism as, "The sensitivity to exclusion in the international system during the last century, and in modern societies in the last two hundred years, invites the more general observation that social inclusion and exclusion is important in all societies, irrespective of place or time."⁸⁴ The theme of inclusion and exclusion lends coherence to his critical project without resorting to the essentialism that played such a great role in the discrediting of Marxism. However, the theme of inclusion is quite different from previous radical projects, which have prioritised fundamental change over including people in the existing system, regardless of how much change is implied by inclusion.

Democratisation

The critical theoretic approach has been immensely influential in the burgeoning literature on democratisation. Indeed, one of the first people to use the term democratisation was the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács.⁸⁵ David Held, one of the most important contemporary writers on democratisation, has also been heavily influenced by the critical theoretic approach after writing one of the most-cited works on the Frankfurt School.⁸⁶ For writers like Andrew Linklater, democratisation is at the centre of their political project. Once one rejects the Marxist account of agency and the need for revolutionary change in favour of an approach which appreciates the importance of international order the appeal of an idea like democratisation becomes obvious. As was noted in chapter two, the idea of democratisation is quite distinct from democracy as it implies the promotion of democracy by external forces, and theorists often attach a string of qualification to it as well. Linklater, for example, identifies democratisation with Habermasian discourse ethics which can be applied to

⁸³ One of the first acts of the new Scottish Parliament was to establish a Social Inclusion Unit.

⁸⁴ Andrew Linklater, 'The Question of the Next Stage in International Relations Theory: A Critical-Theoretical Point of View' *Millennium* (Vol 21 1991 pp 77-98) p. 81

⁸⁵ Georg Lukács *The Process of Democratisation* (New York: SUNY Press 1991)

⁸⁶ David Held *An Introduction to Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Polity 1989)

every level of society, regardless of its relationship to the state. In this section I will contrast this approach of contemporary critical theory with that of two earlier members of the Frankfurt School, Franz Neumann and Otto Kirchheimer.

Many of the arguments for the extension of political community made by critical theorists and others mirror those of a number of broadly social democratic writers responding to the aftermath of World War II. The most notable members of this group are Karl Mannheim, who was discussed in chapter three, and E. H. Carr and T. H. Marshall. The importance of these figures is acknowledged by Linklater in his E. H. Carr Memorial Lecture on Carr and the transformation of political community.⁸⁷ Carr and Marshall were both implicitly responding to the social crises that tore Europe apart in the inter-war years, with the rise of fascist and communist movements across the continent which thrived on the sense of injustice at the peace settlement, both in terms of the harshness of the Versailles Treaty to the vanquished and also in terms of the society that the victorious soldiers returned to. Far from homes fit for heroes, returning soldiers had to cope with social dislocation and later depression, apparently without gratitude from government or people. The welfare state was a partial solution to the problem of re-creating this breeding ground for demagogy. T. H. Marshall, for example, argued that as the eighteenth century had seen civil rights established and the nineteenth century had extended them to political rights, social rights were now demanded in the twentieth century.⁸⁸ These arguments were the basis of the later discussion of democratisation. Whereas in the past intellectual and social élites had seen their position threatened by mass democracy, and had therefore fought hard to resist any extension of the franchise or creation of new rights, now men like Carr and Marshall were claiming that the only way to prevent revolution was to promote the extension of democracy themselves.

The contrast between their approach and Linklater's is instructive. Although they are all concerned with the extension of democracy, their differences are greater than their

⁸⁷ Linklater *E. H. Carr and Political Community*

⁸⁸ T. H. Marshall *Citizenship and Social Class* (London: Pluto 1987)

similarities. For a start, there is no immanent danger of social disintegration today, and so whereas the post-war writers were concerned to avert the kind of social collapse that followed World War I, Linklater has the more modest aim of encouraging social inclusion. More importantly, and as a corollary of this, where post-war social democrats promoted the idea of economic democracy, today's democratisers generally rule economics off the agenda.⁸⁹ Linklater writes that, "Whereas Carr argued for new forms of political community to protect social rights, current approaches are inclined to argue that the enlargement of community should be a vehicle for safeguarding civil rights - allowing appeals beyond the state to international courts of law, for example - and for supporting cultural rights whether by devolving power to local communities or strengthening the international protection of minority nations."⁹⁰ Let us now turn to consider the novel features of Linklater's approach.

The first major departure is in his conception of the nature of rights, which are at the root of his concept of democratisation. In this he goes even further in redefining rights than the post-war social democrats did. Whereas in the past rights were seen as demands for autonomy from the state, the social democrats were calling for the institutionalisation of state paternalism. Although the consequences of this were to prove deleterious to real rights, which could be assaulted more easily once their meaning was devalued, it was probably in the interests of welfare recipients and ultimately for society as a whole. The idea of disbursing resources is far from Linklater's agenda, however. Perhaps rightly he seems to see it as hopelessly utopian to image global economic development and especially so if it involves significant resource transfers from the west. Instead, his understanding of rights is firmly in the moral sphere. Although he has a rather overblown concern for the future of civilization, he believes that, "communities will not survive unless their members are

⁸⁹ Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press 1992) is one of the most influential recent treatments of civil society, and is a good example of the exclusion of economic questions.

⁹⁰ Linklater *E. H. Carr and Political Community*

prepared to define their interests in the light of a more general good.”⁹¹ This indicates first that his demand is upon citizens rather than states, and second that his interest is in the ethical rather than the economic sphere.

Democratisation carries with it a host of assumptions including transparency and external monitoring which can only be applied unevenly in such a manifestly unequal international system as exists today. In other words, in an unequal world even universal ideals like human rights and democratisation will only serve to reinforce inequalities. This has a particular salience in considering Andrew Linklater’s work as it is one of the insights that was lost in the flight from Marxism. Moreover, it is in the nature of Habermasian critical theory to emphasise process rather than outcome, which lends itself well to the idea of democratisation.

Democratisation is an important concept in Linklater’s work. A broad understanding of democracy is one of the main features of Habermas’s critical theory, and in applying it to the international arena it acquires an additional importance. The post-Cold War concern with democratisation on the part of the western foreign policy establishment reinforces this interest and bolsters the importance of Linklater’s writing, as it is an issue that the discipline is just beginning to explore. However, it also raises a number of key weaknesses in his approach. In particular, a largely unexplored question in all of this writing is the role of agency in achieving the objectives of democratisation. As we have already noted, ethics is an important element of Linklater’s theory, and is a major component of all approaches to democratisation. Without an account of agency, however, they become nothing more than ethical speculation and cannot claim to be politically engaged or particularly critical.

Sovereignty

Debates about sovereignty and nationality have divided Marxist critical theorists for a long time. Lenin’s pamphlet on imperialism established the claim to national self-

⁹¹ Andrew Linklater *The Transformation of Political Community* p. 1

determination as a central plank of the communist programme.⁹² Marxist critical theorists retained an attachment to this principle for most of the twentieth century, consistently supporting third world liberation movements which often proved to be as bad as their former colonial masters. Another branch of Marxist theory, however, maintained that we were entering an era of 'ultra-imperialism', which was leading to the socialisation of world governments.⁹³ Unsurprisingly, this approach lost much of its credibility after World War I, and especially after Wilson lent his support to the idea of self-determination, as part as a defensive strategy against the communist threat. However, as the twentieth century unfolded radical critics became progressively more disillusioned by the demand for third world autonomy. Although they could agree with the liberal critics of colonialism that colonial administration, as it was then constituted, was oppressive and undemocratic, and they often went as far as to subscribe to a version of revolutionary defeatism in their backing for Ho Chi Minh and Che Guevara, they could never live with the idea of wholly self-determining third world states. Never lacking in confidence for their own pet schemes, whether dams, irrigation and development or environmentalism, human rights and population control, western radicals could never leave the third world alone. After decolonisation this meant condemning indigenous third world governments and calling upon their erstwhile oppressors in the west to save them from themselves.

It is in this context that we should approach Linklater's work. He has transcended these debates by reducing nationality to one system of exclusion among many: "the nation-state is one of the few bastions of exclusion which has not had its rights and claims against the rest of the world seriously questioned."⁹⁴ His normative project must involve the legitimation of this international order through the discourse ethics that he advocates. This normative concern is tempered, however, by his desire for the maintenance of international order as the first priority for emancipatory theory. It is the reconciling of these two goals that creates the greatest difficulty for his critical

⁹² Vladimir I Lenin *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press 1996)

⁹³ For example, Karl Kautsky *Selected Political Writings* (London: Macmillan 1983)

⁹⁴ Linklater *Next Stage* p. 93

project in tackling the question of sovereignty, and it raises a number of problems common to Habermasian approaches more starkly than they appear when applied to other issues.

Linklater began his discussion of sovereignty by considering the tension between the duties that we owe to other as men, that is as members of the human race, and as citizens, that is as members of a territorially bounded political community.⁹⁵ It is significant for a work of radical theory that he should deal with duties and obligations rather than rights, placing him in a tradition of ethical speculation rather than political action. Although Linklater has noted that, “Developments of an economic and technological nature have prompted the observation that men are not only members of insulated sovereign states but much more, namely participants within a web of economic and social practices which spill over and even dissolve the boundaries between states,”⁹⁶ he does not believe that the normative theory that he wants to develop can be built on these foundations. Rather, he returns to an earlier tradition of speculation about ethics in the work of writers like Kant, Pufendorf and Vattel. His discussion of sovereignty is based on ethical rather than empirical criteria, and this prejudice manifests itself in a tendency to read history as the unfolding of a moral idea. Influenced by the dialectical thinking of Marx and Hegel, he describes the intermingling of opposites in the modern state as embracing “two moral perspectives – both ethical particularism and ethical universalism. It does so because the modern state recovered the values of political separateness and civic virtue while preserving the notion of a wider moral community to which men, as opposed to citizens, continued to owe obligations.”⁹⁷ It is not, therefore, an account of how the international system will have to modify itself to deal with the consequences of globalisation, but a guide to how we should behave as good global citizens.

⁹⁵ Linklater’s Ph.D. thesis was published as *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations* (London: Macmillan 1990)

⁹⁶ Linklater *Men and Citizens* p. 6

⁹⁷ *ibid.* p. 41

Despite his evident disdain for the principle of sovereignty, in the light of the failure of utopian projects for world government in the past Linklater stops short of offering an alternative. Instead, he concludes, "A pluralist international society strikes a balance between the principle of state sovereignty and universal principles of order and peaceful coexistence. A solidarist international society endorses the principle of state sovereignty but strives to balance it with a commitment to universal moral principles which address the injustices suffered by the victims of human rights violations, whether those be solitary individuals, indigenous peoples, or ethnic and other minority groups."⁹⁸ It is interesting that he is so willing to endorse the principle of state sovereignty. Part of this must surely be defensiveness against the charge of utopianism, but it is also a genuine endorsement of the principle of order, which is currently based around sovereign states. Rather than abolishing states, he seeks to make them accountable to global norms of human rights. Again this reflects his attachment to Habermasian discourse ethics, which privilege norms about the conduct of discussion and democratisation rather than the wholesale redesign of political institutions.

The end-point that Linklater reaches is that cosmopolitanism is the highest stage of human emancipation: "By imputing rights to one another within a world political system which exercises control over the totality of resources, members of the human species complete the move from particularism to universalism."⁹⁹ This continues his theme of ethical progress with a normative vision of where we should go next. The question is how we should go about realising these rights within a framework of sovereign states that must be upheld as part of his defence of international order as the precondition for progress.

⁹⁸ Linklater *Transformation* p. 176

⁹⁹ Linklater *Men and Citizens* p. 201

¹⁰⁰ Linklater *Men and Citizens* p. 26

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* pp 26-27

¹⁰² Linklater *Transformation* p. 41

¹⁰³ Cox Gramsci, *Hegemony* p. 164

¹⁰⁴ Linklater *Transformation* p. 169

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.* p. 173

Conclusion

Critical theory has an ambivalent relationship to its heritage in Marxist and other radical traditions. On the one hand, reference to the great radical thinkers of the past gives them a certain kudos, and the work of Marx and Engels in particular is so voluminous that it lends itself to selective interpretation and plundering for decontextualised quotations. Moreover, the dearth of radical ideas today invites the rehabilitation of older ideas. On the other hand, however, Marxist thought remains tainted with the association with Soviet Communism, and the very idea of revolutionary change is no longer seriously contemplated by either academics or political groups. The discussion of contemporary critical theoretic approaches to international relations has indicated the conservative nature of their alternatives.

Finally, in case there are any remaining doubts as to the ultimately conservative direction of Linklater's project, we should return to his point about the maintenance of international order as the precondition for progress. If by this he means merely that he doesn't want to see a lapse into anarchy then he cannot be faulted, but this is such an uncontested point that it would scarcely be worth making. Rather, the intention of this seems to be a warning against grand political projects, and a vanquishing of the spirit of Marxist critical theory. In the cold light of twentieth century history it seems that these projects have always been doomed to failure, and Linklater's work should be read in the context of mapping out a more modest version of critique. It is unclear, however, if he realises just how much he has rejected, however. In affirming the need to uphold the present order in the world he is unable to distinguish between the powerful and powerless members of the international system; he is reduced to identifying 'goodies' and 'baddies' across the globe. The result of this is that he has no position from which to be universally critically of the intervention of the powerful against the powerless unless they violate the iron law of discourse ethics, and he cannot identify any group of people, whether within or between states, who could promote these discourse ethics. Instead, any interested party is free to pontificate as long as they do not violate the rules of discourse by, for

example, proposing a holistic alternative vision with plans for its implementation. The result is a truly impoverished critical theory that, in its partisan endorsement of a particular utopia, lacks even the advantages of flexibility and historicity of the constructivist approach.

Having covered four of the most important critical approaches in International Relations, the most striking thing is how uncritical they are. Competing theoretical structures, with varying degrees of elaboration, have been developed around a core of key themes, which emphasise the contingency of human rationality, the dependency of our relationships, and the limited nature of sovereignty. To adopt the language of traditional research for one moment, one of the policy implications of this scholarship could be that we need a high level of international regulation to constrain the actions of individuals and societies who might destabilise global society if left alone. This stands in stark contrast to earlier radicalism, which in both its idealist and its Marxist variants was based on a more positive vision of what humans are capable of if they are granted more liberty than they enjoy at present. To substantiate this claim, and mark out my own approach, I now turn to discuss the various ways in which post-positivists have discussed agency.

Agency

Central to all of the post-positivist approaches discussed here is agency, which I take to mean human capacity for conscious, purposive action in shaping our surroundings. Conservative approaches to society have tended to denigrate agency, instead seeing impersonal forces shaping destiny (as seen in the traditional approaches discussed in chapter 1). Radicals have therefore perceived a need to provide accounts of agency that stake a claim for humans to be able to shape their societies. This requires an account of what individuals can do, but at the political level agency becomes collective – individual wills bound together for common goals. This is particularly relevant for sovereignty, which can be taken as being a term for collective subjectivity.

Here I conclude these two chapters, and introduce the rest of the thesis, by discussing in turn the approaches to agency taken by the post-positivist theories that I have introduced. Poststructuralism receives only a summary treatment as it is widely acknowledged to be opposed to any strong sense of the subject. I suggest the other post-positivist theories are also unable to provide a sufficiently robust notion of agency to support their critical claims, and that we must look elsewhere for a radical account of sovereignty in international relations.

Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism can be treated briefly, because it is openly hostile to strong accounts of agency. Superficially, poststructuralism represents a reaction to structuralist approaches, associated with Saussure's linguistic theories¹⁰⁶ and the structural Marxism of Althusser.¹⁰⁷ Read as an approach to subjectivity, however, we can see that structuralists and poststructuralists were both grappling with the difficulty of social theory without subjectivity. Althusser developed a more 'scientific' variant of

¹⁰⁶ Ferdinand de Saussure *Course in General Linguistics* (London: Duckworth 1990)

¹⁰⁷ For example, Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar *Reading Capital*

Marxism which ignored Marx's early concern with issues like alienation and produced a theory devoid of the pervasive humanism in Marx's own work. He concentrates on the importance of impersonal forces and his work lacks the urgency with which Marx approached the challenge of emancipation. Poststructuralists are very critical of the determinism of structuralist approaches, but they continue to move further away from nineteenth century progressivist theories.

Poststructuralism is above all associated with the assault on the subject. In place of what they see as the myths about rational man (sic), poststructuralists pose a world of indeterminacy and of forces beyond our conscious control. As this is absorbed into approaches to social science, however, its rhetorical power is dulled by the realities of a world based on the assumption that we can, at least to an extent, take control of our destiny. In addition to this, poststructural insights are often scarcely understood even by those who would identify themselves with this approach. It is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the critique of subjectivity that is more subtly developed in the other post-positivist theories that I discuss.

Constructivism

Constructivism offers a stronger account of agency. It claims to offer a notion of agency that contrasts with the deterministic frameworks that are prevalent in International Relations. In the context of liberal and realist accounts of International Relations, this claim can easily be sustained. Classical realism in particular treated agency as the actions of statesmen playing an ancient game according to well-established rules, with other people being brought on merely as a stage army (and, in international politics, they were literally armies). As Ruggie has remarked in relation to neoliberal and neorealist accounts of agency, "actors, in the context of these models, merely enact (or fail to) a prior script".¹⁰⁸ Ruggie's interest, in common with the other constructivists, is in how actors can (re)write that script. In this section we will look at how this is explained, but first a note of caution. Bearing in mind the

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*

points made in the introduction to this chapter we can recognise that despite the attempts of the constructivists to introduce a richer sense of agency into international theory, it has been introduced from a philosophical and sociological tradition that has sought to decentre the self-determining, history-making subject in favour of an intersubjective construction of linguistic convention. This is why (with Husserl) they emphasise 'intersubjectivity', which is a term often employed instead of society.

The constructivist account of agency has been clarified and refined through Alexander Wendt's debate with Martin Hollis and Steve Smith. In *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*,¹⁰⁹ Hollis and Smith counterpose two distinct methods of social scientific enquiry in International Relations, those of explanation and understanding. Explanatory theories are broadly positivist, and involve the social scientist observing the phenomena that he is studying from outside, and describing them. Against this approach, they argue for social theory that tries to understand the object of investigation from the inside, an approach that owes much to the *verstehen* approach, to Wittgenstein, Winch and hermeneutics. This they identify as post-positivist. The insider view that they flag up implies that agency is more important in international relations than is generally recognised because the way that individual agents understand their actions matters for international relations. This, however, is a corrective rather than an alternative; they recognise that there are always two stories to tell, the insiders' and the outsiders'.

Wendt, on the other hand, tries to disentangle debates about agency and structure from those about levels of analysis, developing an argument which he made in an earlier article about agency.¹¹⁰ Although he agrees with their account of the levels of analysis problem, Wendt disputes their position on the agent structure problem which, as he explained in an earlier article, "is really two interrelated problems, one

¹⁰⁹ Martin Hollis and Steve Smith *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon 1991)

¹¹⁰ Alexander Wendt, 'The agent-structure problem in international relations theory' *International Organization* (Vol 41 No 3 1987 pp 335-370)

ontological and the other epistemological.”¹¹¹ While he separates epistemological and ontological problems, Wendt also suggests that Hollis and Smith’s distinction between explanation and understand is of limited usefulness, suggesting that, “‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ accounts are *both* relevant to a *naturalistic* social science. The characterization of one as Understanding and of the other as Explanation seems to be a legacy of positivist conceptions of explanation that forced students of social life into a choice between rigidly defined alternatives – a choice that on a scientific realist view need not be made.”¹¹² The choice between insider and outsider accounts, he argues, should be determined upon wholly pragmatic grounds.

The resolution that Wendt prefers is a holistic approach which realises that, “states’ identities and interests are in important part constructed by the *process* of interaction within anarchy.”¹¹³ He goes on to explain the consequences of this approach with reference to his own work on sovereignty:

A world in which identities and interests do not change is one in which the basic dynamics of interaction do not change; the distribution of power may evolve, and this may give rise to new dominant and subordinate players, but as long as states are treated as given, self-interested actors exogenous to process the fundamentally competitive character of world politics remains constant. A world in which identities and interests are learned and sustained by intersubjectively grounded practice, by what states think and do, in contrast, is one in which ‘anarchy is what states make of it’. States may have made that system a competitive, self-help one in the past, but by the same token they might ‘unmake’ those dynamics in the future.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ *ibid.* p. 339

¹¹² Alexander Wendt, ‘Bridging the theory/meta-theory gap’ *Review of International Studies* (Vol 17 1991 pp 383-392) p. 391, emphasis in original

¹¹³ Alexander Wendt, ‘Levels of analysis vs. agents and structures: part III’ *Review of International Studies* (Volume 18 pp 181-185 1992) p. 183, emphasis in original

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 183

This quotation shows Wendt trying to shift the focus away from questions about the level of analysis that International Relations should employ and towards the question of the relationship between agency and structure. The study of this dynamic relationship can shed light on the historically specific relationships between the phenomena that international relations is concerned with. Moreover, it raises the possibility of destabilising apparently eternal institutions like sovereignty. What is missing from this account, however, is any discussion of how these changes might be achieved, perhaps because Wendt's communitarian approach favours leaving the resolution of political questions to the communities that they affect.

Although Wendt wants to put agency at the centre of international relations, he sees many constraints on it. Unlike many self-styled constructivists who are influenced by Foucault, he does not think that because institutions are socially constructed they can be arbitrarily reconstructed as the constituted institutions become objective facts that themselves shape norms and because the actors whose practices gave rise to certain institutions may have a continuing interest in maintaining them.¹¹⁵ Agency is also constrained by socialisation, which sets the context for individual actions and beliefs but does not wholly determine them. Wendt suggests the circumstances in which identity can change: 'The exceptional, conscious choosing to transform or transcend roles has at least two preconditions. First, there must be a reason to think of oneself in novel terms. This would most likely stem from the presence of new social situations that cannot be managed in terms of pre-existing self-conceptions. Second, the expected costs of intentional role change – the sanctions imposed by others with whom one interacted in previous roles – cannot be greater than its rewards.'¹¹⁶ This account follows from the structuration theory that he employs, which is "a relational solution to the agent-structure problem that conceptualizes agents and structures as mutually constituted or co-determined entities."¹¹⁷ The nature of the mixture is to be determined by empirical inquiry into specific issues, like Wendt's own discussion of sovereignty, but this sets out a clear and distinct theoretical framework within which

¹¹⁵ Wendt, *Anarchy* p. 411

¹¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 419

¹¹⁷ Alexander Wendt, 'The agent-structure problem in international relations theory' p. 350

the issue can be approached. It is, moreover, a significant departure from neo-realist and neo-liberal accounts both in the nature of its approach to agency and in the fact that it has a specific focus on agency.

The relevance of these disputes about agency, which involve philosophy and sociological theory, is not immediately apparent in International Relations, and so before we conclude a note should be made about the importance of debate. The article by Ruggie that was used to introduce this section concludes its section on agency by noting that, “ ‘making history’ in the new era is a matter not merely of defending the national interest but of defining it, nor merely enacting stable preferences but constructing them”.¹¹⁸ It is in the context of the fluidity of post-Cold War politics that the issue of agency becomes important, as agents are responsible for constructing preferences and defining the national interest. Moreover, the intersubjective account that the social constructivists give both allows scope for changing the ‘national interest’ to encompass the kind of humanitarian goals that they espouse, and provides a theoretical justification for the intellectual playing a major role in this process. It is during periods of change that the issue of agency is posed most starkly, and its theoretical clarification today is both a reflection of these real changes and also an important element in shaping them.

Feminism

Agency is one of the most contested and important concepts in feminist thought. Although the most dominant theme in feminist accounts of agency is the critique of Cartesian method, which implicates human agency and the rational subject in the domination of the ‘other’, there are other approaches that seem to elevate the idea of human agency.¹¹⁹ These are more marginal to feminism, but enjoy an exaggerated

¹¹⁸ John G. Ruggie op. cit. 1998 p. 878

¹¹⁹ Many of the former were discussed under the section on epistemology. The latter is well represented by Patricia S. Mann, ‘Musing as a Feminist on a Postmodern Era’ in Jodi Dean (ed) *Feminism and the New Democracy?: Re-siting the Political* (London: Sage 1997), who argues that “we should stop worrying about issues of identity and refocus on issues of agency, or significant action.”

importance in International Relations through the impact of Elshtain's writings. She celebrates the historical emergence of agency, "A towering achievement, tied inescapably to the public-private division, is the notion of politics as a form of action, an activity carried out by individuals with agency within and upon the world rather than creatures through or to whom things simply happen."¹²⁰ This is important for the kind of normative project that Elshtain is engaged in because, "Man's gain of partial autonomy, his emergence from the imbeddedness of 'natural' determinism, meant that henceforth an individual could be seen as praiseworthy or could be blamed."¹²¹ However, there is nothing specifically feminist about this account. Although Elshtain has identified some of the most attractive features of historical accounts of agency and harnessed them to a contemporary normative schema, she is setting herself against mainstream feminist accounts of agency, which range from outright hostility to masculinist notions of subjectivity to a more nuanced feminist reappropriation which values caring and nurturing against autonomy and conflict.

This position is derived from a critique of dualistic thinking which argues that the subject can only exist in opposition to an objectified 'other'. In western political theory, this has meant defining a masculine subject which operates in the public sphere and determines his own existence against a feminine other which is confined to the private sphere and is dependent upon male protection. The ecofeminist Maria Mies argues that, "self-determination of the social individual, the subject, was – and is – based on the definition of the 'Other', the definition as object, of certain human beings. In other words: autonomy of the subject is based on heteronomy (being determined by others) of some Other (nature, other human beings, 'lower' parts of the self)."¹²² This approach has been enormously influential across the social sciences, but it is often trivialised by writers who adopt the motif without understanding its

(p. 225) However, her defence of agency has the same limited character as that of the critical theorists, and is susceptible to the same criticisms raised against them in chapter 6.

¹²⁰ Jean Bethke Elshtain *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought* (Oxford: Martin Robertson 1981) p. 13. This notion of agency, apparently derived from Arendt, still seems hollow, since it seems to celebrate action for its own sake, devoid of any bigger aspirations.

¹²¹ *ibid*, p. 13

¹²² Maria Mies, 'Self-Determination: The End of a Utopia' in Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva *Ecofeminism* (London: Zed Books 1993) p. 223

derivation from a long tradition of political theory, and most notably from Hegel's master-slave dialectic. In feminism, this was popularised by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*,¹²³ which draws specifically on twentieth century interpretations of Hegel by existentialists and phenomenologists who secularised his work,¹²⁴ removing the transcendental elements which were so important for the nineteenth century left Hegelians. I will not attempt to contest the 'real' meaning of Hegel (whatever that was) here, but it is important to note the changing way in which his writings have been used in social criticism. Left Hegelians in particular claimed that the logic of his work suggested that society should be transformed beyond what he saw as the end of history, and they developed accounts of human agency that allowed for the possibility of us consciously changing our society. Their account of agency owed a great deal to Hegel's theological concerns, where the sense of transcendence was clearest. Now that these ideas are less popular, the division between left and right Hegelians has lost its significance, as neither hold much hope for major social change. Instead of attempts at transcendence, there are pleas for inclusion. Instead of active subjectivity, there is passive victimhood.¹²⁵

Other feminists have tried to rescue a more limited form of agency from the ruins of the Cartesian subject, but they ultimately undermine it even further by developing a form of agency based on victimhood along similar lines to those described above. This is clearest in the strands of feminism derived from psychoanalysis. Although the work of early psychoanalysts like Freud is not obviously concerned with undermining the subject, but rather with revealing another dimension of it, feminists have emphasised the elements of psychoanalysis which support their opposition of

¹²³ Simone de Beauvoir *The Second Sex* (London: Picador 1988)

¹²⁴ Notably Martin Heidegger, but in France this approach was popularised by Alexandre Kojève's influential lecture series, later published as *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1996)

¹²⁵ The most articulate case for this re-working of Hegelian themes from a Hegelian perspective is made by Axel Honneth in *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge: Polity 1996), especially chapters three and five, which contain a number of feminist themes.

Cartesian notions of subjectivity.¹²⁶ Nancy Chodorow, one of the most influential feminist interpreters of psychoanalysis, has used object-relations theory, which was developed to account for the development of the self in the early stages of childhood, to argue that, "Psychoanalysis radically undermines notions about autonomy, individual choice, will, responsibility, and rationality, showing that we not control our own lives in the most fundamental sense. It makes it impossible to think about the self in any simple way, to talk blithely about the individual."¹²⁷ The context of her theory is important here – the conclusions that she reaches about human subjectivity in general are based on an approach to psychoanalysis based on early childhood. The leap of logic is never quite bridged, and we are being asked to take as faith the relevance of socialisation and the development of gender roles as limiting our ability to act for the rest of our lives. The alternative project that Chodorow endorses is to "reconstruct a self that is in its very structures fundamentally implicated in relations with others."¹²⁸ This is the heart of the feminist critique of subjectivity. Instead of the sovereign, self-determining subject, Chodorow poses a model of *inter*-subjectivity which moderates the ambitions and demands of the individual in favour of an ethic of care which respects and considers the interests of others.¹²⁹ This model has been perhaps most famously developed by the psychologist Carol Gilligan who has also studied the comparative developmental processes of boys and girls in order to critique the model developed by Lawrence Kohlberg, with whom she formerly collaborated. Gilligan argues that the stereotypes of development which Kohlberg worked with, "reflect a conception of adulthood that is . . . out of balance, favouring the

¹²⁶ Indeed, feminists and their allies have mounted a sustained attack on Freud, particularly in relation to his alleged abuse of patients. A good example of this is Jeffrey Masson *The Assault on Truth: Freud's suppression of the seduction theory* (New York: Pocket Books 1998).

¹²⁷ Nancy J. Chodorow *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge: Polity 1989) p. 154. A useful brief statement of her approach is found in 'What Is the Relation between Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Psychoanalytic Psychology of Women?' in Deborah L. Rhode (ed) *Theoretical Perspectives on Sexual Difference* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1992)

¹²⁸ *ibid*, p. 156

¹²⁹ The fact that the argument for an ethic of care rather than right was first made by that most masculine of philosophers, the Nazi thinker Martin Heidegger is rarely acknowledged. See *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell 1996) Part I Section 6. This is not to say that it is indefensible; indeed, Stephen K. White develops a version of postmodern feminism with explicit reference to Heidegger in *Political Theory and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991). However, this relationship may be more problematic than many feminists acknowledge.

separateness of the individual self over connection to others, and leaning more toward an autonomous life of work than toward the interdependence of love and care.”¹³⁰

This model is developed in Nancy Hirschmann’s book on consent theory.¹³¹ She cautions against masculinist notions of independent agency defined by antagonist relations with others, and develops an alternative, feminist perspective. Criticising traditional accounts of agency, she claims that, “because it is a reactive rather than relational autonomy that this agency embodies, it is also what justifies – indeed, creates and perpetuates – the radical and abstract individualism of liberal democratic theory, the market model of society, substantive theories that require the dehumanization, oppression, and nonrecognition of women, a theory that obligation can exist only by virtue of voluntary assumption.”¹³² Her alternative model is based on a mutuality of recognition.¹³³ Its two central pillars are trust and participatory democracy. It is a therapeutic style of politics in which, “citizens would be able to engage in self-reflection about their desires, preferences, feelings and empathetic responses in order to learn more about what their society and they as individuals need and want by observing and experiencing the mutual interaction between individual and society that conversation inspires.”¹³⁴ This seems to be an updated version of the nationalistic slogan from Kennedy’s inauguration speech, ‘Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.’ This minimalist account of agency as an ethic of care moves so far from what is traditionally understood by the term agency that it is perhaps more appropriate not to consider this as an account of agency at all. It is rather an argument about the kinds of obligations which we owe one another combined with a psychoanalytic account of the optimal conditions for the development of selves who can respond to the challenge that Hirschmann lays out. Far from an idea of agency based on subjectivity, this model implies that the values

¹³⁰ Carol Gilligan *In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press 1993)

¹³¹ Nancy J. Hirschmann *Rethinking Obligation: A Feminist Method for Political Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1992)

¹³² *ibid*, p. 228

¹³³ This is shared with the feminist accounts of agency discussed above, and also certain critical theorists like Honneth.

¹³⁴ *ibid*, p. 255.

required of subjects are closer to those of the slaves than of the masters in Hegel's dialectic. This approach reaches its zenith in Vivienne Jabri's appropriation of Kristeva's idea of the 'abject'.¹³⁵ Neither subject nor object, "The abject is that which must remain constitutively outside, rejected and ejected at one and the same time."¹³⁶

The feminist accounts of agency discussed in this section are an impoverished understanding of the possibility of human action when measured against the historic approaches inherited from the enlightenment and from the experience of radical politics. With many of the other theorists discussed in this thesis, feminists have implicated the subject in the defeat and perversion of the radical projects that the idea was associated with, be it the degeneration of enlightenment universalism into rapacious capitalism, or radical Marxism into Soviet Stalinism. The various re-workings or alternatives to the idea of agency, however, lack the sense of historical mission of the earlier theories. More importantly, in the absence of a belief in humanism and a sense of historical mission, radical politics is necessarily more whimsical. Politics has traditionally been anchored in a particular understanding of community, be it the working class, the nation or the party. Affiliations have always cut across each other, but they were underpinned on the basis of common interests. These ideas are frowned upon by feminists, who have tried to develop an alternative account of politics, based on women's experience of exclusion, which cut across all of these boundaries.

Critical Theory

Agency is at the forefront of critical theory, which offers a nuanced account of agency that claims to rescue the subject from poststructural assaults. This has historically been the great strength of critical theories in the past because, through identifying emancipatory agents, radical theorists could explain epochal changes where conservatives saw only individual humans acting in contingent situations.

¹³⁵ Vivienne Jabri '(Uni)form Instrumentalities and War's Abject' *Millennium* (Vol 27 No 4 pp 885-902 1998)

¹³⁶ *ibid*, p. 896

Moreover, the great appeal of radical theories was their attempts not only to promote utopian visions but also to describe the route to their realisation. When today's critical theorists promote ideas like order and social inclusion it is clear that the utopia that they propose is not very far removed from reality, and that too much agency could be a bad thing. Their account of agency is correspondingly degraded.

As a result of historical and social developments, "men faced a world which was their own historical product; and they did so as agents capable of transforming the conditions of their social and political existence."¹³⁷ Thus, "Our experience of living in and among sovereign states could not simply be that of participating within a necessitous system of relations, but of confronting a social world in contradiction with our humanity."¹³⁸ This is lifted almost straight out of Marx's account of the development of subjectivity, and goes on to adopt his notion of the possibilities for transformation being contained within the contradictions of the present system. From this common basis, however, Linklater aims to stifle the ambition of traditional Marxist theories of agency by restricting its role and operation.

The Habermasian elevation of dialogue is problematic for developing an explicit account of agency, and is frustratingly elusive on the question of how to bring about the social transformations that he describes. There is no shortage of platitudes about the desirability of free discourse, but little questioning of whom will arbitrate between the groups involved. One imagines an ageing Jürgen Habermas presiding over the United Nations General Assembly, gently rebuking the Iranian delegate for goading the Americans, while reminding the Saudis of the need to show more respect to the women serving coffee. The key thing is the ethical demand to respect one another's position and to allow consensus to emerge on the basis of the force of the better argument alone. Linklater follows this demand with the observation that the consequence of his argument is that, "dialogic communities will be sensitive to the needs of the victims of the totalising project: namely, aliens beyond secured borders

¹³⁷ Linklater *Men and Citizens* p. 26

¹³⁸ *ibid.* pp 26-27

and a range of internally subordinate groups.”¹³⁹ There is an interesting parallel here with Cox’s adoption of Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, which “frees the concept of power . . . from a tie to historically specific social classes and gives it a wider applicability to relations of dominance and subordination,”¹⁴⁰ which also follows Linklater’s identification of patterns of inclusion and exclusion as the defining characteristics of any social order. Although they reach their conclusions from slightly different directions, there is a common thread in their writing on agency which emphasises rules for interaction rather than celebrating the possibilities for action.

It would be stretching the point to argue that there is no account of agency among critical theorists, but only just. In their enthusiasm for developing conditions for fair discourse they have evaded the question of how it is to be implemented. Equally, the demand for inclusion overshadows the critique of the basis of the society into which they want minorities to be included in. It is a shallow form of criticism that can point only to the fact that in contemporary society not everybody’s voice is equal. More insidiously, it could be claimed that the inclusion of minorities into decision-making processes represents nothing more than the neutralisation of political opposition by groups who can have an input into the political process, but who receive no guarantees about the outcome. A classic example of this in practice is the Northern Ireland Peace Process, where every minority is now given an opportunity to participate, but none of them has any assurance about the realisation of their political objectives.

Although this is a rather cynical interpretation, which is perhaps an unfair reflection on the theorists that are under discussion, they do seem to have a real desire to avoid conflict. Linklater’s ultimate preference for order over political action is exposed in his commentary on E. H. Carr:

¹³⁹ Linklater *Transformation* p. 41

¹⁴⁰ Cox *Gramsci, Hegemony* p. 164

The very possibility of Carr's post-Westphalian arrangements exists as long as a majority of nation-states or the most powerful among them are committed to constitutional rule, deliberative politics, social welfare and universalistic moral beliefs which value radical cultural differences. The moral capital on which modern societies can draw for the purpose of creating post-Westphalian arrangements largely consists of these normative orientations. These are the qualities of modernity which make the unit-driven peaceful transformation of the international system possible.¹⁴¹

The consequence of this is a legalised politics, as we saw in the previous chapter with the constructivists. Critical activity is directed at the rules of the game. But no matter how much more open the game is made, the people are merely playing to another's rules in this scheme. It denies a constitutive role to agency in forming and re-forming both itself and its surroundings. The implications of this will be traced in subsequent chapters, which will look at some of the political ramifications of critical approaches without a strong account of agency.

¹⁴¹ Linklater *Transformation* p. 169

Concluding Remarks

These two chapters have surveyed the major challenges to traditional theories of international relations as applied to sovereignty. Focusing on agency in the final section has concluded the section by summarising my differences with these theories and cleared the space for my own distinctive approach.

The next chapters take the thesis forward by discussing historical and political aspects of sovereignty and developing a case for progressive International Relations scholars to defend a more robust notion of sovereignty.

4 Where Sovereignty Started

Part I showed that many critical scholars are hostile to a strong notion of sovereignty. This chapter develops my more positive view of sovereignty and shows that it should be seen as a right. First, I argue that the essence of a right is that it embodies the autonomy of a subject, and that this subject can be a collective body rather than an individual. The next section presents the historical evolution of this idea, in rather schematic form, arguing that both rights and sovereignty should be seen as tied in with the separation of the economic and political spheres that is specific to capitalist societies.

This chapter presents sovereignty in a historical context. Two ways of approaching this can be identified. One is to look at the evolution of the concept of sovereignty, how it has been used and what it has been taken to mean. The other is to look at the changing practice of state power, what the state has been able to do in the name of sovereignty, and how its power may have been strengthened or eroded over history. Keeping with the aims of this study, this chapter concentrates on the meaning that has been attached to sovereignty, which is of course derived from its actual powers over time, and in turn can shape the way that sovereignty is exercised.

Sovereignty as a Right

Many of the approaches that have been discussed in Part I of this thesis started from a recognition of the wrongs that have been done to people. They have stressed the experiences of the victims of international politics and thus sought to make political interventions in international relations that will make it harder for such abuses to be perpetrated again. The chief implication of these ways of thinking is that we need a new way of approaching international relations that takes normative claims seriously rather than, as has often been the case in the recent past, ignoring the normative components of such questions.¹ There is a widespread denial of the idea that scholars

¹ See for example the claims in, inter alia, Chris Brown *International relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* (Brighton: Harvester, 1992), Mervyn Frost, *Ethics in International relations*

can be neutral observers,² and an equally widespread revulsion at the barbarous practices that continue across the world, despite the onward march of technology, industry and wealth. Much of the blame is held to attach to the baleful effects of the doctrine of state sovereignty. The human rights lawyer Geoffrey Robertson succinctly articulates this approach to sovereignty when he claims that “The movement for global justice has been a struggle against sovereignty.”³

The striking thing about this critical discussion of sovereignty, however, is that despite the different positions that are espoused, and the sense that the participants are engaged in a debate, the various contributions all effectively point towards the same conclusion. They all end up suggesting a range of remedies for the twin problems of identity and liberty that set qualifications upon the claim to, and exercise of, sovereignty. They are all searching for a way of arbitrating between claims to sovereignty by certain agents and demands for by other agents for ‘international intervention’ to uphold human rights. What is missing from these perspectives, however, is the idea that people could – and perhaps should - emancipate themselves and that ‘emancipation’ at the hands of another is not really emancipation at all.

Historically, claims to sovereignty in the twentieth century have been associated with claims to self-determination.⁴ While the historical antecedents of such claims do not concern me (for the moment), it is worth noting that self-determination in twentieth century international relations is widely regarded as a right. Indeed, in many respects,

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Daniel Warner, *An ethic of responsibility in international relations* (Boulder, Lynne Reiner, 1991), Steve Smith ‘The Forty years Detour’ in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 21, 1992, 489-506.

² The most celebrated, and amongst the most influential versions of this claim can be found in Robert Cox, ‘Social Forces, States and World Order: Beyond International Relations Theory’ in R. Keohane (ed) *Neo-Realism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

³ Geoffrey Robertson *Crimes Against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice* (London: Penguin 2000) p. xviii

⁴ A brief historical account of the emergence and significance of self determination can be found in Antonio Cassese, *International Law in a Divided World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989), pp131-137. Significantly (for my later argument) Cassese points out that amongst the earliest advocates of self-determination was Lenin in his *Theses on the Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self Determination*.

as Rosalyn Higgins has pointed out, it has been seen as a *foundational* right.⁵ Thus, while it is obviously true that many of the arguments 'post-positivist' theories make about the problems of sovereignty turn on the alleged incompatibility of sovereignty and rights, sovereignty in contemporary international law is actually based on a right, the right to self determination. It may be, of course, that this right on occasion will clash with other claims. It is not the case, however, that there is no basis in 'rights talk' for sovereignty.⁶

Demands for human rights come in many forms. What concerns me here is the underlying claim that we have certain entitlements due to us by virtue of our existence as human beings. This claim itself has taken a very wide range of forms from natural rights and natural law versions to contemporary positivism and critical legal theory.⁷ However they are interpreted, the point of rights claims is to assert a particular kind of force against those agents that would deny or deprive that agent in possession of a right of the use of it. Briefly put, my argument in this chapter will be that sovereignty can be defended as a rights claim made by a collective agent for political autonomy and that other rights claims cannot be held to 'trump' it. This runs counter to the modern trend of interpreting rights as moral claims made *by others* on behalf of minorities or the oppressed.⁸

In the past, national self-determination was highly regarded, in spite of the fact that it involved violent means. Anti-colonialists who were condemned officially as terrorists were heroes to Western intellectuals and student radicals. They did not parade their victimhood, but demanded independence, asserted their autonomy and

⁵ See her argument in chapter 7 of *Problems and Process: International Law and How we Use it* (Oxford Clarendon press, 1994)

⁶ The most thorough recent discussion of the interdependence of sovereignty and self determination can be found in Antonio Cassese, *Self determination of Peoples: A legal Reappraisal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁷ For recent discussions see especially, Jeremy Waldron *Liberal Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Robert P George (ed) *Natural Law Theory: Contemporary Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) and Joseph Raz 'Legal Rights' in *Ethics and the Public Domain* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1994).

took power for themselves.⁹ Their aim was not the defence of their traditions, but modernisation and development.¹⁰ Today claims for 'sovereignty' are more likely to originate from western intellectuals and take the form of calls for group rights in order to preserve traditional ways of life.¹¹ The basis of this is not the confident assertion of their identity as a political subject, but the timid presentation of the wrongs done to them, parading their marginalisation as a way of claiming protection from others.

The main point to be emphasised here is that rights can be held by collective agents, not just individual agents. This understanding implies that there are no 'natural' rights held by persons, but only historically constructed rights won by agents, both individual and collective. Moreover, even rights that are owed to individual agents, are so owed only because of the existence of a context of collective agency which made the existence of such rights possible.

In much traditional liberal theory, of course, rights were solely seen as owed to individuals. Rights, we might say, embodied the claim to autonomy that was made by the enlightenment subject.¹² Civil rights, like the right to freedom of expression or assembly, assert the right to speak, and importantly to hear, any argument or claim without them being screened by a higher authority. The right to vote is a demand to play an equal role in determining the government of a society. Claiming these rights does not require any positive action from anyone else. No resources need to be

⁹ Classic works include Franz Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin 1970) and Jean-Paul Sartre *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* (London: Routledge 2001)

¹⁰ This is reflected in debates about economic and social rights and was incorporated into Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech (<http://www.libertynet.org/~edcivic/fdr.html>), which identifies freedom of speech, freedom of worship and freedom from fear, but also freedom from want, as essential freedoms.

¹¹ Ecofeminist Vandana Shiva can be taken as illustrative of this. See, for example, Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva *Ecofeminism* (London: Zed Books 1993)

¹² I use the term 'enlightenment subject' to convey two things. First I mean a new intellectual outlook that gave a fresh and independent role for human agency outside theological strictures and rigid structures of political and intellectual authority. Second, I mean political actors that seized power on the basis of equality in the American and French Revolutions. For a development of these ideas see Slavoj Žižek *The Ticklish Subject: the absent centre of political ontology* (London: Verso 1999).

provided, beyond the token cost of organising an election.¹³ The only condition that is logically necessary for their exercise is that there are people to exercise them, people who want and will demand them against other authorities. Although these rights are held by individuals, however, it was only possible to claim them, and even to conceive of them, when individuals were in a position to associate together to demand them. In other words, the exercise of individual rights depends upon the existence of a collective agent that can guarantee and enable them, which in the modern world is the sovereign state.

Today, however, many new rights have made their way onto the political agenda. Minorities demand cultural rights, and social democrats demand welfare rights.¹⁴ While of course the claims are rights claims, they are qualitatively different from rights like freedom of speech because they embody demands for entitlement and protection. In other words, they are the very opposite of rights to autonomy. Instead of endorsing a claim to independence, these rights are effectively calling for dependence; dependence on external authorities for resources and protection. Even where there is a popular demand for these rights, they do not have the universal character of, say, the right to freedom of speech. Freedom of speech benefits everybody, whereas the right to welfare provision is specific. Furthermore, whereas freedom of speech costs nothing, many societies find it impossible to provide the range of welfare provisions that are regarded as 'rights' in the developed world. Where one set of rights is about autonomy and independence, the other is about dependence.

In recent theorising about rights it has become commonplace to draw upon Wesley Hohfeld's distinction between four senses in which rights can be asserted; as

¹³ A classic statement of this distinction is to be found in Isaiah Berlin *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1969).

¹⁴ Recent debates over multi-culturalism make the point very well. See on the side of social democracy Brian Barry *Culture and Equality* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001) and, on the side of multi-culturalism, Bikhu Parekh *Rethinking Multi-culturalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002).

privileges (sometimes called 'liberties'), claims, powers or immunities.¹⁵ Both privileges and powers take the form *x has a right to a*. Claims and immunities, by contrast, take the form *x has a right that y do a*. thus we can say that self-determination rights are effectively privilege rights (either simple privilege rights or power rights). X (whether x is an individual or collective agent) has a right to self-determination and thus a political community with sovereignty. Many now standard human rights assertions, however - for example assertions to a right of rescue or humanitarian intervention (on which more later) - are effectively claim rights. They argue that x has a right that y (other states, the international community) intervene to protect rights putatively being violated.

Today, these latter rights are proliferating, but traditional autonomy rights are under assault. A good example of this can be found in debates about freedom of speech, where traditional protections of free speech are being attacked by those who want to protect the victims who may be harmed by injurious speech.¹⁶ New rights are ardently promoted, while at the same time there are popular demands to balance rights against duties, privileges against responsibilities.¹⁷ In fact, these two processes are logically related by their similar misunderstanding of what a right consists of. Quite simply, a right delineates a sphere of human autonomy in which we are free to pursue our own desires. They are fundamental in a way that other claims, no matter how valuable in themselves, are not.

The claim to the 'right to self-determination' is, then, in Hohfeld's term a 'privilege right'. However, unlike the second group of rights it does not involve an ongoing

¹⁵ See the discussion in Wesley Hohfeld, *Fundamental Legal Conceptions as Applied in Judicial Reasoning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919). A good recent discussion is the Introduction to Jeremy Waldron (ed) *Theories of Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984)

¹⁶ The traditional case for free speech protection is well put by Nadine Strossen *Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex and the Fight for Women's Rights* (New York: Abacus 1996). On the other side, most notable are feminists such as Andrea Dworkin who argues that free speech can be an injurious form of action. See, for example, Andrea Dworkin *Pornography: Men possessing women* (London: Women's Press 1996)

¹⁷ These ideas are most clearly expressed in the more popular writings of the communitarians, such as Amatai Etzioni *The Spirit of Community: The reinvention of American Society* (New York: Simon and Schuster 1994)

claim for resources or protection. Once the group that exercises the right to self-determination is defined and in control of its territory it does not need to rely on external enforcement of its right to independence. Of course, this does not mean that it retains independence. Another state could still invade, or an internal minority could secede, but in principle the right is defensible. By analogy, the right to free speech could be abrogated by statute, or restricted by the financial muscle of Fleet Street, but the right is, in principle, defensible without resources. It requires only a negative; that nobody acts to restrict it.¹⁸

In what, then, does the right to self-determination consist? Two important distinctions must be made to clarify the status of this right. First, it must be separated from the liberal idea of rights attaching to individuals, whether by nature or by social convention. Rights are claimed by *social* subjects, which constitute themselves precisely in their assertion of autonomy. This often takes the form of individuals defending a sphere of existence apart from the society, where they can define their own conventions. This can include the claim that "An Englishman's home is his castle" or the claim to speak freely without others deciding what we should be protected from. But the relevant agent can also be collective. In the case of self-determination the subject is the nation, broadly defined. It does not have to be an ethnic nation, but can be any group with a convincing claim to constitute a viable polity.

The second distinction that must be made is between the right to self-determination lying with the polis, and that associated with any minority culture. The distinction here is between a claim based on the self-creation of a polis, where a group establishes itself and pursues a claim on its own behalf, and a claim based on an appeal to others to recognise a group as culturally distinct, or oppressed. No matter

¹⁸ A similar argument for grounding the fact of autonomous political community in rights claims can be found in Michael Walzer's work, most especially *Just and Unjust Wars* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977). However, Walzer's version fails to distinguish between claims rights and privilege rights and this weakens the overall argument, in my view.

how legitimate the complaint of such a group, its claim to self-determination cannot assume the status of a right unless it can successfully organise itself.

Charles Merriam describes this process well:

As the position of the absolute monarch was no longer tenable, and the basis of the doctrine of popular sovereignty appeared to be destroyed, it was an easy step to declare the State itself the juristic person *par excellence*, to be the bearer of the sovereign right, exercised through its constitutional organs. The sovereignty of the State in international law had long been recognized; it was, therefore, comparatively simple to see in the State, as newly conceived in the organic and personal sense, the real sovereign.¹⁹

This outline gives no easy rule as to how we should determine whether a claim to secession is made by a viable polis or merely a special interest group. No such rules could ever be devised, and the only aim of this presentation is to establish the basis of self-determination as a right. It does not remove the obligation to exercise judgement in particular cases. This argument does not provide a *carte blanche* for every community to secede, creating thousands of states. In fact, it only establishes that there is, in principle, a right to do so. Just as the right to freedom of speech can be used stupidly, a small and practically unviable community could assert a right to secession. The onus is on those who oppose the exercise of this right to make their case.

I want to suggest that it is entirely plausible to accept the proposition that the assertion of self-determination rights by collective agents should enjoy the same degree of protection as any fundamental right and still hold that there is no necessary division between different states, as my analogy to free speech suggests. Of course this does not solve all problems. How, for example, do we deal with conflicts of

¹⁹ Charles E. Merriam *History of the Theory of Sovereignty Since Rousseau* (New York: AMS 1968) p. 128

rights and there are always the problems posed by the existence of widespread cultural diversity and from the economic inequality that effectively denies many the pre-conditions for exercising rights. I will attempt to offer a way of resolving these problems later in this chapter after a further consideration of the historical debates that have attached to sovereignty, and in particular to some of the ways in which Marxist writers have treated the subject.

Let me sum up. This section has tried to offer a logical basis for an account of sovereignty that sees it founded on an account of rights consistent with the Hohfeldian account of certain rights as privilege rights. This argument suggests that collective agents can assert a privilege right to self determination as a ground for a strong conception of sovereignty that cannot simply be overridden by the assertion of other, claim rights, much the more common way of making rights claims in contemporary social, political and international theory. This, then, reinforces the points made earlier in the thesis (in chapters 2 and 3) about the relative weight we should give to agency and structure in International Relations theory. The point perhaps to stress is that this defence of sovereignty is grounded not on any intrinsic value of sovereignty as such but rather on the claim that in the contemporary context only sovereignty, understood as the assertion of a privilege right of self determination, can do justice to a peoples autonomy and thus guarantee their other rights.²⁰ The next section turns to consider its chronological development, and links it to attempts to construct critical, historical accounts of international relations.

Evolution of Sovereignty

Traditional accounts of sovereignty have tended to treat it as a natural, or at least an unproblematic, feature of society. F. H. Hinsley began his influential study of sovereignty by returning to the tradition of Roman law.²¹ Since ideologies are constructed from inherited vocabularies, this is not wholly illegitimate. When

²⁰ My argument is thus different from those of, for example, David Miller, who grounds his defence of sovereignty in versions of an appeal to the intrinsic worth of community. See his *On Nationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998)

²¹ F. H. Hinsley *Sovereignty* (London: C. A. Watts and Co Ltd 1966)

renaissance and enlightenment thinkers began to formulate the new concept of sovereignty, they of course used familiar terms and examples. However the ideas of sovereignty that they began to work out are only trivially similar to ancient and medieval versions. It is true that different geographical entities have been hierarchically ordered, and have maintained relations with one another in the absence of an overarching authority regulating their interaction. But legitimacy was conceptualised in the modern system through mutual recognition.²² It was possible – indeed, normal – to maintain authority through force, and for that authority to be recognised by others regardless of how that power is exercised.

The emphasis for recent scholars has been to show that sovereignty is a contingent and multi-layered phenomenon, and that it is therefore susceptible to multiple criticisms and change.²³ One approach to this involves rescuing the universalist implications of the doctrine of sovereignty when it first evolved from the struggles against absolutist rule. It contrasts the universalist rhetoric with the reality of social stratification and inequality. The contrary approach looks not at the social inequality that frustrated the universalist doctrine of sovereignty, but at the very doctrine itself. It is associated with a variety of critical perspectives that can be grouped together in that they treat sovereignty as a practice of exclusion associated with modernity. The first approach adopts the doctrine of sovereignty, and criticises the inequitable social conditions that prevent its realisation. The second approach sees the idea of formal equality, which underlies sovereignty, as the problem. This chapter argues that the second approach, which has been popularised in International Relations by the post-positivists, especially by Rob Walker and David Campbell,²⁴ is insufficiently historical to provide a basis for a progressive critique.

²² See the argument in Alan James *Sovereign Statehood* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1986). See also the discussion in Robert Jackson, *Quasi-States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1992)

²³ For one particularly significant post-positivist account of sovereignty which emphasises the ideas fluidity and hybridity see Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

²⁴ See especially Walker *Inside/Outside: international relations as political theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and David Campbell *National Deconstruction: violence, justice and the war over Bosnia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998)

For example, Walker has argued that “State sovereignty is in effect an exceptionally elegant resolution of the apparent contradiction between centralization and fragmentation, or, phrased in more philosophical language, between universality and particularity.”²⁵ He goes on to explain that “the principle of hierarchical subordination gradually gave way to the principle of spatial exclusion” as the forces of modernity undermined the medieval world-view. The constructivist Nicholas Onuf has outlined a similar conceptual history of sovereignty, which he sees as “ineluctably tied” to modernity.²⁶ Common to this approach is the idea that modernity, which developed from the enlightenment, is based on a false universalism that generalised the European experience. Ideas like the sovereign state unjustly privilege one form of spatial organisation over others, imposing a unitary vision that does not respect difference. However, rather than give way to relativism, scholars in this tradition tend to resolve these contradictions with some minimal level of universality derived from human rights norms.

However, the critical presentation of sovereignty as the outcome of practices of exclusion finds little support in the historical record. As Robert Jackson reminds us, “the modern world of sovereign states was instituted as an escape from ... ideological orthodoxy and political hierarchy”.²⁷ The claim to sovereignty has long been associated with the call to freedom and a belief in universalism. This point of view is put forward by the Frankfurt School theorist Franz Neumann:

By attributing sovereignty to the state, formal equality is attributed to all states and a rational principle is thus introduced into an anarchic state system. As a polemical notion, state sovereignty in international politics rejects the sovereign claims of races and classes over citizens of other states, thus limiting the state's power to people residing in a specific territory. The notion

²⁵ R.B.J. Walker, ‘Security, Sovereignty, and the Challenge of World Politics’ *Alternatives* 15 (1) 1990 pp 3-27 p. 10

²⁶ Nicholas Greenwood Onuf *The Republican Legacy in International Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998) p. 113

²⁷ Robert Jackson *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000) p. 169

of state sovereignty is thus basically antimperialist [sic]. The equalizing and limiting functions of this doctrine appear most strikingly when contrasted with the National Socialists' racial imperialism (which rejected state sovereignty for racial supremacy) and with the doctrines of the sovereignty of the international proletariat, represented by the Third International.²⁸

As is well known, the French revolution created the vehicle for the entry of serious doctrines of popular sovereignty in the modern world.²⁹ Citizens were not defined by ethnic descent. Nobles with ancient ties to France fled, whereas foreigners in France could be counted as citizens. The English radical Tom Paine even became a deputy.³⁰ However, it is obviously not the case that sovereignty has been simply a universalist, egalitarian doctrine. The problem for a theory of sovereignty is to account for both its universalism, which critical theorists today neglect, and its exclusive, reactionary side, whose potential was underestimated by its early proponents.

The tension between universalism and particularism in enlightenment thought is encapsulated by Kenan Malik:

The declaration of the Rights of Man seemed to imply that all humanity should be accorded ... rights. Yet, in practice, those rights were enforced and defended through the mechanism of a nation state. In other words in order to be able to exercise universal rights, one had to belong to a nation, to be a citizen. But guaranteeing rights through national citizenship by definition excluded those rights from all who were not citizens. Through the development of capitalist society, the nation-state became the mechanism for

²⁸ Franz L. Neumann *The Concept of Political Freedom* in William F. Scheuerman (ed) *The Rule of Law Under Siege: Selected Essays of Franz L. Neumann and Otto Kirchheimer* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1996) pp 213-214

²⁹ Of course, ideas about popular sovereignty did not start with the revolution. They had been extant at least since ancient Athens, but the revolution provided the first large scale adoption of these ideas in practice.

³⁰ See John Keane *Tom Paine* (London: Bloomsbury 1996)

protecting rights, but in so doing denied those very rights to others. The rights of 'man' and the rights of a citizen seemed necessarily contradictory.³¹

The nub of the problem is to be found in the tension between absolute and unqualified universalism in enlightenment view of the rights of man, the immiseration of the poor and the rise to power of a new, largely middle class, elite. In fact, it was this very élite that put forward the ideology of equality most forcefully; "in this particular historical conjuncture, in distinctly non-capitalist conditions, even bourgeois class ideology took the form of a larger vision of general human emancipation, not just emancipation for the bourgeoisie."³²

The democratic moment created by the French Revolution was transitory. The concept of the 'nation' was amorphous, a shorthand for the political community within the state. But it quickly acquired a life of its own in irrationalist approaches that tried to make sense of the tension between universalist idealism and particularist, exclusive reality. The situation soon arose where "The sovereign is not the *will* of the *people* at large, but the *reason* of the *nation* as embodied in the constitutional authorities. ... *reason* was substituted for *will* as the basis of genuine authority."³³ The theme of ignorant masses needing reasoned guidance is already present in post-revolutionary thought in France.

For much of the nineteenth century sovereignty retained this ambiguity. In Marx, for example, the existence of sovereign states was a fundamental barrier to human liberation. This is shown in some famous passages of the *Communist Manifesto*, where he celebrates the achievements of capitalist society, "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions

³¹ Kenan Malik *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society* (London: Macmillan 1996) p. 69

³² Ellen Meiksins Wood *The Origin of Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press 1999) p. 111

³³ Charles E. Merriam *History of the Theory of Sovereignty* p. 83 and 84

everywhere.”³⁴ And, further, “In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations.... [the bourgeoisie] creates a world after its own image.”³⁵ It ends with a call to arms for the proletarians of all countries to come together to overthrow current social conditions.

He accounted for the development of the sovereign state as an outcome of a change in the mode of production from feudalism, where the expropriation of surplus was carried out directly and visibly by political authorities, to capitalism, where expropriation was carried out through a veil of equality created by formally equal contracts between capitalists and workers. This appropriation, Marx argued, is extra-political, and capitalist society is characterised by the separation of political and economic functions. This point has been re-stated by Ellen Meiksins Wood, who correctly points out that this separation of economics and politics is best understood as the depoliticisation of economics.³⁶ It is this separation that gives rise to the state, which apparently operates in the interests of all society, but in fact defends the interests of capital against its class enemies.

The separation of politics and economics is neither absolute nor static. It is a contingent relationship that is negotiated over time. In the twentieth century the state has come to play an ever-larger role in the economy. During the two world wars the state directed the economy in the interests of the war effort, and state spending failed to fall back to pre-war levels after both wars. More recently, states have been markedly less enthusiastic about taking responsibility for the economy, promoting the free market on a rhetorical level at least.³⁷

³⁴ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Penguin 1985) p. 83

³⁵ *ibid.* p. 84

³⁶ Ellen Meiksins Wood, ‘The separation of the “economic” and the “political” in capitalism’ in *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995)

³⁷ See Alan S. Milward *The European Rescue of the Nation State* (London: Routledge 1999)

The separate states that emerge with the development of the capitalist world market divide humanity into nations rather than classes, subsuming all other interests into the national interest in times of crisis. The importance of the 'Blitz spirit' was amply demonstrated in the farcical attempts at re-creating it through the fiftieth anniversary commemorations in the 1990s. Nationalism develops as an ideology that ties capitalists and workers together against the citizens of other states, frustrating the progress of humanity as a whole.

Writing from a rather different standpoint, Robert Jackson also makes this separation between politics and economics the basis for approaching international relations:

"State sovereignty is not a sociological idea or an economic notion as it is sometimes erroneously made out to be. It is sometimes said that states are losing their economic sovereignty to international capital markets. That claim is conceptually confused. The expression 'economic sovereignty' is a conflation of two different concepts that are best kept in separate compartments if we wish to be clear. A better term might be economic autarky ... Sovereignty is a legal notion in actual practice: that is, as used by practitioners. That is not to say that sovereignty and economics are unrelated. Obviously they are related. It is merely to point out that the relation is a contingent relation and not a conceptual relation."³⁸

From this, he justifies political conditionality in terms of the freedom of contract, "Members of international society are fully entitled to use their financial aid or technical assistance to reward or punish foreign governments. They are perfectly within their rights to lay down domestic conditions – such as the protection of human rights or respect for the rule of law, or the holding of democratic elections – in exchange for international aid. If the government of the target country cannot accept

³⁸ Robert Jackson *The Global Covenant* p. 109; see also p. 251

those conditions they are free to refuse them.”³⁹ This claim will be discussed in chapter 7, while this chapter will explain how these phenomena came to be treated as separate.

The separation between politics and economics first developed in England. This is not the place to attempt to explain why this process occurred, but before anywhere else in the world England developed a national, capitalist market in agricultural surplus. The people to benefit most from this were the nobles rather than the peasants or the bourgeoisie, and they understood that it was in their interests to give up some of the feudal privileges enjoyed by their continental counterparts. Ellen Meiksins Wood has explained that,

As purely economic power increasingly displaced politically constituted property, and as landlordly wealth was increasingly based on economic rents from productive free tenants rather than on surplus extraction from feudal dependants, even lords began to see the advantages of a property form effectively denuded of extra-economic ‘embellishments’, whether in the shape of juridical privileges or prescriptive liabilities. In the end, feudal forms of lordly property gave way and the customary rights of peasants were extinguished, leaving the classic ‘triad’ of English agrarian capitalism – landlords, tenants, and propertyless wage-labourers, bound together by purely ‘economic’ relations.⁴⁰

In pre-capitalist societies, economic activity was based on unequal relationships, where political power was used to create economic wealth. Although this took many different forms, and did not usually take the form of direct enslavement, there was a formally unequal relationship between people who produced goods and those who profited from them. As capitalism developed, however, this gave way to an exchange between equals, where there was a legal contract between employers and employees.

³⁹ *ibid.* p. 312, and also defended on p. 365

⁴⁰ Ellen Meiksins Wood *The Pristine Culture of Capitalism* (London: Verso 1991) pp 51-52

The modern conception of sovereignty developed from this differentiation of powers, and not, importantly, from the centralisation of political power in absolutist states.⁴¹ In other words, Britain rather than France was the model of the sovereign state. It is on this basis that theories of the modern sovereign state have been constructed.

These developments in the relationship between politics and economics shaped the origin and early development of sovereignty. In the literature of International Relations, however, these ideas are usually divorced from this historical analysis and treated rather as resources that can be plucked from their historical context to support new theoretical approaches or contribute to the contemporary disciplinary debates.⁴² Inasmuch as context is considered, the main writers who developed the idea of sovereignty are held to have been concerned with the problem of order, which is of central importance to more recent theories of international relations.⁴³ Indeed, International Relations historically focused on political order between sovereign states without delving too deeply into the ways in which economic forces can impinge on political order.

The idea of the sovereign state emerged slowly from a number of related debates about the legitimate scope of temporal and ecclesiastical power, as the European monarchies vied with the Pope throughout the middle ages. The argument the I am making is that these strands were brought together by the emergence of a capitalist economy, and in particular the separation of political authority from the sphere of production. Such debates can be traced back to the ancient Greeks, to the medieval scholastics, and to many others. To see their real effect in international relations, however, it is more appropriate to consider a more recent starting point. Specifically I begin with the debates about the rights of Europeans over the New World colonies, as they pushed the issue of the right of property to the fore. Anthony Pagden notes, “the

⁴¹ Justin Rosenberg *The Empire of Civil Society: A Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations* (London: Verso 1994) chapter 5

⁴² Although an important and influential corrective to this is found in the Cambridge School of intellectual history, in the figures of Quentin Skinner, Richard Tuck, John Dunn and others.

⁴³ See NJ Rengger *International Relations, Political Theory and the Problem of Order: Beyond International Relations Theory?* (London: Routledge 1999)

overwhelming preoccupation of the crown and its advisors not with the question of sovereignty, although this, too, was by no means uncontentious, but with property rights.”⁴⁴ I will end before Locke, who has been thoroughly treated elsewhere,⁴⁵ and is most obviously concerned with questions of economic rights.

The discovery of the New World challenged the pre-conceptions of the old, which was confronted with a land and society unknown to the classical sources that the scholastics relied upon, and which was not easily described or explained. When the Spanish and Portuguese conquests began the sovereign state, with sole authority over a territory, had not yet emerged. Instead of the scramble for territory that would mark the later conquest of Africa, there was a series of negotiations that involved debating subtle theological points and frequent deferral to the papacy. The fiction that their aim was to convert the natives was maintained throughout, and institutionalised in a Papal commission to Spain to convert them. J. H. Parry, who is one of the foremost chroniclers of this process, has noted that, “A thoroughly conquered people, in effect, has no legal rights except those granted to it, as of grace, by the conquerors; while the conquerors claim a new set of rights which require legal definition, with reference to new responsibilities ... A new situation calls for legislation – no system of philosophy or body of custom will serve ... and legislation, to be effective and convincing, requires the assumption of sovereignty.”⁴⁶

The question of the humanity of the people that they subjugated was debated with pious seriousness. Many participants of the debate used Aristotle’s concept of the natural slave as a starting point; others argued that they had an equal capacity to

⁴⁴ Anthony Pagden *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination: Studies in European and Spanish-American Social and Political Theory 1513-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1990) p. 15

⁴⁵ C. B. Macpherson *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon 1962), Ellen Meiksins Wood *The Origin of Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press 1999)

⁴⁶ J. H. Parry *The Spanish Theory of Empire in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press 1940) p. 70

receive the Gospel.⁴⁷ The universalist element of the first approach to empire has been all-but obscured. Pagden notes that, "The history of the European empires in America is one of the reformulation of a constitutive element in European cultural and political thinking: the belief in the possibility of a universal human code of conduct."⁴⁸ At this time, cultural differences were not associated with racial difference.⁴⁹

Nicholas Onuf has explained that in the Renaissance there was a move away from the slavish devotion to classical models that their predecessors tended towards, developing new ideas by using the vernacular rather than Latin. He writes that, "majesty, rule and agency had come together at the level once identified with princes and republics not just to create the sovereign state as something new but to eliminate all other political arrangements, at whatever level, from serious competition with the state."⁵⁰ Machiavelli was among the first to give shape to the newly emerging practices of international relations in the sixteenth century. The internecine wars of the Italian states provided a fitting backdrop for theories of absolute sovereign power to be developed. He saw the influence of Virtù and Fortuna everywhere in society; Fortuna, the fickle woman, and Virtù the decisive man. An important study of renaissance Italy, which is attuned to the psychological impact of the social upheavals, notes that, "The wheel of Fortune was a fitting cipher for the widespread feeling, among the upper classes, that men had lost control over their lives. The image summed up the instabilities of the age. But more specifically, it was an ideological projection onto the events of history. It was an effort – desperate, as we can now see – to make sense of the failure of the Italian ruling groups."⁵¹ Machiavelli clearly implies the separation of the political and economic spheres in a famous letter where he writes that, "Fortune has decided that I must talk about the

⁴⁷ See Lewis Hanke *Aristotle and the American Indians: A Study in Race Prejudice in the Modern World* (London: Hollis and Carter 1959)

⁴⁸ Anthony Pagden *Lords of all the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500-c. 1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1995) p. 200

⁴⁹ Margaret T. Hodgen *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1964) passim, especially chapter 6

⁵⁰ Onuf, *Sovereignty* p. 438

state-not knowing how to discuss wither the silk trade or the wool business, either to profits or losses.”⁵²

Maurizio Viroli draws out the logic of Machiavelli’s argument as implying that, “ruling and legislating according to justice and reason presuppose the existence of the state as a dominion – that is, a political structure having the power to exercise jurisdiction over a people in a territory.”⁵³ At this stage, in theory at least, we have arrived at the idea of the state as an entity possessing something like the modern notion of sovereignty. Chabod argues that in Machiavelli, “there is no further intervention on the part of God or the devil, the saints or the ‘enemy of the human generation’. Everything is determined by human agencies...”⁵⁴ Without this basis in human will, the modern idea of the sovereign state would have been impossible.

Although Machiavelli is one of the core thinkers in the realist canon, it is Jean Bodin who is generally credited with developing the theory of sovereignty in the *Six Books of the Commonwealth*,⁵⁵ first published in 1576. Indeed, “sovereignty is the central fact in Bodin’s political theory”.⁵⁶ Wood notes that, “The conceptual clarity of the French idea was a response to the absence in reality of an ‘absolute’ and ‘indivisible’ sovereign power.”⁵⁷ Bodin defines sovereignty as, “that absolute and perpetual power vested in a commonwealth”.⁵⁸ However, from this apparently absolutist conception of sovereignty he proceeds to limit its exercise to a greater degree than some realists would today, claiming that both God’s law and the law of nations are its superiors.⁵⁹

⁵¹ Lauro Martines *Power and Imagination: City States in Renaissance Italy* (London: Allen Lane 1980) p. 442

⁵² Niccolò Machiavelli ‘Letter to Francesco Vettori in Rome’ in Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa (eds) *The Portable Machiavelli* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1979) p. 65-66

⁵³ Maurizio Viroli *Machiavelli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998) p. 48

⁵⁴ *ibid*, p. 180

⁵⁵ Oxford: Basil Blackwell n.d. Translated and abridged by M. J. Tooley

⁵⁶ Charles E. Merriam *History of the Theory of Sovereignty* p. 14

⁵⁷ Ellen Meiksins Wood *The Pristine Culture* p. 44

⁵⁸ Bodin p. 25

⁵⁹ Chapter 8, “all the princes of the earth are subject to the laws of God and of nature, and even to certain human laws common to all nations” (p. 28)

Hobbes was the first great political theorist to write at a time when market relations pervaded all social relations.⁶⁰ Macpherson argues that Hobbes' theory did not rely on hierarchy, because the market "established an inequality of insecurity".⁶¹ For Hobbes, "A political sovereign was necessary to guarantee order, by enforcing rules which would prevent the peaceful competition of the market turning into, or being supplemented by, open force. But the authority of the sovereignty could now be made to rest on a rational transfer of rights agreed upon by men who were equal in a double sense: their value and entitlements were equally governed by the market, and in the face of the market they appeared to be equally insecure."⁶²

Hobbes' concern in the *Leviathan* is obvious; he wants to avoid the anarchical situation that England got into during the Civil War (1642-49). There is no suggestion that we should return to a golden age of the past, and Hobbes is rather too cynical to imagine that a harmonious state of affairs could easily or permanently be established. Instead, he provides reasons and arguments for why we should defer to the judgement of the sovereign. Contrary to the caricatured image of Hobbes held by those who have not read his work, he was not an apologist for power, and he did not argue for totalitarianism. His argument rests on the idea of free and equal human beings who freely contract together. From an unpleasant, but equal, original position, people originally contracted together to advance their own interests.⁶³ People enter into this contract for instrumental, self-interested reasons. In Chapter 18 of the *Leviathan*, Hobbes provides arguments for absolute obedience to the sovereign that are derived from the original contract. He argues that, "if he that attempteth to depose his Sovereign, be killed, or punished by him for such attempt, he is author of his own punishment, as being by the Institution, Author of all his Sovereign shall do: And because it is injustice for a man to do any thing, for which he may be punished by his own authority, he is also upon that title unjust."⁶⁴ He argues against those,

⁶⁰ C. B. Macpherson *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* p. 89

⁶¹ *ibid.* p. 89

⁶² *ibid.* p. 89

⁶³ Thomas Hobbes *Leviathan* (London: Dent 1983 [1651]) Chapter 13

⁶⁴ *ibid.* p. 91

such as Milton and Knox,⁶⁵ who defended rebellion on the grounds of the higher law of God, that, “there is no Covenant with God, but by mediation of some body that representeth Gods person”.⁶⁶ Here Hobbes is arguing that rebels cannot claim the authority of God, as nobody can claim to have reached agreement with God; rather, they must accept the authority of the sovereign, who represents God on earth. In this chapter, Hobbes provides a detailed and coherent argument for subjects to accept the will of the sovereign as identical with their own will.

The first person to systematically shift the focus of debate towards the relationship between political and economic power was C. B. Macpherson. According to Peter Gowan, “Macpherson transformed the received narrative of modern European liberalism, from Hobbes through Kant to Bentham and Mill, by arguing that what was normatively relevant about humanity – its morally significant dimension – was its equal subordination to the market.”⁶⁷ It is appropriate to sum up this section with a quotation from his *Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*:

to get a valid theory of political obligation without relying on any supposed purposes of Nature or will of God ... one must be able to postulate that the individuals of whom the society is composed see themselves, or are capable of seeing themselves, as equal in some respect more fundamental than all the respects in which they are unequal. This condition was fulfilled in the original possessive market society, from its emergence as the dominant form in the seventeenth century until its zenith in the nineteenth, by the apparent inevitability of everyone's subordination to the laws of the market. So long as everyone was subject to the determination of a competitive market, and so long as this apparently equal subordination of individuals to the determination of the market was accepted as rightful, or inevitable, by virtually everybody, there was a sufficient basis for rational obligation of all men to political

⁶⁵ See Quentin Skinner *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1979) for a survey of these debates.

⁶⁶ Thomas Hobbes *Leviathan* p. 91

⁶⁷ Peter Gowan, ‘The Origins of Atlantic Liberalism’ *New Left Review* 2 (8) 2001 pp 150 – 157 p. 155

authority which could maintain and enforce the only possible orderly human relations, namely, market relations.”⁶⁸

But it was of course Marx who is most associated with drawing together political and economic analysis, and it is to him that we now turn.

Marx and the right of sovereignty

The argument for treating sovereignty as a right that is presented in this thesis is, of course, far removed from Marx’s direct concerns for human emancipation through freeing human potential from the (primarily economic) constraints of capitalism and, as we have already seen, Marx shared in the general ambiguity towards doctrines of sovereignty in progressive nineteenth century circles. However, I will argue that seeing sovereignty as I have done here, maps on to Marx’s concerns at their most central because the right to sovereignty presented here derives from a concern for active human subjects. In his earlier work Marx had emphasised this in his criticism of idealism. In his celebrated Theses on Feuerbach, for example, he distinguishes his approach thus: “The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism (that of Feuerbach included) is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively.”⁶⁹ Here Marx is explaining the novelty of his approach in terms of the centrality of the active human subject. Reality, for Marx, is the reality constructed by active humans. Furthermore, his theory differs because “The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.”⁷⁰ He reiterates the claim that history is made by people, and expands the theme by explaining that those who wish to impose an abstract will on the world (which could include ideas about human rights, or an international order policed by global bodies that are above the will of states) fail to realise that they, too,

⁶⁸ C. B. Macpherson *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* p. 272 – 273

⁶⁹ Karl Marx *Theses on Feuerbach* <http://csf.colorado.edu/psn/marx/Archive/1845-Theses/>

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

are a part of the world. Inasmuch as Marx was concerned with people liberating themselves from social fetters – political and economic – this thesis is Marxist. Whilst it is necessary to clarify the relationship between my argument and what I take to be Marx's, I do not go down the route of mapping my concerns and methods to Marx's.

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to locate the problem of sovereignty in both a conceptual and an historical framework, identifying the competing interests that have shaped it and offering an account of it that shows how sovereignty can be asserted as a right, deriving from self determination. The recent accounts of sovereignty and of the relation between rights and sovereignty that have been developed by post-positivists in International Relations (and by others in related fields) are strikingly ahistorical and do not serve to 'trump' (to use Dworkin's famous notion) the right to self determination understood as sovereignty. They are 'historical' chiefly in the sense that they deny that sovereignty is a natural way in which to organise society, and that they can point beyond it.

Returning to Wood's claim that the separation of politics and economics is really the depoliticisation of the economic is a good point from which to understand the tension. The economic sphere is never entirely depoliticised; nor, in capitalist society, can it be entirely politicised – i.e., brought under democratic control. The question is about where the line is to be drawn. In International Relations this point remains salient. Third world claims to sovereignty over natural resources were taken very seriously during the Cold War, but today they are largely ignored.⁷¹ Today, however, the growth of interdependence and more recently of 'globalisation' has been widely held to render such concerns pointless. Neo-liberal political economy, borderless in essence and often in effect, is a dominant force in thinking through the logic of the contemporary international system. Opposition to neo-liberalism in academic and

⁷¹ See the discussion in Robert H. Jackson *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990)

policy debates in International Relations is increasingly coming from 'post-positivist' theorists of various stripes, critical, post-structural, feminist and normative theorists all criticise these developments. However, their criticism tends to coalesce around claims about the 'rights' of the poor and about the requirement of the 'rich' to do something about it. The 'global justice' industry especially emphasises this.⁷² Yet all these accounts effectively present the relevant rights as claim rights (x has a right that y do a) and are silent about the privilege right of self determination whose face in the modern world has inevitably been sovereignty. The rest of this thesis will show that, however well intentioned, this silence has great costs and that only a clear and unambiguous privilege right of self determination, expressible in terms of sovereignty stands any chance of doing justice to both the autonomy and rights of persons in the contemporary world.

⁷² The most impressive contemporary version of this claim can be found in Thomas Pogge's *World Poverty and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002) but see also Onora O'Neill *Bounds of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and the debates in Thomas Pogge (ed) *Global Justice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

5 From Anti-Imperialism to Multiculturalism

This thesis, then, presents sovereignty as a foundational privilege right that cannot be trumped by other claim rights, however important these might be in specific contexts. While of course a way needs to be found of accommodating such rights to sovereignty (an issue to which I shall return in later chapters and the conclusion) it is necessary first to confront the clearest negations of that right in the history and practice of international relations. I shall argue here that there are strong and weak forms of this negation – imperialism being the strongest form of the negation, contemporary multi-culturalism the weaker form. I will, therefore, look at each in turn before concluding this chapter by summarising my argument that such attempted negations of sovereignty in fact do not cancel out its value.

Empire, imperialism and international relations

The study of imperialism occupies a curious place in the study of international relations. It is usually treated as synonymous with colonialism and by far the most serious attention to it has been paid by critics of colonialism.¹ However, there has also been a smaller, though growing, attempt to look at 'empire' as a more general political form.² But the changing ways in which imperialism has been understood have been central to twentieth century international relations. The challenge to imperialism issued by Hobson, Lenin and others early in the twentieth century held up the reality of inequality between the imperialist powers and their colonies against their claim to bring the benefits of civilization to others. These ideas were given material force by insurrections and

¹ The literature here is huge. A good general survey can be found in Lewis S Feuer *Imperialism and the Anti-Imperialist Mind* (New York: Prometheus, 1986). Discussions of particular European imperialisms, focussing especially on the British, can be found in Vol V of the *Oxford History of the British Empire: Historiography*. Perhaps the best general treatment of the imperial mentality is in A.P. Thornton's well known *Doctrines of Imperialism* (London: John Wiley, 1965) and also his less general (again focussing on Britain) but still excellent *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies* (Harmondsworth: Macmillan, 1986 2nd edition). A rare, but excellent, treatment of imperialism in the formal literature of international relations is Charles Reynolds, *Modes of Imperialism* (London: Martin Robertson, 1981).

² Perhaps the clearest book, with a focus on international relations, is Michael Doyle's *Empires* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986). The most general and exhaustive, however, is unquestionably S. N Eisenstadt *The Political System of Empires* (Transaction books, 1993 (revised edition)). An influential author of the 1960's and 70's who argued that the best way to see the cold war was as a clash of empires was George Liska. See especially his *Imperial America: The International Politics of Primacy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967).

uprisings against colonial rule in the colonies themselves, a trend exacerbated by the organisation of colonial subjects into regiments to fight in World War I.³ Some defenders of empire resorted to increasingly vitriolic racist arguments, and their opponents often aped them with arguments about responsibility towards lower races.⁴ Alongside this, however, was a recognition that the colonies could not be held forever, and the theme of managed withdrawal has run throughout the century. The literature on 'end of empire' is now almost as great as that of imperialism itself. At the beginning of the twenty first century, however, powerful states seem to have regained their mandate to intervene in the affairs of the third world, and once again they do so in the name of 'civilization' – now perhaps more usually understood in terms of human rights, say, or democracy.⁵ Chapter 6 of this thesis will look at this recent trend in more detail. This chapter, by contrast, will provide the background to that discussion by showing both how the meaning of imperialism has been re-interpreted as a cultural phenomena, hence allowing (even, perhaps on some readings requiring) former 'imperialist' states to intervene on 'humanitarian' grounds to save victims from their own governments or from external circumstances. It will also clarify my thesis about the instrumental value of the right to sovereignty by distinguishing it from intrinsic claims about the value which inheres in cultural autonomy.

At the start of the twentieth century the absolute dominance of the sovereign state was fully established. The only question was of the kind of community that could be regarded as sovereign. Just as liberal societies have consistently withheld rights from certain groups, such as women, on the basis that they were not capable of exercising them, sovereignty was denied to people who Europeans regarded as backward. In itself, this did not undermine the idea of sovereignty. It can, of course, be applied unequally without being called into question as an idea. The idea only came to be questioned when

³ See Frank Furedi *Colonial Wars and the Politics of Third World Nationalism* (London: I. B. Tauris 1994)

⁴ This is particularly clear among the Fabians, e.g. Rita Hinden (ed.) *Fabian Colonial Essays* (London: George Allen and Unwin 1945)

⁵ Gerritt Gong's *The Standard of Civilization in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984) is a now standard analysis of the idea of member states of international society having a behavioural standard to which all should subscribe. Jack Donnelly has recently suggested that 'human rights' are the new 'standard of civilization'. See his 'Human Rights: A New Standard of Civilization?' in *International Affairs*, vol 74, No 1, January 1998, 1-24.

imperialism was challenged by colonial nationalism and western radicalism. One way of responding to this was to deny the legitimacy of these movements, to separate respectable western nationalism from its pathological reflection in less advanced societies.⁶ Another was to co-opt radical ideas to an establishment agenda, as Wilson did with his call for national self-determination.⁷

This was the temporal context in which the discipline of international relations also developed, of course.⁸ However, these concerns were not directly reflected in its early research agenda, which tended to focus more on utopian schemes for world peace and international organisation, or on problems of war and security. Radical writing on imperialism was not only outside the mainstream, it was often seen as unscholarly or merely journalistic or both. In fact, the critics of imperialism have been persistently misrepresented in International Relations. Conservatives and liberals alike have sought to deny the legitimacy of their claims, obscure differences between the critics, and accuse them of either naivety or malice.⁹ The most notable example of this – though not limited to scholars of international relations, of course – is the tendency to see Hobson and Lenin as representatives of the same idea, because of Lenin's well-known acknowledgement of Hobson. This saves the trouble of delving into Lenin's other substantial source, Volume 3 of Marx's 'Capital', or any of the other 380 sources found in Lenin's 'Notebooks on Imperialism'.¹⁰

Kenneth Waltz serves to demonstrate the misunderstandings prevalent in mainstream International Relations. He deals with the Hobson/Lenin theory of imperialism in a chapter of *Theory of International Politics* entitled, 'Reductionist Theories'.¹¹ He claims

⁶ See Frank Furedi *Colonial Wars*

⁷ For discussions of Wilson's ideas about self determination and their impact both in the US and more generally see Margaret Macmillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and its attempt to end war* (London: John Murray, 2003)

⁸ For good accounts of the background assumptions of the nascent discipline between the 1880's and the 1920's (the point at which it became institutionalised) see, for example, Brian Schmidt *The political discourse of anarchy: a disciplinary history of international relations* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998).

⁹ This is a central theme in Furedi *Colonial Wars*

¹⁰ Karl Marx *Capital* Vol 3 (London: Lawrence and Wishart 1984), V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 39 (London: Lawrence and Wishart 1968)

¹¹ Kenneth N. Waltz *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill 1979) Chapter 2

that we should expect that, "the assumptions of the Hobson-Lenin theory will be economic, not political",¹² and advises that, "students will save much time and trouble by mastering the sixth chapter of Part I, where they will find all of the elements of later economic explanations of imperialism from Lenin to Baran and Sweezy."¹³ Indeed, he only concedes Lenin the merit of originality in two areas; he refused to accept Hobson's claim that government policies could eliminate the drive to imperialism, and he believed that capitalism inevitably caused imperialism, which necessarily lead to war.¹⁴ In fact, these two areas of disagreement are absolutely essential to grasp either theory.

Waltz feigns confusion at the claim that capitalism causes imperialism when, "Imperialism is at least as old as recorded history."¹⁵ To encounter such a claim from Waltz is strange, to say the least, when we refer back to his own claim in the preceding chapter, "That theoretical notions are defined by the theory in which they appear is easily understood."¹⁶ Not quite so easily, it seems. Hobson is absolutely clear on this point:

the distinction between genuine Colonialism and Imperialism, important in itself, is vital when we consider their respective relations to domestic policy. ... Imperialism is the very antithesis of [the] free, wholesome colonial connection, making, as it ever does, for greater complications of foreign policy, greater centralisation of power, and a congestion of business which ever threatens to absorb and overtax the capacity of parliamentary government.¹⁷

So how are these theories different? Hobson argues that imperialism is an irrational policy, "A completely socialist State which kept good books and presented regular balance-sheets of expenditure and assets would soon discard Imperialism; an intelligent laissez-faire democracy which gave duly proportionate weight in its policy to all economic interests alike would do the same. But a State in which certain well-organised

¹² *ibid.* p. 20

¹³ *ibid.* p. 20

¹⁴ *ibid.* p. 23

¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 25

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 11

¹⁷ John A. Hobson *Imperialism: A Study* (London: George Allen and Unwin 1954) p. 125

business interests are able to outweigh the weak, diffused interest of the community is bound to pursue a policy which accords with the pressure of the former interests.”¹⁸ And again, “The rich will never be so ingenious as to spend enough to prevent over-production.”¹⁹ Lenin, in contrast, sees imperialism only as contingently irrational – irrational, that is, in the context of the development of human society, but absolutely rational from the point of view of capitalist interests.

One obvious source of confusion in understanding Lenin’s theory is that it is written in an elliptical style to fool the censors. He points out that, “This pamphlet was written with an eye to Tsarist censorship. Hence, I was not only forced to confine myself strictly to an exclusively theoretical, mainly economic analysis of facts, but to formulate the few necessary observations of politics with extreme caution, but hints, in that Aesopian language – in that cursed Aesopian language – to which Tsarism compelled all revolutionaries to have recourse whenever they took up their pens to write a ‘legal’ work.”²⁰ Note that he does not say that imperialism *is* ‘merely’ economic, only that he has concentrated on that side of it.

The subtitle of Lenin’s work is ‘the highest stage of capitalism’, and to understand it fully one must begin from Marx’s description of the laws of motion of capitalist society in *Capital*. Lenin’s argument is that these laws are being subverted by capitalism itself in a state of crisis. He describes its evolution schematically thus, “the principal stages in the history of monopolies are the following: 1) 1860-70, the highest stage, the apex of development of free competition; monopoly is in the barely discernible, embryonic stage. 2) After the crisis of 1873, a wide zone of development of cartels; but they are still the exception. They are not yet durable. They are still a transitory phenomenon. 3) The boom at the end of the nineteenth century and the crisis of 1900-03. Cartels become one of the foundations of the whole of economic life. Capitalism has been transformed into imperialism.”²¹ The picture that Lenin paints is of imperialism unfolding as free-market

¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 47-48

¹⁹ *ibid.* p. 84

²⁰ V. I. Lenin *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (London: Pluto 1996) p. 1

²¹ *ibid.* p. 17

capitalism stagnates. In the end, he is clear that a quite distinct form of social organisation had emerged.

Briefly, according to Marx capitalism was a system of production where profits are extracted by purchasing labour for less than the value of what it produces. Those with capital are able to gain profits, while others are forced to sell their labour in order to survive. To defend their privileges, capitalists organise themselves into states, deriving their profit from production within states, importing other necessities and selling manufactured products abroad. Lenin's starting point is that the rate of profit that can be extracted tends to fall.²² In their efforts to counteract this tendency capitalists change the very character of capitalism. Lenin notes that, "Under the old capitalism, when free competition prevailed, the export of *goods* was the most typical feature. Under modern capitalism, when monopolies prevail, the export of *capital* has become the typical feature."²³ In other words, capitalists can get a better return on their capital abroad than in their own states. The problem with this, however, is that in their own countries the state exists to defend their collective interests. When they export capital they run the risks of expropriation, civil unrest and other uncontrollable factors.

However, although this is the general direction of Lenin's argument, it should be noted that he was aware of the operation of other counteracting tendencies, even in the imperialist epoch. In a chapter entitled, "The parasitism and decay of capitalism", Lenin writes that, "Certainly the possibility of reducing cost of production and increasing profits by introducing technical improvements operates in the direction of change. Nevertheless, the tendency to stagnation and decay, which is the feature of monopoly, continues, and in certain branches of industry, in certain countries, for certain periods of time, it becomes predominant."²⁴

²² Noted by Marx in *Capital* Volume 3 Chapters 14-16. See James Malone and Norman Lewis *Introduction* in V. I. Lenin *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (London: Pluto 1996) for a synopsis.

²³ V. I. Lenin *Imperialism*. p. 61

²⁴ *ibid.* p. 101

This much was anticipated by Marx.²⁵ Lenin gives these ideas shape by developing them in relation to the specific developments that had been taking place towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth; "If it were necessary to give the briefest definition of imperialism we should have to say that imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism. Such a definition would include what is most important, for on the one hand, finance capital is the bank capital of a few big monopolist banks, merged with the capital of the monopolist combines of manufacturers; and, on the other hand, the division of the world is the transition from a colonial policy which has extended without hindrance to territories unoccupied by any capitalist power, to a colonial policy of monopolistic possession of the territory of the world which has been completely divided up."²⁶

But, beneath that cursed Aesopian language, it is possible to discern the political focus of Lenin's argument: "Domination, and violence that is associated with it, such are the relationships that are most typical of the 'latest phase of capitalist development'; this is what must inevitably result, and has resulted, from the formation of all-powerful economic monopolies."²⁷ So, as markets expand, the political domination of the capitalist class is also expanded. In the nation-state this is represented by the bourgeois state, or 'special body of armed men', as Lenin had earlier described it.²⁸ The state upholds order and provides the necessary public goods to facilitate capitalist exploitation to continue unimpeded. As capital moves outside the jurisdiction of its own state, the market is not always upheld as the capitalists would wish. The state therefore follows national capital, ensuring that it is allowed to exploit foreign labour without impediment.

Against the liberal view of trade leading to peace, Lenin claimed that, "Imperialism is the epoch of finance capitalism and of monopolies, which introduce everywhere the striving for domination, not for freedom. The result of these tendencies is reaction all along the line, whatever the political system, and an extreme intensification of existing

²⁵ *Capital* Vol III (London: Lawrence and Wishart 1984)

²⁶ *ibid.* p 89-90

²⁷ *ibid.* p. 22

antagonisms in this domain also. Particularly acute becomes the yoke of national oppression and the striving for annexations, i.e., the violation of national independence (for annexation is nothing but the violation of the right of nations to self-determination).”²⁹ It is this quite distinctive analysis that Lenin was able to formulate his demand for national self-determination.

But the misrepresentations of these theories are not simply due to error on the part of academics. Lenin would barely have merited a footnote in International Relations if it were not for the material force that his ideas achieved in the ferment of World War I, a time when the great powers were acutely sensitive to challenges to their empires. The most notable response to Lenin was Wilson’s attempt to co-opt his idea of self-determination to a very different political agenda. His adoption of Lenin’s terminology has led to the obfuscation of the differences between their respective deployments of the term. However, the debate continues to be characterised by the debate between Wilsonian and Leninist ideas about self-determination.

Although Wilson has been widely criticised for his naïve optimism, not least by his own Secretary of State Robert Lansing, his notion of self-determination was strictly circumscribed in its application. Lansing famously mused that, “The more I think about the President’s decision as to the right of ‘self-determination’, the more convinced I am about the danger of putting such ideas into the minds of certain races. It is bound to be the basis of impossible demands on the Peace Congress and create trouble in many lands.”³⁰ But Wilson was already one step ahead of him. In the 1912 election campaign Wilson claimed, “I stand for the national policy of exclusion. The whole question is one of assimilation of diverse races. We cannot make a homogenous population of a people who do not blend with the Caucasian race.”³¹

²⁸ V.I.Lenin ‘The State and Revolution’ in V.I.Lenin *Selected Works* 3 volumes (Moscow: Progress Publications 1977), Volume 2

²⁹ V. I. Lenin *Imperialism* p. 125

³⁰ Robert Lansing *The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1921) p. 97

³¹ quoted in Rubin Frances Weston *Racism in U.S. Imperialism: The influence of racial assumptions on American foreign policy 1893 – 1946* (Columbia S.C.: University of South Carolina Press 1972) p. 32

Liberal-sounding platitudes about freedom were always tempered by pragmatic consideration of the balance of power, and of American interest. For example, he claimed that "Free, open-minded and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the population concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined."³²

Indeed, American opposition to Wilson was not confined to reactionaries like Lansing. The anti-imperialist, William Allen White, echoed Lansing's concerns. Noting that self-determination was intended for the peoples of central Europe, he wrote that, "when you preach freedom to a people ridden by despotism, and when you exhort these peoples to rise – just because you happen to be fighting the particular despot who rules over these people ... millions of other people living under what the Anglo-Saxon regards as highly moral government in a most exemplary fashion, may loathe the exemplary fashion and regard your exponent of orderly government as a despicable tyrant. And the man may be your best friend."³³ Another of the American anti-imperialists, Oswald Garrison Villard, wrote that the allied desire for democratisation was, "imperialism of the worst kind".³⁴

A sense of the fear that the Americans felt can be seen in a memorandum composed by Lansing:

in Russia disorganized and weakened by revolution appeared Bolshevism, the doctrine of a proletariat despotism. It is opposed to nationality and represents a great international movement of ignorant masses to overthrow government everywhere and destroy the present social order. Its appeal is to the unintelligent

³² Woodrow Wilson January 1918 quoted in Michael D. Callahan *Mandates and Empire: The League of Nations and Africa 1914 – 1931* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press 1999) p. 18

³³ Quoted in Christopher Lasch *The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution* (New York: McGraw Hill 1972) p. 208; ellipsis in source.

³⁴ Quoted in *ibid.* p. 168

and brutish element of mankind to take from the intellectual and successful their rights and possessions and reduce them to a state of slavery.³⁵

One gets a further impression of the extent of his fear of Bolshevism later, "It would be a godsend to the country if we could get away from the old party names of Democrat and Republican with their memories of partisan battles and bitterness, and organize a new party of earnest patriots devoted to the maintenance of democratic institutions and boldly hostile to the socialistic doctrines now being advocated."³⁶ Here, democracy becomes no more than a slogan. A 'democracy' without parties implies a democracy without the representation of competing interests, simply a political system dedicated to its own defence against the horror of 'socialistic doctrines'. A telling anecdote of his attitude is found in his Desk Diaries, where he notes that at a Cabinet Meeting there was "No real business. All politics."³⁷ Another theme that comes up in his papers is the need to deploy nationalism against classism. Like Wilson, his view of the nation is explicitly racist; "The natural cleavage between nations is along ethnological lines. Kinship and common blood are the bases of community interest."³⁸ And he cannot resist an anti-Semitic side-swipe, claiming that in the US Bolshevism is "largely in the hands of the Jews."³⁹

Arno Mayer explains how "Wilson's daring proposal for orderly change became the most decisive challenge to [Lenin's] revolutionary ideology."⁴⁰ Moreover, he notes that moderate social democrats in Germany were able to make a credible case against revolution by invoking the Fourteen Points, which were seen as a guarantee of fair treatment in the peace treaty. Christopher Lasch disputes Mayer's emphasis, arguing that Wilson's friends and enemies saw no distinction between their respective opposition to

³⁵ Robert Lansing *Memorandum on Absolutism and Bolshevism*, June 12 1918, The Robert Lansing Papers Box 64

³⁶ Robert Lansing *Private Papers* 26 July 1919 p. 123½ (sic) Robert Lansing Papers Box 64

³⁷ Robert Lansing *Desk Diaries* 6 November 1920 The Papers of Robert Lansing Reel 3

³⁸ Robert Lansing *Self-Determination* 6 June 1920 Robert Lansing Papers Box 64

³⁹ Robert Lansing *The Spread of Bolshevism in the United States* July 26 1919 Robert Lansing Papers Box 64

⁴⁰ Arno J. Mayer *Wilson vs. Lenin: Political Origins of the New Diplomacy 1917-1918* (Cleveland: Meridian 1964) p. 367

closed diplomacy and espousal of an early political settlement of the war.⁴¹ But today, discussions of self-determination focus on the application of Wilsonian principles, neglecting the more radical tradition that links the emancipation of nations to the emancipation of humanity.⁴²

The existence of imperialism does not as such negate the argument made in this thesis for sovereignty as a foundational right, which can be claimed even when it is not recognised in a particular social institution. But these debates about imperialism are relevant because they were conducted in terms that are conducive to the argument made here that states should be self-determining. Moreover, it is necessary to distinguish the argument that I am making from varieties of Wilsonianism. In the same vein, I now move on to discuss more recent debates about autonomy that focus on cultural factors, again distinguishing my own position from them.

The cultural turn

Today debates about Western political and economic imperialism in the vein of Wilson and Lenin seem sterile. Anti-westernism seems confined to terrorists who enjoy no solidarity from Western people. The political impetus to join political struggle with the third world has been upstaged by sympathy campaigns from charities. But the term 'imperialism' persists. The increasingly hollow shell of radical anti-imperialism has been maintained by post-colonial studies,⁴³ although the content has changed utterly. Most commonly, however, imperialism is seen in cultural terms, as the imposition of a set of values and beliefs on another culture. The upshot of this argument is that the critique of imperialism is reversed; where anti-imperialism used to be a universalist doctrine, holding up the ideal of autonomy for all, it is now particularist, valuing cultural

⁴¹ Christopher Lasch *The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution* (New York: McGraw Hill 1972) *passim*, especially p. 65

⁴² Although modern studies do not necessarily focus on either tradition, or even use the language of self-determination, the ghosts of Wilson and Lansing can be seen in the tedious ongoing debate about whether this or that nation can legitimately secede, or how the principle can be reconciled with the desire for global order. David McCrone *Sociology of Nationalism* (1998) is a useful guide to contemporary debates.

⁴³ A good example is provided by Spivak. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, et al *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (London: Routledge, 1996)

membership above all else. These arguments have become so influential that they have largely forced the idea of national self-determination off the agenda, to the point where arguments for collective autonomy can be disregarded even by critics of the multiculturalist approach, of whom I will have more to say later.

Once decolonisation had taken place, it was easy to suppose that imperialism too had been effectively eradicated. The endless discussions of the Soviet Union as 'the last empire' and the final collapse of colonialism that greeted the Soviet collapse in 1991 can be taken of additional evidence of this tendency.⁴⁴ When inequalities persisted, academics came up with the term 'neo-imperialism' to explain the ways in which great powers continued to exercise political influence after formal control had been relinquished.⁴⁵ Beyond some versions of neo-marxism, for example, dependency theory and world systems analysis however, little attention was paid to the economic aspects of imperialism that Lenin had seen as so important⁴⁶.

The withdrawal from empire was managed very carefully. Local élites were cultivated, and radicals were culled – often literally – in colonial wars.⁴⁷ Added to the very low economic base that existed in most former colonies, the dismal performance of post-colonial states is unsurprising. Ideas about cultural imperialism have been built on the foundation of the anti-colonialist defeat. The focus of anti-imperialist ideas has shifted from a critique of powerful states oppressing others to a critique of powerful communities oppressing others. And these communities need not be states. In the popular current jargon, they can be communities of discourse or cultural minorities.

A tendency among colonial élites that saw the revolt against imperialism as an irrational urge rather than a rational, self-interested desire to legislate for one's self spread to more

⁴⁴ For example, G.R. Urban *End of Empire: The Demise of the Soviet Union* (University Press of America 1993), Stephen Dalziel *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Smithmark Publishers 1993)

⁴⁵ For example Michael Barratt Brown *The Economics of Imperialism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1974)

⁴⁶ Good examples of the dependencia approach can be found in Andre Gunder Frank *Dependent Accumulation* (Monthly Review Press 1998) and Andre Gunder Frank and Barry Gills *The World System: 500 or 5000 years* (London; Routledge, 1993). The locus classicus of world system analysis is, of course, Immanuel Wallerstein *The Modern World System* (3 vols Academic Press, 1976-89).

radical scholars. In the inter-war period this took the form of denying the legitimacy of colonial nationalism. Unlike the respectable nationalism of the West, it was seen as irrational and impulsive.⁴⁸ This tendency has been maintained until the present. In a classic work on sovereignty of the 1970s, Raymond Vernon saw the opposition to American multinationals as being based on “a clash of national cultures” in the “advanced countries”, but as “ideological” elsewhere.⁴⁹ He explicitly separates ideology from self-interest, explaining that in third world, “hostility may spring more from ideology than from direct self-interest.”⁵⁰

But the more important development has been that these ideas have spread from conservative imperialists to formerly critical liberals and radicals. Martin Shaw and Mary Kaldor, for example, believe that the character of politics, and of war has fundamentally changed.⁵¹ Shaw, for example, castigates “a residual third world ideology according to which Western, especially American, ‘imperialism’ is the touchstone for all world politics. This approach recognizes neither the quasi-imperial character of many non-Western states nor the transformation of Western state power.”⁵² Richard Falk argues that, “A misleading impression may have been created, especially in Africa, that sovereignty is a status, once and for all, and not a process, evolving to incorporate responsibilities of states as well as rights.”⁵³ Again, the specifics of these arguments will be discussed more fully in chapter 6. What concerns us now is simply the point that the oppression of nations is now rarely interpreted as an act of political domination by more powerful groups against the less powerful.

⁴⁷ See Furedi *Colonial Wars*

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Raymond Vernon *Sovereignty at Bay: The Multinational Spread of U.S. Enterprises* (London: Longman 1976) p. 204

⁵⁰ *ibid.* p. 201

⁵¹ Mary Kaldor *New and Old Wars: Organized violence in a global era* (Cambridge: Polity 1999; re-published with a new afterward, 2001), Martin Shaw *Theory of the Global State: Globality as an Unfinished Revolution* (Cambridge: Polity 2000)

⁵² Martin Shaw *Theory of the Global State* p. 261

⁵³ Richard A. Falk *Human Rights Horizons: The Pursuit of Justice in a Globalizing World* (London: Routledge 2000) p. 84

'Cultural imperialism' and 'post-colonial studies' have thus become the new foci for radical critics who once opposed imperialism. Cultural imperialism can be defined as imposing one set of cultural norms over another, and it is generally seen as an act that anyone can be guilty of. The misrecognition of somebody's group identity is seen as a form of harm that states should take account of in policy making. In its most banal form this is termed 'political correctness', but at a higher level the recognition of cultural identity is taken very seriously. It is a diffuse term that defies simple definition, but I will expand on some of its applications through discussing multiculturalism below.

Opponents of cultural imperialism are anxious to distance themselves from third world nationalism. Donald Pease notes the emergence of 'global-localism', which sees imperialism as a phase of globalisation.⁵⁴ "Whereas critics of imperialism usually endorse a reading of the emergence of Third World colonies into nation-states as a more or less effective anti-imperialist project, global-localism construes Third World nationalism as itself a moment in colonial domination, and it understands social relations in the so-called Third World to be at once more complicated, unbounded, and interconnected than the anti-imperialist reading permits. This discourse thereafter insists that colonialism, nationalism, and imperialism be understood as interlinked phases in a decentred yet encompassing system."⁵⁵ In a symbolic act of inclusiveness, Pease wants to unite the discourses of anti-imperialism and global-localism, to capture the socio-economic context for cultural domination.

Postcolonial studies is a term used to define an area of academic study. Again, its meaning is too general to be pinned down easily, but it covers the study of the ways in which one set of values maintains itself over others, and how new forms of power relations have continued to deny equality to liberated third world states. A standard textbook on postcolonialism notes that, "the dismantling of colonial rule did not necessarily bring about changes for the better in the status of women, the working class or the peasantry in many countries. 'Colonialism' is not just something that happens

⁵⁴ Donald E. Pease 'New Perspectives on U.S. Culture and Imperialism' in Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (eds) *Culture of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press 1993)

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. 26

from outside a country or people, not just something that operates with the collusion of forces inside but a version of it can be duplicated from within.”⁵⁶ By a sleight of hand, the author redefines colonialism as its manifestation, and argues that because those manifestations are replicated after the end of colonial rule, colonialism must still exist. Such logic is rife in post-colonial studies. This is inevitably detrimental to any attempt to understand the distinct, specific processes that give rise to oppression, calling it all ‘colonialism’. The elision of terms that once had quite separate and specific meanings, and the expansion of what it means to be colonised or oppressed to cover many indirect forms of power characterises much post-colonial scholarship and is surely not a helpful way to seek to understand such complex and multi-faceted phenomena.

The difference between anti-imperialism and post-colonialism can be clarified through a discussion of Sartre, who straddles both traditions but has now been effectively incorporated into the post-colonial canon. Although he has been drafted into the post-colonial studies canon through his introductions to Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi, he is not making the argument that his new allies attribute to him.⁵⁷ Rather than unconditionally valuing alien cultures, he writes, “As for our famous culture, who knows whether the Algerians were very keen to acquire it? But what is certain is that we denied it to them.”⁵⁸ Here, his dispute with the colonialists is not that they imposed French culture, but that they did not impose French culture. Further, he follows an earlier anti-colonial tradition in writing that, “One of the functions of racism is to compensate the latent universalism of bourgeois liberalism: since all human beings have the same rights, the Algerian will be made a subhuman.”⁵⁹ Again, he is not arguing that the problem is that a western rights tradition has been forced on others, but that they have been denied it. Implicit in this passage is the idea that it would be better to treat Algerians as having the same universal rights as us.

⁵⁶ Ania Loomba *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge 1998) p. 12

⁵⁷ Reproduced in Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘Colonialism is a System’ in Jean-Paul Sartre *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* (London: Routledge 2001)

⁵⁸ *ibid.* p. 41

⁵⁹ *ibid.* p. 45

These claims do not fit easily with the post-colonial bent of the introduction to the volume in which this translation appears, which claims that, "Postcolonialism represents a name for the intrusion of ... radically different epistemology into the academy."⁶⁰ This is not to suggest that many elements of post-colonial thought are present in Sartre's other writings. It is, however, important to draw a line between universalist criticism and post-colonial criticism.

If the above analysis is plausible it is reasonable to ask what in general accounts for the now obvious dominance of 'cultural' as opposed to 'material' conceptions of colonialism and all that goes with this. Perhaps the most important text for the cultural turn in general is Edward Said's *Orientalism*.⁶¹ And before turning to look at the significance in general of this turn for international relations and for conceptions of sovereignty it is worthwhile spending some time on this text and the ideas to which it has given rise.⁶² Said invests Orientalism with an almost mythic power of its own. He writes that, "Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; nor is it representative and expressive of some 'Western' imperialist plot to hold down the 'Oriental' world. It is rather a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an *elaboration* no only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of 'interests' which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding

⁶⁰ Robert J. C. Young 'Preface: Sartre: the "African Philosopher"' in *ibid.* p. xxiii

⁶¹ Edward W. Said *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin 1995)

⁶² For a general assessment of Said's significance for the cultural turn focussing specifically on his readings of imperialism see Keith Ansell Pearson, Benita Parry and Judith Squires (eds) *Cultural Readings of Imperialism: Edward Said and the Gravity of History* (London: Routledge, 1998). The breadth of Said's influence can be seen not least in the fact that the editors are respectively a professor of Philosophy, of English and comparative literature and a political theorist.

relationship to political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with power".⁶³

In taking the distinction between 'self' and 'other' as his starting point Said locates himself within a long tradition of social theory. In one of the most famous presentations of this approach, Hegel explained how our concept of self derived from a series of struggles against others. As the master subjugates the slave, the slave becomes aware of his difference from the master.⁶⁴ The master defines his identity against an other, the slave. This development can be taken as a positive development, as it represents the emergence of conscious human subjects rather than an undifferentiated mass. Through defining ourselves, individually and collectively, against others, it is possible to form a positive sense of what we are. Before jumping ahead to Said's criticisms of the way that this developed into a generalised pattern of exclusion, it is important to appreciate the positive side of this development.

However, Said treats the distinction between self and other as more than a way to account for the creation of identity. In his analysis it becomes a dynamic in its own right, operating across human history and defining the core and the periphery. This leads Kenan Malik to conclude that, "The category of the Other is ahistorical and takes little account of the specificities of time and place."⁶⁵ All of this is in marked contrast to the critics of imperialism discussed above, who saw real, specific inequalities and injustices and developed theories to explain them. Said has developed a theory into which he is able to fit an analysis by employing the self-other distinction as a slogan. It implies a distrust of a robust projection of the self, individually or collectively, and a re-valuation of the culture of the other in its own terms. The logic of this position was developed and

⁶³ *ibid.* p. 12

⁶⁴ Derived from G. W. F. Hegel *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) Tr. A. V. Millar, but better known through Alexandre Kojève *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1996)

⁶⁵ Kenan Malik *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Societies* (London: Macmillan 1996) p. 222

taken still further in Said's almost as influential sequel, significantly titled *Culture and Imperialism*.⁶⁶

These themes have been pushed much further in the broader discussion of multiculturalism in political theory in general and in International Relations in particular. One of the most influential versions of this has been developed in the Canadian context by writers such as Will Kymlicka and Charles Taylor. These writers argue that the need to preserve cultural groups must be incorporated into liberal thinking. It must be recognised at the outset that they are not endorsing a postmodern claim about a plurality of identities, but trying to incorporate ideas about the importance of group membership into liberal theory. Taylor, for example, writes that, "we give due acknowledgment only to what is universally present – everyone has an identity – through recognizing what is peculiar to each."⁶⁷ Rather than indulging in speculation about the play of identities, they are trying to establish a basis for governing diverse societies without denying rights to minority cultures.

Taylor rejects the liberal claim to neutral treatment, arguing that, "Where the politics of universal dignity fought for forms of nondiscrimination that were quite 'blind' to the ways in which citizens differ, the politics of difference often redefines nondiscrimination as requiring that we make these distinctions the basis of differential treatment."⁶⁸ Nondiscrimination is not rejected here, but redefined to mean that equal treatment might mean different treatment for certain cultural groups. Iris Marion Young makes a similar claim, noting that social movements of the new left shifted the meaning of oppression in the 1960s, "In its new usage, oppression designates the disadvantage and injustice some people suffer not because a tyrannical power coerces them, but because of the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society."⁶⁹

⁶⁶ London: Vintage, 1994.

⁶⁷ Charles Taylor et al *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1994) p. 39

⁶⁸ *ibid.* p. 39

⁶⁹ Iris Marion Young *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1990) p. 41

This analysis frustrates any aspiration for a deep universalism. The aspiration for a thoroughly cosmopolitan polity is undermined by particular cultural claims. Young argues that ideas of equality and liberty that ignore difference have three negative consequences. First, they force minority groups to assimilate into a culture that has been defined by a privileged minority. Second, it allows privileged groups to avoid confronting the specificity of their own group membership. Thirdly she argues that, "this denigration of groups that deviate from an allegedly neutral standard often produces an internalized devaluation by members of these groups themselves."⁷⁰

Young explains the effects of cultural imperialism on marginalised groups; "To experience cultural imperialism means to experience how the dominant meanings of a society render the particular perspective of one's own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one's group and mark it out as the other."⁷¹ She claims that it, "involves the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm."⁷² Two points should be drawn out of this claim. First, imperialism is an intangible relationship, where victims experience 'stereotyping'. Second, the argument relies on Young's assertion that different groups will have profoundly different experiences of the world, and different cultures.

Young's argument is a good example of how this approach can trivialise oppression, "Group oppressions are enacted in this society not primarily in official laws and policies but in informal, often unnoticed and unreflective speech, bodily reactions to others, conventional practices of everyday interaction and evaluation, aesthetic judgments, and the jokes, images, and stereotypes pervading the mass media."⁷³ This implicates all of us in oppression, and suggests that we all have a role in overcoming oppression by reflecting upon our speech, body language and practices of interaction. She guardedly qualifies her statement by saying that this is how oppression is *enacted*, not caused.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, quotation p. 165

⁷¹ *ibid.* p. 58-59

⁷² *ibid.* p. 59

⁷³ *ibid.* p. 148

“Ideally a Rainbow Coalition affirms the presence and supports the claims of each of the oppressed groups or political movements constituting it, and arrives at a political program not by voicing some ‘principles of unity’ that hide difference, but rather by allowing each constituency to analyze economic and social issues from the perspective of its experience.”⁷⁴ It is unclear what kind of political *programme* could conceivably result from such a coalition, or what kind of society. If each group can arrive at its own independent analysis, what kind of commonality could emerge?

The idea of cultural membership is at the heart of concepts of cultural imperialism and multiculturalism, but despite a high level of agreement about the political implications of these theories, there is no coherent idea about what cultural membership consists in, or what we should take culture to mean. Will Kymlicka, for example, claims that, “[indigenous peoples] demand the right to decide for themselves what aspects of the outside world they will incorporate into their cultures”,⁷⁵ in the context of a sensible point about the desire for modernisation on the part of traditional societies. But what could it mean to say that a culture will choose what it wants to incorporate from outside? He addresses the question directly in a response to Jeremy Waldron’s more universalistic conception of culture; “Liberal nationalists define cultures as historical communities that possess a societal culture – that is, which possess a set of institutions, operating in a common language, covering both private and public life.”⁷⁶

The meaning of ‘culture’ is unclear in these approaches to cultural imperialism. It does not refer to a traditional idea of ‘high’ culture, popularised by Victorian idealists like John Ruskin and Matthew Arnold. It is perhaps most easily understood as the content of group identity, and of course the content of this is open-ended. It is whatever the groups themselves say it is. Organising a society around respect for cultural demands will inevitably encourage the proliferation of groups identifying themselves as oppressed cultures in order to claim the resources and recognition accorded to them. In other

⁷⁴ *ibid.* p. 189

⁷⁵ Will Kymlicka *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001) p. 141

⁷⁶ *ibid.* p. 211

words, this approach challenges groups to formulate political demands in a way that links them to a unique culture, rather than forcing them to win the endorsement of the majority within a democratic polity. Although majorities can, and very often have, oppressed cultural minorities, they have also often granted them rights.

These ideas have elicited of late some fierce criticisms.⁷⁷ However, it is notable that these critics do not counterpose multicultural rights with the right to national self-determination, but rather defend liberalism or versions of cosmopolitanism against multiculturalism. Of the recent series of high profile cosmopolitan criticisms of multiculturalism in particular and the cultural turn in general Brian Barry's *Culture and Equality* is arguable the most rigorous critique, but it is also perhaps the least sympathetic to any form of collective self-determination.⁷⁸ He contrasts his position with Michael Walzer, claiming that, "liberals are universalists: for them, there are no wogs, because everybody in the world is equally entitled to the protections afforded by liberal institutions, whether they actually enjoy them currently or not."⁷⁹ He therefore does not make the distinction that has been vital to my analysis, between people demanding these rights for themselves, and people having these rights forced upon them.

The positions on imperialism of Wilson and Lenin were formulated at a time when geopolitics was dominated by great empires, and at a time when there were deep ideological conflicts between profoundly different ways of organising society. Whilst more modest and different in kind from Lenin's, Wilson's version of self-determination would see peoples having political independence and territorial integrity – that is, real statehood. The debates about cultural imperialism take place after the end of empires when the states created out of decolonisation were failing to deliver freedom and prosperity to their people. The focus shifted from the political and economic to the

⁷⁷Robert Hughes *Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America* (London: Harvill 1994), Todd Gitlin *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars* (New York: Henry Holt 1995); Brian Barry *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism* (Cambridge: Polity 2001)

⁷⁸ Significant entries to the list of 'cosmopolitan' critiques of multi-culturalism would include Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), and Charles Jones *Global Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), as well as Barry.

⁷⁹ Brian Barry *Culture and Equality* p. 136

cultural, addressing a quite different set of concerns and not addressing the concern raised in this thesis for sovereignty as a foundational right to embody the principle of autonomy.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered two approaches to imperialism that have shaped its treatment in International Relations, the debates about self-determination and those about imperialism. Neither Wilsonian self-determination nor criticisms of cultural imperialism can uphold autonomy in international relations, as outlined in Chapter 4. The Wilsonian approach has been shown to be too much tied to considerations of power politics to consistently uphold sovereignty as a foundational right. The cultural approach does not have a convincing account of cultural membership and is therefore unable to give a credible challenge to power that is robust enough to protect autonomy as understood here. They are therefore red herrings for progressive internationalism.

The upshot of these discussions is that we do not have a vocabulary through which we can criticise great power intervention. We lack the terms with which we might be able to distinguish between the abuses committed by a great power in international relations, and the barbarism that is rife in poor and powerless countries. I am not trying to suggest that this is a linguistic problem; the whole thrust of this thesis is that it is a political challenge. But the changing political climate is clearly reflected in the way that ideas about imperialism have changed throughout the twentieth century. A return to the age-old approaches of Lenin and Hobson seems to me to be an evasion of the task at hand, which is to develop a new approach that is sensitive to the specific features of the world today. I take a first tentative step towards this in the next chapter, which examines the nature of intervention today.

One thing that must remain constant, however, is a continued adherence to a robust universalism that respects the right of others to decide for themselves how they live their lives, but that refuses the claim that they are likely to have values and traditions incommensurate with our own. My own identity cannot be assimilated into a multicultural society. If I want to identify myself as a human being, and see my culture

as being the culture of all humankind, then I am excluded from the multicultural world that they envisage. The implication of Taylor's thesis seems to be that I am an imperialist for trying to force my culture upon everyone else. It is not simply that theorists of multiculturalism, minority rights and cultural imperialism fail to understand the political and economic dynamics of oppression. It would be more accurate to start from the fact that they disdain any attempt at conscious and decisive self-organisation whenever it threatens to step outside the strictly circumscribed liberal norms that they themselves espouse. The alternative that I am trying to develop assumes that all humans will want to partake of the same cultural, social and economic opportunities. But unlike both the imperialists of an earlier epoch, and the human rights activists of our own, I do not believe that the weak should be forced to accept these norms. But the existence of these arguments and the material force that they have held over international relations does not itself negate the aspiration for autonomy. The next chapter examines this theme in more detail, by looking at recent debates about intervention into the affairs of other sovereign states.

6 A New Interventionism?

If the most fundamental negations to seeing sovereignty as a foundational right are the various forms of imperialism and the 'cultural turn' in contemporary thought, perhaps the most important challenge to long standing views of sovereignty in the practice of contemporary international relations lies in the increasing prevalence of intervention in the international system. Of course, this is not new; intervention has long been a feature of international relations,¹ for all that the dominant view in international society and international law was that international society was predicated on a doctrine of *non-intervention*.²

However, as Lyons and Mastanduno have pointed out, while intervention has long been a feature of international relations, and while it has been carried out for many different reasons, one form is especially significant today. They call this 'international intervention' and define it thus: "International intervention may be understood as the crossing of borders and infringements on sovereignty carried out by, or in the name of, the international community."³ As they also point out, this form of intervention is easier to legitimate 'since it more credibly be carried out on behalf of the shared values of a collectivity'.⁴

In the contemporary international system, certainly since the end of the Cold War, this form of intervention has become far more common than ever before and has developed a particular character, intimated by the name most obviously associated

¹ For general discussions of this phenomenon see, inter alia, Hedley Bull (ed) *Intervention in World Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), Marianne Heiberg (ed) *Subduing Sovereignty: Sovereignty and the right to intervene* (London: Pinter, 1994), and Gene Lyons and Michael Mastanduno (eds) *Beyond Westphalia: State sovereignty and international intervention* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1995).

² The best general treatment of this idea is still R.J. Vincent, *Non Intervention and the International Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974)

³ Lyons and Mastanduno, *Beyond Westphalia*, p. 12.

⁴ Lyons and Mastanduno, *Beyond Westphalia*, p. 12.

with it, to wit 'humanitarian' intervention.⁵ It is therefore this form of intervention with which I shall chiefly be concerned here since, as Stephen Krasner has pointed out, more traditional forms do not damage sovereignty as a principle – though of course they do impinge on this or that aspect of sovereignty in this or that specific case.⁶

This chapter thus looks at how the discussion of humanitarian intervention today shapes ideas about sovereignty and how certain contemporary ideas about sovereignty in turn open a space for humanitarian conceptions of international intervention. It begins by reinforcing the observation of Lyons and Mastanduno that post-Cold War humanitarian intervention is a phenomenon distinct from previous phases of interventionism. It then examines three key features of the new interventionism; the desire to help victims, the 'civilizing mission' and the search for a moral consensus, with reference of a number of controversial contemporary cases.

A New Interventionism?

Traditionally the recognition of sovereignty as a right held by states meant that non-intervention was accepted as the norm in international relations. As I remarked above, The classic statement of this in the International Relations literature is John Vincent's *Non-intervention and the International Order*.⁷ He writes that, "The rule of non-intervention can be said to derive from and require respect for the principle of state sovereignty.... If a state has a right to sovereignty, this implies that other states have a duty to respect that by, among other things, refraining from intervention in its domestic affairs."⁸ Following the ideas of the English School, discussed in Chapter 1 above, he notes that, "The formal doctrine of sovereignty and equality of states

⁵ The most thorough investigation of this phenomenon to date in Nicholas J Wheeler *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian intervention in international society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000). I will return to Wheeler's arguments later in this chapter. However, other useful accounts of the rise of humanitarian intervention can be found in Michael Joseph Smith 'Humanitarian intervention: an over view of the ethical issues' in *Ethics and International Affairs*, vol 12, 1998 and Jeff McMahan 'Intervention and collective self determination' in *Ethics and International Affairs*, vol 10, 1996.

⁶ See Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Stanford: University of California Press, 2000).

⁷ R. J. Vincent *Non-Intervention and International Order* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1974)

⁸ *ibid.* p. 14

posited by the international lawyers are not doctrines set over against the practice of states but are features of the system.”⁹ But he recognised that the world was already changing: “Between a naturalism careless of state practice and a positivism that would simply render any and all state conduct as the law, international law has to find a middle way. In the present case, it is not yet clear that a middle course of humanitarian intervention has been traced between a virginal doctrine of non-intervention that would allow nothing to be done and a promiscuous doctrine of intervention that would make a trollop of the law. And until that course can with confidence be traced, it is perhaps non-intervention that provides the more dignified principle for international law to sanction.”¹⁰ This is ultimately a weak defence of non-intervention that recognises changes taking place in state practice. This has accelerated since the end of the Cold War.

Although it is widely noted that there has been a shift towards a ‘new interventionism’¹¹ since the end of the Cold War, an interventionism characterised especially by its purportedly humanitarian focus, many analysts have remained sceptical, arguing that intervention as such is fundamentally unchanged. Stanley Hoffmann, for example, speaks for many when he claims that the subject of intervention is, “practically the same as that of international politics in general from the beginning of time to the present.”¹² He argues that the problem of intervention is ultimately insoluble, and by following Talleyrand in equating non-intervention with intervention, he comes close to denying that there is any problem of intervention at all. Arguing that it is self-determination, and not sovereignty, that is the cornerstone of twentieth century international society, he sees the possible legitimisation of action on behalf of self-determination.

However, if we focus on what we called above ‘international intervention’ there is also a good deal of evidence pointing to a distinct shift of emphasis in contemporary

⁹ *ibid.* p. 352

¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 348-349

¹¹ James Mayall *The New Interventionism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996)

international relations. Perhaps the best overall assessment of the evidence is in Wheeler's *Saving Strangers*, where he concludes that contemporary international society is moving from a 'pluralist' conception of intervention where interventions as such were common, but no threat to sovereignty, to a solidarist conception where, with human rights at the centre of the account, ever increasing limitations on sovereignty and legitimate, even perhaps required action by the international community, is increasingly a norm.¹³

Therefore it seems reasonable to say that there is something quite distinct about post-Cold War intervention. Although the humanitarian claims made on behalf of intervention should not be taken at face value, the new rhetorical framework is important. As we will see, it creates the space for the emergence of a style of interventionism that, unlike the traditional kind, formally subordinates sovereignty to something else.

That this new interventionism represents something new in international society is certainly often emphasised by commentators. Andrew Marr, for example, the BBC's Political Editor, presented the intervention in Kosovo in 1999 thus; "Not for self-interest did we go to war. Rather we went to war to answer the call of our moral imagination, fuelled by the stories of Hitler's horror, now repeated in Kosovo."¹⁴ Such a view is obviously supportive of the idea that this was 'an intervention with a difference'. Nicholas Wheeler echoes this in a more academic vein, approvingly citing Clinton's comments on Rwanda, "putting out the inferno of genocide is in both the national and the global interest because failure to do so risks creating a contagion that will undermine the values of all civilized societies."¹⁵

¹² Stanley Hoffmann, 'The Problem of Intervention' in *Janus and Minerva: Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press 1987) p. 178

¹³ See the argument at the end of *Saving Strangers* Chapter 1

¹⁴ Andrew Marr 'Chilling Intimacy of the Killer' *Observer* (20 June 1999) quoted in Francesca Klug *Values for a Godless Age: the story of the United Kingdom's Bill of Rights* (London: Penguin 2000) p.

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¹⁵ Nicholas J. Wheeler *Saving Strangers* p. 303

If there is something new going on here, wherein does its origin lie? For many, scholars and analysts alike, the answer seems obvious. At least since Nuremberg international institutions, especially those dominated by western states (effectively all of them), have been engaged in a process of gradually, to use a phrase of Henry Shue's, 'eroding sovereignty'.¹⁶ The memory of the Holocaust,¹⁷ the passing of key UN conventions, especially the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948 and the genocide convention in 1947, the growth and spread of the global human rights regime,¹⁸ the creation and enhancement of NGO's dedicated to human rights like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the end of the cold war and the growing impact of globalisation (on which more in the next chapter); all of these processes and events have helped to constrain sovereignty. Stephen Toulmin, at the end of his book *Cosmopolis*, suggests a powerful image that suits this view well; sovereignty is a powerful Gulliver increasingly tethered by many strands by the Lilliputian NGOs of human rights.¹⁹ In particular the sense is very high that the atrocities that have been committed in modern times must not be allowed to happen again and that, if necessary the international community must act to prevent them and punish them when they have occurred.

Atrocities are often highlighted in debates about sovereignty and human rights as they have a powerful mobilising effect in the era of global television news. Moreover, there is a prevalent sense that something must be done to prevent medieval barbarism in the Internet age. However, as I now go on to discuss, the presentation of atrocities is sometimes one-sided.

¹⁶ See Henry Shue 'Eroding Sovereignty' in Robert Mckim and Jeff McMahan (eds) *The Morality of Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997)

¹⁷ For an excellent discussion of the power of the memory of the holocaust in contemporary politics and society, especially in the US, see Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000)

¹⁸ For excellent treatments of this see, especially, Geoffery Robinson *Crimes Against Humanity* (London: Penguin, 1999) and Thomas Risse, Steven Ropp and Kathryn Sikkink, *The Power of Rights: international norms and domestic change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

¹⁹ Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The hidden agenda of modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992)

Of course, atrocities have always been a part of conflict. Sometimes these have been devilishly planned and meticulously executed. More often, they have been the acts of individuals reacting to extreme circumstances.²⁰ But discussions of contemporary violence and atrocities often do not pay sufficient attention to the social dynamics that lead to conflict. Mark Duffield, among the most perceptive analysts of the paradoxes of development aid today, notes that despite the readiness to blame conflict on indigenous groups in the third world, there are few detailed studies of these groups, "In the main, aid policy is content with brief pathologies of deviancy and breakdown."²¹ And the other side of these pathologies, which have demonised terrorists and fundamentalists, is the figure of the victim deserving of Western assistance.

Helping Victims

The 'victim culture' in modern western societies has been widely remarked upon.²² Less often noted is that there is effectively a growing 'victim culture' in international relations, one which has led western foreign policy to be re-directed towards the assistance of victims. Floods, famines, civil wars are now staple fare of international relations discussions. The global media covers one crisis after another, always posing the stark alternative – stand by and watch, or go over and help these people. Again and again Western news reports show third world demonstrators with slogans written in English, appealing not to their fellow citizens, but to the western powers who seem to represent their greatest hope.²³

The cultural critic Slavoj Žižek has been one of the most perceptive commentators on this tendency, particularly in relation to the former Yugoslavia. He notes that a Kosovar refugee is "the ideal subject-victim in aid of whom NATO intervenes: not a political subject with a clear agenda, but a subject of helpless suffering, sympathizing

²⁰ See, for example, Joanne Bourke *An Intimate History of Killing* (New York: Basic Books 1996)

²¹ Mark Duffield *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London: Zed 2001) p. 140

²² e.g. Robert Hughes *Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America* (London: Harvill 1994)

²³ The BBC website has numerous examples. See, for example, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/103541.stm> for Hong Kong protests commemorating Tiananmen Square.

with all suffering sides in the conflict, caught up in the madness of a local clash that can be pacified only by the intervention of a benevolent foreign power, a subject whose innermost desire is reduced to the almost animal craving to 'feel good again' ..."²⁴

The other side of this apparent benevolence, however, is that real independence is removed from the political agenda altogether. Zizek again; "it's OK to help the helpless Albanians against the Serbian monsters, but in no way are they to be allowed actually to cast off this helplessness by asserting themselves as a sovereign and self-reliant political subject, a subject with no need for the benevolent umbrella of the NATO 'protectorate' ...".²⁵ Instead of discussing putative economic motives he recognises that powerful states can gain moral authority through intervention. NATO, a Cold War alliance created to defend Western interests, can be made to appear benevolent.

This trend is most clearly seen in the discussion of rape as a war crime. Rape has been a feature of warfare throughout history, and the mass rape by Japanese soldiers in Nanking was one of the great horrors of World War II. However, the discussion took a new turn with the outbreak of the war in Bosnia, where western interventionists claimed that mass rapes were being perpetrated as part of a conscious Serbian policy.²⁶

The evidence for mass rape is, at best, slim. At the peace talks in Geneva in 1992 Hans Silajdzic, foreign minister of the Sarajevo government, claimed that 30 000 Muslim women had been raped. A Czech journalist Jita Obzinova inflated the figure to 100 000 in December 1992, and claimed (falsely) that the Serbs had admitted 30 000 rapes. In January 1993 the UN decided to investigate. Tadeusz Mazowiecki

²⁴ Slavoj Zizek *The Fragile Absolute – or, why is the Christian legacy worth fighting for?* (London: Verso 2000) p. 58

²⁵ *ibid.* p. 59

²⁶ There was widespread press coverage of atrocity stories in Bosnia – e.g. 'Yugoslav forces use ancient ways to break civilian spirits', Martin Kettle and 'Serbs have rape camp, says Cook', Nicholas

spoke to 30 victims and 19 women who were pregnant, allegedly as a result of rape. His report concluded that there had been 12 000 victims. Newsweek chose 50 000 as its figure, based on 28 interviews and advice from German journalist Alexandra Stigylmayr. But in October 1993 the UN Commission for War Crimes in the Former Yugoslavia stated that there had been 330 documented cases of rape by the three sides. And in the TV documentary *Special Envoy* (4 Feb 1993) Jeremy Bony recorded that, "When I was 50km from Tuzla I was told: go to the grammar school in Tuzla, where you will find 4 000 rape victims. 20km away the figure shrank to 400. 10km away it was only 40. When I was there I found only four women who wanted to give an account."²⁷ What is remarkable is not the inflation of the number of victims, but the uncritical way in which propaganda was accepted by the Western media.

Ustinia Dolgopol articulates the approach of many feminists to this issue. She describes the results of her interviews with the comfort women in Asia, "Consistently in these interviews, the women emphasised that the horrors they experienced did not end when the rapes ended. For them the emotional and psychological pain continued for the remainder of their lives. They described the enormous emotional burden of having to keep secret their experiences, the constant sense of shame ... During the interviews the women described the importance of receiving a full and frank apology, the necessity to receive compensation in recognition of the harms that they had suffered, the importance of accessing medical services and counselling. It was crucial to the women's sense of empowerment that those working with them understand their situation and have empathy and respect for them."²⁸

Dolgopol proposes establishing a fund for reintegrating women and children into the community. Money could be spent on, "counselling, psychological and psychiatric

Watt, Ian Traynor and Maggie O'Kane both *Guardian* 24/4/99 and quoting Robin Cook's infamous claim that the reports of rape camps have 'the ring of corroboration'.

²⁷ This material is collected in Rajko Dolecek 'I Accuse' *Questions and Opinions Library* 3 1999 and Norma von Ragenfeld-Feldman 'Rape and the Reporting of Rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1992 - 1993' *Dialogue* 21 1997

treatment, research into issues faced by women attempting to re-integrate into the communities after the infliction of rape and sexual assault, and public education campaigns to highlight the trauma experienced by those who have been raped and sexually assaulted. All work in this area must assist in restoring the women's sense of self-worth and dignity."²⁹

Christine Chinkin argues that *any* rape committed during a war is a war crime.³⁰ The argument is made on the basis that all rapes occur in the context of war, and so they should be tried as crimes of that war. But rapes also occur outside wars, and in many cases the boundary between rapes linked to war and those that are not will be indistinct. Chinkin errs on the side of classifying all rapes as war crimes to avoid this sticky problem, which provides a lever by which the restoration of order after war through a war crimes tribunal can extend its power over properly civilian matters in the interests of protecting individual victims.

The result is that international relations becomes inseparable from interpersonal relations. By treating people as individual victims with their own traumas to overcome it becomes difficult to conceive of groups of people as collective subjects. The focus of research in this area is on the problematisation of individual relationships in third world states, and Western experts are presented as the people who can provide the necessary expertise to assist them in negotiating these relationships.

Even more powerless than the anonymous victims of rapes, however, are the children who are victims of international conflicts. In an address to the people of Kosovo, Tony Blair said, "What has given me pleasure more than anything else is to see the

²⁸ Ustinia Dolgopol 'A Feminist Appraisal of the Dayton Peace Accords' *Adelaide Law Review* 19 (1997) pp 59 – 71 p. 68 - 69

²⁹ *ibid.* p. 70

³⁰ Christine Chinkin 'Rape and Sexual Abuse of Women in International Law' *European Journal of International Law* 5 1994 pp 326 - 341

young children here today living again in their homeland in peace.”³¹ And writing in *The Daily Express*, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook pledged to help the victims of child abuse, noting that, “The voice of children [is] too often ignored.”³² He notes that an expert from Save The Children is already working at the Foreign Office, and that the government is setting up a ‘children’s select committee’ in the UK. Another Foreign and Commonwealth Office minister, Tony Lloyd, provides a clue to why senior ministers are so keen to hear the voice of the child. He writes that, “Grand phrases like ‘post-conflict resolution’ or ‘peace-building’ can sometimes obscure the sheer simplicity of what children perceive their needs to be.”

What John Lloyd and Robin Cook take to be an argument for listening to the voice of the child could reasonably be taken to make the opposite case. Children articulate simple needs and desires, but the conflict situations are complicated. Children cannot reasonably be expected to make sense of the historical, political and economic dynamics of wars; after all, few politicians seem capable of doing so. Listening to the voices of children can be used to justify any well-meaning and suitably vague scheme for humanitarian intervention or reconciliation proposed by any well-meaning outsider.

A recent textbook on conflict resolution notes that there is, “new scope for benign intervention and community building across international frontiers”, but claims that, “the key goal is to strengthen the conflict resolution capacity of societies and communities.”³³ They see “a shift from seeing third party intervention as the primary role of external agencies towards appreciating the role of internal third parties or indigenous peacemakers.” “Instead of using the blanket term ‘third parties’, with its implication of externality and detachment, [there is] a spectrum of agents ranging

³¹ Tony Blair ‘Prime Minister Addresses the People of Kosovo’, transcript of address in Pristina, Kosovo 31 July 1999, available at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/speechtext.asp?2703>

³² Robin Cook ‘My Pledge to Help the Victims of Child Abuse’ *The Express* 5 August 1999, available at <http://www.fco.gov/uk/news/newstext.asp?2717>

³³ Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The prevention, management and transformation of deadly conflicts* (Cambridge: Polity 1999) p. 224

from 'uninvolved parties', through 'marginal concerned parties' to 'actively influential concerned parties'.³⁴

The authors suggest that there is a need to address the 'psycho-social' dimension to conflict resolution.³⁵ They cite a debate about the applicability of Western models of post-traumatic stress disorder to third world conflicts, noting that "In some cultures (for example, Mozambique), where misfortune and violence is often attributed to possession by bad spirits, there is scope for remarkably swift reconciliation through public cleansing ceremonies."³⁶

The point of this focus on the victims is brought out in Mary Kaldor's acclaimed study of new wars.³⁷ She rejects the idea that the consent of local warlords is essential for peacekeeping operations, arguing that, "What is important is widespread consent from the victims, the local population, whether or not formal consent has been obtained from the parties at an operational level."³⁸ The idea that local people might consider themselves better represented by those that she identifies as warlords rather than the 'international community' does not seem to have occurred to Kaldor. The new approaches to intervention are posed in a language of care that few could find objectionable in their own terms, but which disempower political communities in the name of empowering anonymous victims.

Domestic reasons for the rise of humanitarian intervention

Humanitarian intervention is appealing because it appears to offer hope to oppressed people. The critics of humanitarian intervention tend to argue either that it neglects the national interest, or that its agenda is cynical and self-serving. This debate serves to obscure another important development that goes a long way towards accounting for the new direction in western foreign policy. Since at least the end of the Cold

³⁴ *ibid.* p. 18

³⁵ *ibid.* pp 206 – 211

³⁶ *ibid.* p. 210

³⁷ Mary Kaldor *New and Old Wars: Organized violence in a global era* (Cambridge: Polity 1999; re-published with a new afterward, 2001)

³⁸ *ibid.* p. 127

War and at least until the world trade centre attacks in September 2001, western societies in general and the US in particular have suffered from a lack of clear foreign policy direction, due in part to the absence of an external enemy and due also to the collapse of traditional parties of left and right.³⁹ In this section I want to suggest that widespread demands for the re-forging of a moral or political community are being answered by the humanitarian impulse in international relations and that as a result what we might term the 'cosmopolitan turn' is achieving increasing salience in international relations.⁴⁰

As well as a means of promoting order and civility in the developing world, humanitarian intervention is a way of establishing a social bond within western societies. The need to do something to alleviate carnage abroad can be presented as being a moral imperative that is above politics. Whatever their disagreements about other things, the idealistic anti-capitalist protester, the concerned middle class professional and Tony Blair can all agree about the need to do something.

Of course, this process is also contradictory as interventionism often runs into domestic opposition from those who believe that intervention is not worth the cost. At an abstract level, these claims have some purchase. However, once the climate has shifted towards an interventionist stance over a particular issue, these claims tend to become marginalised. It is much more difficult for isolationist Republicans, for example, to oppose an intervention when American soldiers are already there and there is widespread support for the justice of the cause. Regardless of the residual conservative opposition to the new interventionism, it is proceeding apace, attaching itself arbitrarily to issues and areas of the world, embodying the spirit of doing something good rather than actually establishing a decisive resolution.⁴¹

³⁹ I develop this point in the next chapter.

⁴⁰ For discussions of cosmopolitanism in general see Nichols Rengger 'Cosmopolitanism' in Roland Axtmann (ed) *Understanding Democratic Ideas* (London: Sage, 2003) and Martha Nussbaum, (ed) *For Love of Country* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).

⁴¹ This point should not need extensive elaboration, as nobody would claim that a clear end is in sight even in the most prominent targets of intervention such as Somalia and Bosnia.

Criticising this development, David Chandler writes that, "The concern of many leading liberal commentators, like Mary Kaldor, Michael Ignatieff and David Rieff, is not so much with legitimising new forms of international regulation, but with the moral conception of society itself and the social and political engineering required to create responsible citizens."⁴² In relation to the NATO intervention in Kosovo, he writes that, "The concern is not for the real suffering and loss of life of élite Western airmen or Balkan civilians, but for the preservation of an ideal universality of moral community demonstrating sacrifice ... the real suffering is seen as a necessary tableau on which to construct the ideal of moral community in the West."⁴³

I concur with Chandler's claim that the motivation behind these interventionist claims is the need for universal moral community as well as the re-ordering international relations, but it is with the consequences of this process for international relations that this thesis is concerned with. The concept of the 'international community' fits the 'ideal universality of moral community' that he describes very well. It conveys the idea that there are certain common norms that are shared by certain respectable international actors that can be enforced on others, while avoiding the obviously coercive implications of earlier forms of international organisation. The idea of a 'community' seems more consensual than concepts of empire, or alliances of great powers.⁴⁴

Mary Kaldor expresses this desire most bluntly. She argues that, "An effective response to the new wars has to be based on an alliance between international organizations and local advocates of cosmopolitanism in order to reconstruct legitimacy. A strategy of 'winning hearts and minds' needs to identify with individuals and groups respected for their integrity. They have to be supported, and

⁴² Dave Chandler *Human Rights and International Regulation: Reassessing the ethical agenda* (London: Pluto 2003) p. 148

⁴³ *ibid.* p. 151 – 152

⁴⁴ See Michel Feher *Powerless by Design: The Age of the International Community* (Durham: Duke University Press 2000) for an interesting, though flawed analysis of the idea of an 'international community'.

their advice, proposals, recommendations need to be taken seriously.”⁴⁵ Seeing legitimacy as based on local consent would be to misread her argument. Legitimacy derives from the cosmopolitan norm. Local support is needed to ensure that cosmopolitan norms are effectively enforced, not to create a genuine democratic dialogue. There is certainly no room for challenging cosmopolitan norms in this formulation. The idea of taking seriously the proposals of community leaders lays bare the elitist impulse of Kaldor’s argument. These partners in dialogue will be listened to respectfully, but they will not have any real power to upset cosy cosmopolitan norms. The apolitical nature of this is neatly formulated in the afterward, where she writes that humanitarian intervention “constitutes cosmopolitan law-enforcement and is thus more like policing than war-fighting.”⁴⁶

But the concern for values is not limited to scholarly commentary. Many actors themselves admit that they are trying to forge a moral consensus at home out of humanitarian intervention abroad. Bill Clinton’s advisors have made this clear in their memoirs. Dick Morris, for example, writes that during the US operation in Haiti,

I advised him to center his comments much more on the moral outrages against Haitian women and children on the island than on the practical threat of the refugees who might come to the United States if Haiti didn’t become democratic. ‘You’ve got to get off the refugee issue and onto the human rights and values issues. You look weak when you are trying to stop refugees flooding us, but you look strong when you are “protecting children abroad” ... This is a theme I have developed from listening to the American people speak in the political polling I do. I am convinced that the American people want a foreign policy based on *values*, whereas the foreign policy advisers and the

⁴⁵ Mary Kaldor *New and Old Wars* p. 123

⁴⁶ *ibid.* p. 163

NSC (National Security Council) people always want a policy based on *interests*.⁴⁷

Turning to the British context, Francesca Klug is explicit about the role that human rights can play in re-establishing common values:

Human rights values can never be more than a set of broad principles. Although they challenge many assumptions, they are not a substitute for a fully fledged ideology or belief system which speaks to every faced of human life. As such they generally have the capacity to form the basis of a shared ethos without necessarily disturbing all other points of reference in people's lives, whether these be political or religious or neither of these.⁴⁸

She continues, claiming that there is, "space for *some* 'democratic' involvement in where the boundaries between rights should lie."⁴⁹ In case there is any doubt about the limits of participation, she points out that, "the final decisions in actual cases must lie with the law courts".⁵⁰ Indeed, the only reason that Klug seems to advocate democratic involvement at all is because it is unlikely that human rights alone can "fill the values void in Western societies."⁵¹ Further on, one gets a sense of Klug's political vision when she lists the "big social issues of the day: tobacco-advertising bans; the outlawing of hunting; the debate over whether or not smacking is a legitimate punishment for a child; controls on the expenditure of political parties."⁵²

The point here is to emphasise that there are powerful forces within western societies that can see in the notion of 'humanitarian intervention' and all that tends to go with it powerful ways of reconnecting with otherwise disillusioned and increasingly cynical

⁴⁷ Dick Morris *Behind the Oval Office: Winning the Presidency in the Nineties* (New York: Random House 1997) pp 5 – 6

⁴⁸ Francesca Klug *Values for a Godless Age: the story of the United Kingdom's Bill of Rights* (London: Penguin 2000) p. 148

⁴⁹ *ibid.* p. 149; my italics

⁵⁰ *ibid.* p. 149

⁵¹ *ibid.* p. 150

⁵² *ibid.* p. 182

electorates. Coupled with the more general developments touched on above this is another reason why western governments might seek to 'erode sovereignty' still further, at least outside the west itself.

Intervention and Democratisation

One of the most positive hopes expressed at the end of the Cold War was that in the absence of superpower rivalry the third world would undergo a transition to democracy. The discussion about democratisation has eclipsed the discussion about democracy in the way that governance has become an omnipresent supplement to government.⁵³ Both of these new terms imply a flexibility and indeterminacy that is quite distinct from the much tighter definitions of the earlier concepts. However, this flexibility is one-sided. Democratisation as a process is in many ways the opposite of traditional understandings of democracy, and is in fact more concerned with the means to achieve a desired outcome than to establish a framework for the demos to form and exercise their general will. Thomas Franck, for example, wants the right to democratic governance to be written into international law, but when the only legal subjects capable of enforcing their rights are powerful western states this proposal can only make a mockery of democracy.⁵⁴ These ideas effectively pass law-making powers over to international bodies that are not accountable to the people that they govern, and impose external norms that cannot be challenged. This is not in itself a democratic development, even if it assists in creating a basic framework of order where there was anarchy or arbitrary justice previously. Once the principle of democracy is undermined in this way all guarantees are removed, and people are left at the whim of alien institutions.

⁵³ For good discussions see James N Rosenau and Ernst Otto Czempiel (eds) *Governance Without Government: Order and change in world politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Inge Kaul, Isabelle Grunberg and Marc A Stern (eds) *Global Public Goods: International co-operation in the twenty first century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Wolfgang Reinicke *Global Public Policy: Governing without government* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1998).

In common with the other ideas discussed in this chapter, this aspiration originated in the West and has been imposed with little comprehension of, or even interest in, the particular problems faced by different societies. They have little respect for the idea of autonomous agency in the developing world, and the institutions and procedures that have been put forward have served to limit the scope for third world people to realise their collective aspirations.⁵⁵ In this section I shall focus on one particular version of the contemporary debate about democracy, that offered by Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck, since their work brings out most clearly the fears that are embodied in the discourse of democratisation and how, as a consequence, this helps to embed the interventionist and humanitarian impulse in contemporary international relations.

Beck has popularised the idea that we live in a 'risk society' where we must organise ourselves to manage the consequences of the risks that we ourselves have created through high technology and industrialisation. Beck's positive vision of a politicised risk society is closely bound up with a reconceptualisation of democracy, which was the subject of his latest book, significantly entitled *Democracy Without Enemies*.⁵⁶ Beck argues that democracy has been institutionalised as a process of competition between interests, largely over economic issues and between classes. This is now dying through disengagement, as other issues, bound up with the risk society, are not dealt with under the narrow remit of traditional democracy. This is a popular theme in the literature on democracy, which has expanded in inverse proportion to participation in the political processes of western democracies. The central problem that they are concerned with is that democracy is a form of government that relies upon the demos, the subjects who collectively compete over their political interests. Today, the competition no longer takes place in any real sense, leaving democratic

⁵⁴ See Thomas M Franck *Fairness in International Law and Institutions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1997)

⁵⁵ For a critique that emphasises this point see Rita Abrahamsen *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa* (London: Zed 2000), one of the only studies of democratisation to place third world agency at the centre of its analysis. The most far-reaching example is the administration in Bosnia. See Gerald Knaus and Felix Martin 'Lessons from Bosnia and Herzegovina: Travails of the European Raj' in *Journal of Democracy*, July 2003, Volume 14, Number 3 <http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/KnausandMartin.pdf>

institutions as an empty shell, which Beck describes as consisting of “zombie-institutions which have been dead for a long time but refuse to die.”⁵⁷ This reinforces the disengagement of the demos and leaves governments and political parties without any clearly defined roles. The aim of much of the literature on democratisation is therefore to re-engage the demos, which Beck wants to do through new social movements such as environmentalism and feminism.

Giddens argues that this can be achieved through ‘dialogic democracy’. He characterises democracy as having two functions: ‘On the one hand, democracy is a vehicle for the representation of interests. On the other, it is a way of creating a public arena in which controversial issues – in principle – can be resolved, or at least handled, through dialogue rather than through pre-established forms of power.’⁵⁸ He describes this process as the ‘democratizing of democracy’⁵⁹ through the activities of self-help groups and social movements which can, ‘force into the discursive domain aspects of social conduct that previously went undiscussed, or were ‘settled’ by traditional practices. They may help contest “official” definitions of things; feminist, ecological and peace movements have all achieved this outcome, as have a multiplicity of self-help groups.’⁶⁰ Giddens makes it clear that his interest in democracy is not the representation of interests but the resolution of issues with the minimum of conflict (‘dialogically’). The self-help groups that he identifies as the vanguard of the new democracy are given a role well beyond that that a ‘self-help’ group would ever want. Giddens aims to transform them into something quite different in the interest of a particular political project. This is perhaps unwittingly revealed in his qualification of the claim that they can contest official definitions of things with the word ‘help’. Rather than participating in a process of forming and imposing a general will by engaging in debate that aims to change the views of the electorate and their representative, Giddens sees the role of social movements as assisting in a larger project.

⁵⁶ *Democracy Without Enemies* (Cambridge: Polity 1998)

⁵⁷ Beck *Reinvention of Politics* p. 140, emphasis in original

⁵⁸ Anthony Giddens *Beyond Left and Right* p. 16

⁵⁹ *ibid.* p. 17, emphasis in original

This project can be taken a lot further in international relations. Whereas the problem that Beck and Giddens are addressing in the internal context is political disengagement, the problems in international relations are more complex still. Theories of democratisation are concerned about the lack of civil society and a democratic culture to a much greater extent than those dealing with exclusively national issues. Instead of trying to politicise the populous with appeals to new social movements and a common sense of fearfulness, international theorists of democratisation see a much greater role for external agencies in setting the ground rules and educating the people. In Bosnia, for example, candidates are prevented from standing in an election unless they support the terms of the Dayton Agreement.⁶¹

Democracy, understood in this particular way, is thus now seen as the precondition for development (I shall suggest, in the conclusion to this study, that it has effectively replaced the ideal of development.) Abrahamsen argues that, "electoral democracy, while valuable, contains substantial limitations in terms of its ability to address issues of social justice in highly unequal societies".⁶² "Procedural or minimalist approaches to democracy are concerned with equal legal or formal rights, and tend to underplay the extent to which these rights can be realised."⁶³ She is exactly right when she says that, "It is likely that for the majority of poor people, democracy is valued not only because it offers the right to vote, but also because it opens up the political space for demanding social and economic rights."⁶⁴ Although she is writing about the developing world, this claim is an equally important corrective to the formalistic – even ritualistic – ideas about democracy prevalent in the developed world. Her conclusion is apposite to this study. "Domestic politics must be democratised, but international relations are left untouched and protected from the reach of the good governance discourse. In this way contemporary development discourse can be said

⁶⁰ *ibid.* p. 17

⁶¹ David Chandler *Bosnia: Faking Democracy After Dayton* (London: Pluto 1999) is a good case study of the re-definition of democracy by the democratisers

⁶² *ibid.* p. 68

⁶³ *ibid.* p. 74

⁶⁴ *ibid.* p. 84

to be part of the global governance of the African continent, one of the ways in which present international structures and relations of power are maintained and reproduced. Accordingly, one of the main effects of the good governance discourse, despite all its proclamations in favour of democracy, is to help reproduce and maintain a world order that is essentially undemocratic.”⁶⁵

A true, vibrant democracy involves the people taking control of their society and determining its future through fighting for competing visions. It is this that has inspired people to fight for the extension of the right to vote; not because they were excited about the possibility of endorsing an existing alternative, but because they believed that the extension of the franchise would transform the existing options. As Abrahamsen has rightly emphasised, democracy is nothing more than a tool for achieving other important objectives. But democratisation actually rules out many of these alternatives by circumscribing what can be democratically decided.

Despite all the debate about democracy and democratisation, the simple procedures put in place in Britain and America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries continue to serve today, with few changes. And this is despite the huge changes that have taken place in these societies since then. The espousal of simple procedural measures, such as those campaigned for by the Chartists and Suffragettes, is consistent with the idea of sovereignty put forward in this thesis, but ideas of democracy that put limits on democracy's scope, or which try to impose a fully formulated model of voting systems and checks and balances go against the idea that I am putting forward of self-determination.

Autonomy versus intervention in international relations

Let me conclude this chapter by with reference to a very different way of putting together autonomy and intervention. In his essay, 'A Few Words on Non-Intervention', John Stuart Mill makes an argument for non-intervention that is

⁶⁵ *ibid.* p. 147

sensitive to democratic concerns that are significant today.⁶⁶ His essay begins with the poor estimation of English foreign policy in Europe. The first reason identified is that statesmen claimed not to interfere where no English interest is concerned, and so “England is thus exhibited as a country whose most distinguished men are not ashamed to profess, as politicians, a rule of action which no one, not utterly base, could endure to be accused of as the maxim by which he guides his private life; not to move a finger for others unless he sees his private advantage in it.”⁶⁷ But Mill also notes that what is meant is not interest, but security.

Mill does not accept that intervention to do promote ideas, however laudable, is acceptable: “To go to war for an idea, if the war is aggressive, not defensive, is as criminal as to go to war for territory or revenue; for it is as little justifiable to force our ideas on other people, as to compel them to submit to our will in any other respect.”⁶⁸

He sees non-intervention as a foundation stone of international relations: “The doctrine of non-intervention, to be a legitimate principle of morality, must be accepted by all governments. The despots must consent to be bound by it as well as the free states. Unless they do, the profession of it by free countries comes but to this miserable issue, that the wrong side may help the wrong, but the right must not help the right. Intervention to enforce non-intervention is always rightful, always moral, if not always prudent.”⁶⁹ The only reason for not extending it to less developed peoples is that, “barbarians will not reciprocate. They cannot be depended on for observing any rules.”⁷⁰ But for nations that have achieved statehood, non-intervention is held up by Mill as the best way to regulate international relations.

⁶⁶ John Stuart Mill, ‘A Few Words on Non-Intervention’ in *Collected Works Vol XXI: Essays on Equality, Law and Education* ed. John M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1984)

⁶⁷ *ibid.* p. 114

⁶⁸ *ibid.* p. 118

⁶⁹ *ibid.* p. 123

⁷⁰ *ibid.* p. 118

We are very far in this discussion from the ideas discussed in this chapter. Humanitarian intervention is not being promoted as an alternative to defending the national interest, but as an extension, or re-definition of it. Through a moral condemnation of the practices of poor states, 'humanitarians' bolster their own civilized credentials, without solving the problems of the very 'strangers' their interventions purport to help.⁷¹ Advocates of humanitarian intervention increasingly treat sovereignty as an entirely contingent matter. There is no belief that citizens of other states either could or should be able to organise themselves, as John Stuart Mill envisaged. Instead, their governments, at least, are expected to submit to open-ended international monitoring and mentoring.

A criticism that is often conceded by those who favour intervention is that intervention is arbitrary. NATO will intervene against Serbia in Kosovo, but not against Russia in Chechnya. America will intervene in South and Central America, but not against China over Tibet. The most common response to this reality is to assert that it is better to do something than to do nothing, and that norms of humanitarian intervention are, in any case only just evolving. But given the scale of human rights abuses across the world, perpetrated by respectable members of the international community as well as so called rogue states, the few haphazard interventions there have been seem unlikely to make the sort of difference hoped for by their advocates, and instead threaten the one thing that might provide citizens in the countries involved with some real sense of empowerment, to wit the ability to rule themselves. Whereas realist explanations (as discussed in chapter 2) can easily explain both the failure to intervene, as well as cases of actual intervention – accounting for both in terms of the vagaries of the pursuit of interest - theories of humanitarian intervention are forced to pursue a logic that would dictate ever more intrusive monitoring, ever more global regulation and increasing numbers of actual

⁷¹ For an argument that interventions actually *never* succeed in helping their targets, and which shares a good deal else with the argument presented here see Caroline Thomas' excellent chapter in Ian Forbes and Mark Hoffman (ed) *Political Theory, International Relations and the ethics of intervention* (London: Macmillan, 1993).

interventions world wide.⁷² Interventions, however, that will neither produce the positive results claimed for it, nor sustain a properly democratic international relations, but will, instead, remove the real possibility of increasing democracy in international relations in the only form that it has ever really been known, a democratically organised sovereign political community.

However, for this still to be a real possibility one final possible obstacle remains to be considered. The argument that in a globalising and in certain key sectors, at least a globalised world, such political autonomy is impossible. It is to this argument, then, that I now turn.

⁷² And these proposals have been around for a long time; see David Davies *The Problem of the Twentieth Century: A Study of International Relationships* (London: Ernest Benn 1930)

7 Globalisation: A New World Order?

Everything we have discussed up to this point has been framed by the assumption that, at least in theory, it is open to us to assert sovereignty as a right should have priority over other rights, that sovereignty is the best and most effective way of enabling developing societies to empower themselves. Discourses of imperialism, the cultural turn, the new interventionism all seek to put limits on that assertion, or claim it is inappropriate, foolish or immoral in certain circumstances. However, none of these claims amount to an assertion that it is, in principle, impossible.

Increasingly, however, we find exactly this claim being made in perhaps the most protean of contemporary discourses in international relations, that of 'globalisation'. This term has become a central site of debate in the social sciences today,¹ as well as in the policy communities of states, international institutions and the wider public intellectual world.² It is not only relevant to international relations; across the social sciences, and even the humanities, the term globalisation attaches to processes and theories in every area. The problem is that there is no general agreement about what it means, or what it implies. However, one central idea widely shared – to be sure in various ways and to varying degrees – in most of the leading accounts of globalisation is the claim that globalisation is profoundly affecting the independence and autonomy of the state as traditionally conceived and that, in order to cope with,

¹ Particularly influential treatments of the phenomenon in the wider literature of the social sciences, which often relate it to equally problematic notions such as postmodernism, would include Manuel Castells *The Information Age* 3 vols (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996-7) see esp. *Vol 1 The Rise of the Network Society*. Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social theory and global culture* (London Sage, 1992); Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London Verso, 1991); Anthony Giddens *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping Our Lives* (London: Profile 1999); Martin Albrow, *The Global Age: State and society beyond modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996); Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999); Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The human consequences* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An inquiry into the conditions of cultural change* (Oxford Blackwell, 1989). Works by Giddens, Held and others also relevant here will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

² Particularly good examples of the public intellectual/policy debate on globalisation would include Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Harper Collins, 1999); I Kaul et al (eds) *Global Public Goods: International Co-operation in the twenty first century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Wolfgang Reinicke, *Global Public Policy: Governing without government* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1998)

relate to or manage globalisation traditional ideas of sovereignty, such as those defended in this thesis, will have to be at the very least severely reconceptualised and quite possibly abandoned altogether.

If the claims of globalisation are correct, the project this thesis has embarked upon is doomed to failure. Thus in this final chapter before we move to a concluding survey of the claims this thesis has sought to develop, I will address a number of the discourses of globalisation and see if, in fact, there claims are warranted. It will come as no surprise to find that the answer that will be offered here is that they are not.

The strategy will be as follows. I shall first offer a brief general account of the general literature of globalisation that will emphasise its generality and high level of abstraction and contend that as a result, globalisation claims are often so general as to be effectively meaningless. Following this, I will turn to the more important question of why it has become so prevalent and what the implications of this question are for contemporary discussions of sovereignty. Initially here, I shall return to the arguments of Ulrich Beck's and Anthony Giddens' discussion of risk society. Here I argue that they use the concept of globalisation to develop a social theory with an extremely attenuated notion of human subjectivity, where global forces are effectively beyond our control – a 'runaway world' to use the title of Giddens' much discussed Reith Lectures,³ and offer some criticism's of this idea. However, it is important to see that many of the supposed 'opponents' of globalisation share many of the assumptions of its advocates and this makes a serious critique more difficult still. I thus turn my attention to the other 'side' of the globalisation debate, the anti-corporate 'anti-globalisation' movement, which claims to represent a popular backlash against globalisation and is sometimes associated with a demand for greater sovereignty.⁴ I criticise aspects of these arguments and distance my own arguments from them by showing that their agenda shares, with many of the advocates of globalisation, a hostility to the forms of collective agency that this thesis espouses.

³ See Giddens, *Runaway World*, passim

⁴ In North America these groups are called anti-corporate, but in Europe they are termed anti-capitalist.

The next part of the chapter tries to make good on my earlier promise to provide an explanation of how in international relations theory at least, we have reached this stage and what the implications of this are. I develop two claims that I have made throughout this thesis, that liberation movements in the developing world have atrophied and that popular nationalism has evaporated in the West. I want to make clear that I am not suggesting a simple one to one correlation between these developments and the emergence of globalisation theory. Rather I am trying to establish the circumstances in which such ideas were able to take hold. By suggesting that such circumstances were in fact offshoots of a particular constellation of historical and ideational forces I hope to suggest why it is the case the 'globalisation debate' poses no real threat to the idea of sovereignty contained in this thesis at all.

Globalisation? Antinomies of a debate⁵

There is no clear agreement on the meaning of globalisation. On that much at least, there does seem to be some agreement. The amorphous nature of the concept paradoxically bolsters its legitimacy by allowing it to evade almost any specific criticism. Because globalisation is ubiquitous, it is effectively beyond challenge. For some this represents a theoretical advance. Anthony Giddens, for example, notes that, "Discussion of globalization is no longer concentrated on whether or not it exists, but on what its consequences are."⁶ A similar claim is manifest in perhaps the best known general introduction to the whole gamut of globalisation debates, the collectively authored *Global Transformations*⁷. In that book, the authors suggest that there are three general positions on globalisation the first two of whom – named hyper-globalisers and transformationalists – accept the fact of globalisation, though they differ on the extent, character and implications – and the final one is simply termed 'sceptics', a rather large group, one assumes.

⁵ A useful overview of these debates is found in Malcolm Waters *Globalization* 2nd edition (London: Routledge 2000)

⁶ Anthony Giddens 'Introduction' in Anthony Giddens (ed) *The Global Third Way Debate* (Cambridge: Polity 2001)

⁷ David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathon Perraton *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity 1999)

As far as actual definition is concerned, there are many. Giddens, for example, defines globalisation as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa”.⁸ David Held and his colleagues, in contrast, see it as “the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual”.⁹ Meanwhile, in perhaps the most sophisticated but also accessible, account of globalisation in the international relations literature, Jan Art Scholte suggests a succinct ‘core thesis’ about globalisation, to wit that it is the “transformation of social geography marked by the growth of supraterritorial spaces”,¹⁰ while also suggesting that this core thesis needs to be amended and qualified by a total of no less than thirteen sub theses! This surely suggests, to say the least, a problematic degree of imprecision in the original formulation.

Some have sought to see in globalisation as a relational notion. In International Relations theory perhaps the most interesting author to focus on globalisation in this way is Ian Clark. His description of the relationship between sovereignty and globalisation seems on the surface more sophisticated, “sovereignty both traces, but also in turn shapes, the contours of globalization because both are rooted in changing state practice.”¹¹ However, if we pause to consider the content of this claim, it is again unhelpfully vague. He claims that changing state practice is at the root of changes in the nature of sovereignty that could be understood as almost definitionally true – but then says the same about ‘globalisation’. But surely one cannot offer as an understanding of something an account that says ‘it’ is dependent upon state practice, since it is precisely what is to count as ‘it’ that is at issue. It would, of course, be foolish to claim that these are necessarily discrete processes. The problem is that Clark’s theoretical claims are simply too abstract without elaboration in specific contexts. To carry conviction, and in order to have a discussion of specific contexts

⁸ Anthony Giddens *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity 1990) p. 64

⁹ Held et al, *Global Transformations*, P.2

¹⁰ Jan Art Scholte *Globalization: A critical introduction* (London: Macmillan, 2000) P.8

we need an understanding of what globalisation is (at least as a hypothesis) which would allow us to properly ask the question.

Most analysts accept that, thus understood, globalisation is necessarily a very broad phenomenon indeed and that in many respects it has been happening for centuries, possibly even millennia.¹² The question that follows from this, of course, is whether contemporary globalisation is especially significant, and if so, in what way.

Of course, it would be foolish to deny that the world is more closely connected today than at any time in the past, and that the pace of change is accelerating. International travel is now commonplace, the Internet makes everyday contact between people on different continents possible, and huge volumes of foreign currency are traded daily across technologically sophisticated international currency markets. But the novelty and implications of these changes can themselves be contested. Levels of foreign direct investment, for example, have only recently risen to the level that they were at before World War I,¹³ and although the internet has had an immense impact upon our lives, it is scarcely greater than that of the telegraph and telephone, at a time when instantaneous communication over great distances was unknown. Stephen Kern has gone so far as to suggest that, largely for these reasons, the period 1880 – 1914 as being the real era of ‘globalisation’.¹⁴ The levels of currency trading are cited with wearying regularity to prove that something new is happening, but the actual levels are almost impossible to measure, and their implications are in any case disputed.¹⁵ And on top of all of this, it is very far from clear that any of these features are irreversible. The scare over deep vein thrombosis (DVT) may yet be allowed to restrict air travel, demanding larger and thus less affordable seats, which, if you add

¹¹ Ian Clark *Globalization and International Relations Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999) p. 71

¹² A point made much of by Held et al in *Global Transformations* and, indeed, quite central to the specific sense they want to give to contemporary globalisation, but more so that later.

¹³ Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson *Globalization in Question: The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance* (Cambridge: Polity 1996)

¹⁴ Stephen Kern *Culture of Time and Space 1880 – 1914* (Harvard Mass.: Harvard University Press 1986)

¹⁵ See Daniel Nassim *Cowardly Capitalism* (London: Wiley 2001) and Diane Coyle *Governing the World Economy* (Cambridge: Polity 2000) for analyses of this.

this to the general crisis of aviation post 9/11 could easily lead to a reduction of this aspect of 'globalisation' rather than increasing volume. And from being a more or less unregulated sphere of freedom, the Internet has become the target of many governments' efforts at control and content restriction.¹⁶

All of this is to say, that the attempts so far made to define globalisation do not seem to have generated any particular consensus on what, actually, is going on and what it might mean. However, while the claim that globalisation is too general to be helpful has much to commend it, it does not by itself get to grips with what is behind the popularity of such theories. Justin Rosenberg's recent critique of what he terms the 'follies' of globalisation theory takes us rather further in this regard. He claims that, "In the logical structure of their argumentation, what presents itself initially as the explanandum – globalisation as the developing outcome of some historical process – is progressively transformed into the explanans: it is the globalisation which now explains the changing character of the modern world – and even generates "retrospective discoveries" about past epochs in which it must be presumed not to have existed."¹⁷ The advantage of Rosenberg's approach for this thesis is that it puts agency at the heart of its critique, by showing that some of the key writers in the globalisation canon ultimately present globalisation as causing globalisation, a process without an agent. However, for my purposes I want to develop further the idea of globalisation as social process without agency. I do this by looking at the discussion of risk, which is an important subset of globalisation theory that Rosenberg covers in his chapter on Anthony Giddens. Rosenberg describes Giddens' account as drawing a picture of "people on the one side and disembodied systems on the other, in which power itself ceases to be an organic category but is replaced by the purely technical variable of 'risk'."¹⁸ Whilst I do try to show that Giddens' idea of risk is indeed alien to the sense of human agency that I would encourage, I show below that there is more to the 'risk society' than the purely technical.

¹⁶ See *The Economist* 'The Internet's new borders' Vol 360 No 8234 August 11th-17th 2001

¹⁷ Justin Rosenberg *The Follies of Globalisation Theory: Polemical Essays* (London: Verso 2000) p. 3

¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 108

Globalisation and Risk

The account of reflexive modernity that Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens provide is the most substantial and sophisticated theory of risk. Beck coined the term 'risk society' as the title of an influential book first published in Germany in 1986,¹⁹ but Giddens had already been working similar themes, and they have since collaborated in theorising the political and social implications of the risk society.²⁰

Contrary to many of their followers in politics and the media,²¹ Beck and Giddens recognise that we are not in greater danger than we were in the past. Indeed, Giddens writes that, "Preoccupation with risk in modern social life has nothing directly to do with the actual prevalence of life-threatening dangers."²² The important change that has taken place in late modernity is that the nature of risk has fundamentally changed, and this has brought the tensions of industrial society into focus. In the past, the hazards that we faced were mainly natural, like floods, famines and diseases. These risks could be calculated and dealt with by individuals in their communities. Pollution, for example, tended to be a localised phenomenon that could be sensed and avoided by individuals. Industrialisation has changed this. On the one hand, it has achieved a greater control over natural hazards than was possible in past, and even come to terms with some of its own side effects, like the control of London smog with the Clean Air Acts in the 1950s. On the other hand, however, it has manufactured new and invisible risks. These risks are incalculable, uncontrollable and the responsibility of nobody. The political process in western societies is still linked to the contests over the production and distribution of the goods that are created by industrial society. Industrial society, however, has moved beyond the

¹⁹ Ulrich Beck *Risk Society* (London: Sage 1992)

²⁰ In Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash *Reflexive Modernization* (Cambridge: Polity 1994) they debate the finer points of thesis, and Beck has written the introduction to the German translation of Giddens' *Beyond Left and Right*.

²¹ Part of their significance, of course, lies in the fact that they are obviously and explicitly public intellectuals. Giddens is not only one of the most influential general social theorists of his generation he has recently held an influential position in UK society as director of the LSE, and he also – with David Held and John Thompson, set up Polity Press in the mid 1980's which has grown into one of the major publishing houses for the 'globalisation industry'. Beck, through his newspaper columns in Germany and his environmental activism has also developed an influential 'public voice'.

²² Anthony Giddens *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity 1996) p. 115

level that these institutions were created to manage. Society today, Beck argues, is characterised by the production and distribution of 'bads', the side effects of industrialisation that nobody is held accountable for. At the moment, risk management is left in the hands of scientists and technocrats who continue to work with a model of instrumental rationality that is unable to reflect upon the ends that it is pursuing and cannot accommodate public concerns. The problem today is that, "No matter how small an accident probability is held, it is too large when *one* accident means annihilation."²³ A nuclear power station, for example, could kill millions of people across the world in the event of an accident, but it is controlled by a small group of appointed managers according to standards and regulations set down by unaccountable experts. The new risks that we face are extremely unlikely, but their consequences are catastrophic and they cannot be comprehended or dealt with by individuals in traditional ways. Global danger has replaced personal risk. This change has important social consequences, which Beck and Giddens have examined from slightly different directions.

The most obvious consequence of the risk society for international relations – and the centrality for both Giddens and Beck of globalisation - is that risk does not respect state boundaries, and people are conscious that this is the case increasingly so today. The implication of this version of globalisation is that we need to re-think politics at every level of society *in the context of global risks*. Beck argues that there is a boomerang effect in the risk society that means that risks created by the activities of western companies operating in the third world will come back to them in the form of, for example, patterns of migration and pollution. This idea has been expressed by the Real World Coalition, an umbrella group of voluntary and campaigning organisations in Britain, which argues that: "it is evident that what happens in the South can no longer be roped off from the experience of Northern societies. Increasing poverty, allied to increasing environmental degradation, is generating new fields of conflict and tension, and creating ever larger numbers of refugees and

²³ Beck *Risk Society* p 29-30, emphasis in original

migrants.”²⁴ It is significant that broadly based campaigning organisations like Greenpeace have already adopted the language of reflexive modernity. Beck recognises this convergence of interest, and claims that the emergence of these groups is a result of the process of reflexive modernisation, and the potential solution to its problems.

Beck argues that the central political problem confronting the risk society is that nobody is accountable for the production of risks. The problem is not simply one of intransigence on the part of scientists and managers, however. The more fundamental problem of the risk society is how to reinvent politics in a way that can manage these problems. Beck is contemptuous of the political institutions and contests that continue to characterise western parliamentary democracy, which he describes as “*a rule-directed wrestling match of parties over the feed troughs and levers of power.*”²⁵ The really important political issues are decided at this sub-political level, where at present, “innovation institutionalized as ‘progress’ remains under the jurisdiction of business, science and technology, for whom democratic procedures are invalid.”²⁶ Alongside this, however, a more positive development is taking place as sub-political protest groups are politicising this arena and bypassing the moribund institutions of traditional democracy.

Indeed, while tradition politics is atrophying, new forms of politics and protest that engage with popular fears are burgeoning. Informal groups and networks like road protesters, environmentalists and self-help groups can be seen as the vanguard of the risk society. Whereas politics has traditionally been conducted by mass political parties with programmes which encompass the whole gamut of public policy, the new social movements identify a single issue, or group of issues, and publicise it with a relatively small group of people. Their aim is often to raise awareness and promote

²⁴ The Real World Coalition *The Politics of the Real World* (London: Earthscan 1996) p. 43. Similar ideas are expressed by the equivalent global institution, the Commission on Global Governance in *Our Global Neighbourhood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995)

²⁵ Ulrich Beck *The Reinvention of Politics: Rethinking Modernity in the Global Social Order* (Cambridge: Polity 1997) p. 135, emphasis in original

²⁶ Beck, *Risk Society* p. 14

caution rather than to implement a manifesto in the way that political parties did. They are redefining the terrain of politics and influencing individual behaviour without necessarily forcing their will on the state. On the other hand, although its influence is exaggerated, there is a resonance for the old certainties which expresses itself in 'fundamentalist' movements, defined by Giddens as "tradition defended in the traditional way."²⁷

Anthony Giddens has written extensively on the end of left versus right, the rise of the risk society and the sub-politics that it engenders.²⁸ The emphasis of his argument, however, subtly differs from Beck in that he believes that individuals have a greater grasp of their circumstances than Beck allows for, and are able to reconstruct their own identities in our de-traditionalised society. This does not mean that Giddens believes in a more ambitious political project than Beck. He believes that, "The Promethean outlook which so influenced Marx should be more or less abandoned in the face of the insuperable complexity of society and nature. A drawing back from the ambitions of the Enlightenment is surely necessary".²⁹ Giddens sees his own analysis of the risk society as a positive reformulation of the emancipatory politics that he spent the early part of his career destroying in his *Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*.³⁰ This critique led him in a similar direction to Beck, and he also starts with the claim that, "the wholesale penetration of abstract systems into daily life creates risks which the individual is not well placed to confront."³¹ Whereas in the past people accepted the authority of impersonal systems without question, and through these systems they were able to deal with the uncertainty that they faced, the risk society undermines these traditions and breaks these bonds of loyalty. The positive side of this, for Giddens, is that individuals have

²⁷ Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right* (Cambridge: Polity 1994) p. 6

²⁸ Anthony Giddens *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics* (Cambridge: Polity 1994) is the most systematic statement, but the issues are also covered in Anthony Giddens *Runaway World: How globalisation is reshaping our lives* (London: Profile 1999) and Anthony Giddens (ed) *The Global Third Way Debate* (Cambridge: Polity 2001)

²⁹ *ibid.* p. 79

³⁰ London: Macmillan 1981. This was the first volume in an eponymous trilogy, followed by *The Nation State and Violence* (Cambridge: Polity 1992) and *Beyond Left and Right*.

³¹ Giddens *Beyond Left and Right* p. 136

a new freedom to construct their own biographies free from the parochial ties of kinship networks and traditional loyalties. He explains that,

The self becomes a reflexive project and, increasingly, the body also. Individuals cannot rest content with an identity that is simply handed down, inherited, or built on a traditional status. A person's identity has in large part to be discovered, constructed, actively sustained. Like the self, the body is no longer accepted as 'fate', as the physical baggage that comes along with the self. We have more and more to decide not just who to be, and how to act, but how to look to the outside world.³²

The politics that this implies is welcomed by Giddens as more than a survival strategy. As a consequence of reflexive modernisation we are forced to engage with the world, endowing us all with greater scope for reflective action and self-creation. He sees this as the basis for a new sociality rather than of introspection. The limits of this model will be considered later, when we discuss the idea of agency in the risk society.

The notion of reflexive modernisation represents the most sustained and comprehensive attempt to understand and mould the level of consciousness that exists in contemporary society. But there is, of course, one central problem, one which is central, in fact, to the debate about globalisation in general. Essentially it is the problem of agency. Is globalisation and the risks that we must now face, such that we are, effectively powerless to change this situation?³³

Agency is one of the most contested issues in the sociology of risk. In answering the question of who the political subject of the risk society is, Beck writes that, "nobody

³² *ibid.* p. 82

³³ Of course this does not necessarily mean we are completely powerless. We can still do things and, perhaps, change certain things. What we cannot change, on some readings at least, is the fact that all this is happening and what comes with this view.

is the subject, and everybody is the subject at the same time.”³⁴ He explains this cryptic statement by claiming that, “hazards, understood as socially constructed and produced ‘quasi-subjects’, are a powerful uncontrollable ‘actor’ to delegitimize and destabilize state institutions.”³⁵ This is an interesting context to his positive remarks on sub-political actors, reinforcing Giddens’ rejection of Promethianism. Beck implies that risks are endowed with a mystical ability to delegitimize human institutions. Like Frankenstein’s monster, the only solution is to reign in human hubris by supporting groups in civil society that organise politically around their fears. The policy prescription that flows from this is the ‘precautionary principle’, which holds that we should not engage in activities unless we already know what their side effects will be. This suggests a fear of managing risk as well as a fear of risk itself.

Whereas in the past agency was bound up with the idea of transformation, today it is linked to caution and conservatism. Beck, for example, argues for self-limitation as a liberating principle, claiming that “cheaper is more beautiful (more beautiful is cheaper), slower is more democratic, being more self-responsible is more fun.”³⁶ Far from a liberating notion of agency, the message of the risk theorists is that less is more, and we should organise politically to restrain ourselves. However, this is not conservative in the traditional sense, as Beck does see considerable scope for human agency to be exercised in new areas: “the more societies are modernized, the more agents (subjects) acquire the ability to reflect on the social conditions of their existence and to change them in that way”³⁷. The idea of restraint and agency can co-exist once the terrain of politics shifts to the control of risk rather than the control of society and production. Beck thinks that this is a positive development, but just as risks are beyond democratic control in society today, the issues that were contested most passionately in the past are excluded from the risk society in favour of self-

³⁴ Ulrich Beck, ‘The Politics of Risk Society’ in Jane Franklin (ed) *The Politics of Risk Society* (Cambridge: Polity 1998) p. 19

³⁵ *ibid.* p. 19. Ulrich Beck clearly thinks that this is an important point as it is repeated verbatim (but without acknowledgement) in ‘Organised Irresponsibility’ *Prometheus* (Vol 1 No 1 1998 pp 82-83)

³⁶ Ulrich Beck *Democracy Without Enemies* (Cambridge: Polity 1998) p. 166

restraint. Similarly, when Giddens claims that, "the day to day actions of an individual today are globally consequential", he does not assume that we can consciously control global society. His more modest project for human agents involves their participation in self-help groups and engaging in ethical practices when they go shopping. Giddens seriously regards this as a positive step towards the recreation of the self, which, although based on ostensibly introspective motives, is the basis for a new sociality. Indeed, the politics that he proposes seems to be a form of individual therapy rather than globally significant political action. Following on from our discussion of democratisation, agency in the risk society is closely bound up with the movements that Beck and Giddens support. There is a self-serving political basis for their identification of agency with narrowly defined sub-political movements that in fact bypasses democratic decision-making.

Beck's positive vision of a politicised risk society is closely bound up with a reconceptualisation of democracy, which was the subject of his latest book, significantly entitled *Democracy Without Enemies*.³⁸ Beck argues that democracy has been institutionalised as a process of competition between interests, largely over economic issues and between classes. This is now dying through disengagement, as other issues, bound up with the risk society, are not dealt with under the narrow remit of traditional democracy. This is a popular theme in the literature on democracy, which has expanded in inverse proportion to participation in the political processes of western democracies. The central problem that they are concerned with is that democracy is a form of government that relies upon the demos, the subjects who collectively compete over their political interests. Today, the competition no longer takes place in any real sense, leaving democratic institutions as an empty shell, which Beck describes as consisting of "zombie-institutions which have been dead for a long time but refuse to die."³⁹ This reinforces the disengagement of the demos and leaves governments and political parties without any clearly defined roles. The aim of much

³⁷ Ulrich Beck 'Self-Dissolution and Self-Endangerment of Industrial Society: What Does This Mean?' In Beck, Giddens and Lash, *Reflexive Modernization*

³⁸ *Democracy Without Enemies* (Cambridge: Polity 1998)

³⁹ Beck *Reinvention of Politics* p. 140, emphasis in original

of the literature on democratisation is therefore to re-engage the demos, which Beck wants to do through new social movements as we have discussed above.

Giddens argues that this can be achieved through 'dialogic democracy'. He characterises democracy as having two functions: "On the one hand, democracy is a vehicle for the representation of interests. On the other, it is a way of creating a public arena in which controversial issues – in principle – can be resolved, or at least handled, through dialogue rather than through pre-established forms of power."⁴⁰ He describes this process as the '*democratizing of democracy*'⁴¹ through the activities of self-help groups and social movements which can, "force into the discursive domain aspects of social conduct that previously went undiscussed, or were 'settled' by traditional practices. They may help contest 'official' definitions of things; feminist, ecological and peace movements have all achieved this outcome, as have a multiplicity of self-help groups."⁴² Giddens makes it clear that his interest in democracy is not the representation of interests but the *resolution* of issues with the minimum of conflict ('dialogically'). The self-help groups that he identifies as the vanguard of the new democracy are given a role well beyond that that a 'self-help' group would ever want. Giddens aims to transform them into something quite different in the interest of a particular political project. This is perhaps unwittingly revealed in his qualification of the claim that they can contest official definitions of things with the word 'help'. Rather than participating in a process of forming and imposing a general will by engaging in debate that aims to change the views of the electorate and their representative, Giddens sees the role of social movements as assisting in a larger project. This project is the child of a small élite of people like Giddens and, no doubt, the higher echelons of the new social movements, but it is not a reformulated idea of democracy. It appeals to what is morally right, rather than what is the popular will. And it rigorously excludes those who fall outside their sense of what is proper for the public sphere.

⁴⁰ Anthony Giddens *Beyond Left and Right* p. 16

⁴¹ *ibid.* p. 17, emphasis in original

⁴² *ibid.* p. 17

The significance of these ideas, and the approach to globalisation they contain, for international relations is simply put in that; the risk society as they understand it demands global solutions. And thus sovereignty as it is generally understood – and certainly as how I have understood it here – stands in the way of this; it is part of the problem, not part of the solution. Specifically, the idea of risks that cannot be controlled by normal processes of human agency is contrary to the idea of subjectivity that is crucial for this thesis, as discussed in chapter 3. The social movements that Beck and Giddens celebrate are put forward at the expense of forging a common will based on the interests of independent subjects; it is this common will that is essential for a critical account of sovereignty in international relations, for without it there will be either formless anarchy or a civil society presided over by external arbiter – or imperialism, as it was described in chapter 6.

Attacking globalisation from below

However problematic the ideas associated with globalisation are, some might say, they have had, from my perspective at least, one unexpected side benefit. They have helped to create a movement that is explicitly hostile to the claims of globalisation advocates and which is beginning to have real political clout. This movement sees itself as representing those who globalisation has ‘left out’ and it emphasises the empowerment and enabling of developing societies, as the argument of this thesis also does. Protests at the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle in November 2000 and the World Bank meeting in Prague the next year have brought this movement to the attention of the media, and writers like George Monbiot, Noreena Herz and Naomi Klein have established themselves as theorists of the movement. In Britain they have been termed anti-capitalist, while in North America they are perhaps more accurately described as anti-corporate.⁴³

At times, groups associated with this movement come close to endorsing ideas of sovereignty and self-determination, The ‘Indigenous Peoples’ Seattle Declaration’,

⁴³ George Monbiot *Captive State: The corporate takeover of Britain* (London: Macmillan 2000), Naomi Klein *No Logo* (London: Harper Collins 2000), Noreena Herz *The Silent Takeover: Global Capitalism and the Death of Democracy* (London: Arrow 2002)

for example, calls for the recognition of, "Our inherent right to self-determination, our sovereignty as nations".⁴⁴ It further argues that the appropriation of land and promotion of consumerism has caused, "not only environmental degradation but also ill health, alienation, and high levels of stress manifested in high rates of alcoholism and suicide."⁴⁵ Culture Jammer Kalle Lasn argues that you should, "Maintain your sovereignty", but he means communities and individuals against corporations.⁴⁶ George Monbiot argues for the state to have more power to regulate, to circumscribe the power of corporations.⁴⁷

Part of the problem in such avowals, however, is the extent to which they do not fit well with the strong elements of irrationalism that the movement also displays. Lasn, for example, elevates the emotive over the thoughtful, celebrating immediate responses over considered reactions, arguing that, "Rage is a signal like pain or lust. If you learn to trust it and ride shotgun on it, watching it without suppressing it, you gain power and lose cynicism."⁴⁸ And he downplays the political and social elements of protest, representing protest as a strategy of self-realisation, "Direct action is a proclamation of personal independence."⁴⁹ His motto seems to be, "Honor your instincts"⁵⁰

Similar tendencies are visible in what has become established as a canonical text for the anti-globalisation movement, Naomi Klein's *No Logo*. She moves from a relatively conventional critique of advertising and corporate power to a much more novel analysis of how to oppose the corporate take-over. Rather than rejecting the limitations that corporate power places on choice, she seeks to limit choice further, arguing for a particularly narrow localism. She writes that, "For a growing number of young activists, adbusting has presented itself as the perfect tool with which to

⁴⁴ In Kevin Danaher and Roger Burbach (eds) *Globalize This!: The Battle Against the World Trade Organization and Corporate Rule* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press 2000) p. 84

⁴⁵ *ibid* p. 86

⁴⁶ Kalle Lasn *Culture Jam: How to reverse America's suicidal consumer binge – and why we must* (New York: Quill 2000) *passim*, esp pp 153 – 155

⁴⁷ George Monbiot *Captive State: The corporate takeover of Britain* (London: Macmillan 2000)

⁴⁸ Kalle Lasn *Culture Jam* p. 143

⁴⁹ *ibid.* p. 129

register disapproval of the multinational corporations which have so aggressively stalked them as shoppers, and so unceremoniously dumped them as workers.”⁵¹ Two striking aspects of this statement are worthy of note. First, the term ‘disapproval’. Not righteous hatred, not a considered analytic critique, but ‘disapproval’ is the word that she uses to describe the adbusters’ attitude towards corporations. It suggests a moralism derived from inner feeling, rather than one derived from a considered analysis. The second feature is that Klein seems to imagine that this disapproval springs from the way that corporations have ‘aggressively stalked’ people.

This curious modesty of aspiration is echoed by George McKay, whose discussion of ‘DiY Culture’ celebrates, “practical collective experience around pleasure”, and quotes an ‘activist’ who claims that, ““for me, these gatherings of people are something really important, that I need. *An essential part of resistance is the coming together of people.*””⁵² Any actual political goals that protesters might have are subordinated to the goal of re-creating community in this argument, trivialising exactly what should be most important aspect of action, and sidestepping the need to analyse the issues that may underlie the protests.

The most noteworthy attempt to theorise these movements has come in the widely discussed work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*.⁵³ Its scope is ambitious, its reach wide but its arguments, I suggest, show very clearly some of the major weaknesses of the anti-globalisation movements approach to globalisation. To begin with, as many observers have noted, the book suffers from a somewhat overinflated style – “Our analysis must now descend to the level of ... materiality and investigate there the material transformation of the paradigm of rule”⁵⁴, they announce at one point, following this with the distinctly opaque claim that “The great industrial and financial powers ... produce not lonely commodities but also

⁵⁰ *ibid* p. xv

⁵¹ Naomi Klein *No Logo* (London: Harper Collins 2000) p. 284

⁵² George McKay ‘DiY Culture: Notes towards an intro’ in George McKay (ed) pp 26 - 27

⁵³ Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press 2000

⁵⁴ *ibid.* p. 22

subjectivities. They produce agentic subjectivities within the biopolitical context”⁵⁵. These stylistic infelicities do not, of course, mean that the analysis they offer is necessarily incorrect; they merely make it much harder for anyone reading the book to grasp what that analysis actually is. Their treatment of International Relations is also rather sketchy, repeating the now familiar – and indeed, in most contemporary International Relations theory (as chapters 1-3 showed) long superseded – simplifications of realism vs. idealism.

So what is it that Hardt and Negri claim? The chief claim in *Empire* is that globalisation does not undermine sovereignty, for the simple reason that it *is* the new sovereignty. And because ‘sovereignty’ is simply represented as popular power, although empire now might be driven by corporate and political elite’s the opportunity exists in principle for a reborn radicalism.

They are perceptive when discussing the positive programme of internationalism, which they understand as “the will of an active mass subject”,⁵⁶ but they claim that the world of states that it responded to has been superseded by empire, a new form of global rule. They therefore claim that we need to recognise,

the emergence of a new quality of social movements. We ought to be able to recognise, in other words, the fundamentally new characteristics these struggles all present, despite their radical diversity. First, each struggle, though firmly rooted in local conditions, leaps immediately to the global level and attacks the imperial constitution in its generality. Second, all the struggles destroy the traditional distinction between economic and political struggles. The struggles are at once economic, political and cultural – and hence they are biopolitical struggles, struggles over the forms of life. They are constitutive struggles, creating new public spaces and new forms of community.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. 32

⁵⁶ *ibid.* p. 49

⁵⁷ *ibid.* p. 56

This collects together so many of the themes that I have been arguing against in this thesis that it is hard to know where to start. They are claiming that these anti-corporate attacks are significant because they challenge the logic of neo-liberalism, but one hunts in vain anywhere in the (very long) pages of *Empire* to find anything that might resemble an actual program for action and thus we are no further forward than with the poststructural agonism criticised in chapter 2. This brings us full circle – we are back to the small competing groups in civil society that Beck and Giddens also celebrate.

Conclusion

If both advocates and critics of globalisation can be found wanting in the ways I have suggested, what accounts for the success of the ‘globalisation debates’? In this section, focusing once more especially on international relations, I suggest a different focus through which to understand the changes that are taking place. Globalisation functions both as a description of a state of affairs, and an explanation of how they have come about. It obviously does touch on some extremely important changes in contemporary world politics, but exaggerates many and marginalised others. The main focus of inquiry here is why analysts have developed such an exaggerated sense of change, what is marginalised and why and what the implications of this are.

Let us begin with an obvious point. Many developing country governments are almost as bad as liberal interventionists say they are. The great hopes of liberation movements have been unfulfilled, and brutal, ineffectual governments have taken over in many of the West’s former colonies. Furthermore, Western radicals who might once have supported the goal of autonomy in such places are now amongst the most vociferous, if sometimes regretful, advocates of intervention.⁵⁸

Charismatic leaders like Che Guevara once provided role models for earnest Western radicals. Today’s leaders like Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic do their

⁵⁸ e.g. Michael Ignatieff *Vital War: Kosovo and Beyond* (London: Chatto and Windus 2000), Mary Kaldor *New and Old Wars: Organized violence in a global era* (Cambridge: Polity 1999; re-published with a new afterward, 2001)

people no favours, and represent a perverse parody of third world freedom. It would be stupid to try to defend these leaders, but it would be even worse to endorse intervention as an alternative. It is not rhetorical hyperbole to see the interventions of Clinton and Blair as having far worse consequences for Iraqis and Serbs than their own leaders. As a result nothing stands between third world peoples and the pressures of global markets and international politics.

The economic position of the third world has become even worse since decolonisation. Although there have been some startling successes in East Asia, Africa is perhaps even more marginal to the world economy than it was in 1900. As a result, it has lost bargaining power against the West.

The end of the Soviet Union has become a tediously familiar explanation for everything in international relations today, and its significance is obviously not to be dismissed. However, it is inadequate to simply invoke it, as if statesmen suddenly felt a crisis of confidence because they had to re-orient themselves. Rather, we need to trace its impact in different areas of interest. The important issue for my purposes is not the change in the balance of power from a bi-polar to a unipolar (or multipolar) system, as if these ahistorical categories can be evoked to capture all of the complexities of post-Cold War system. What interests me is the effect that the collapse of the Soviet Union had on radicalism, in both domestic and international politics. This can be traced one step further by looking at how this conditioned the response of conservative forces once their enemy had been removed, and indeed to the effects that this had on politics once the historic dispute between right and left lost its force.⁵⁹ The collapse of the Soviet Union has had an immense impact on the ability of the third world to pursue its own agenda in international relations. It is not simply that they have lost the ability to play one superpower off against another. Rather, the Soviet Union stood as an example of the possibility of radical change, however degraded Soviet communism was in practice. Now, there is no credible

⁵⁹ This theme has been treated by, among many others, Anthony Giddens *Beyond Left and Right*

model for third world states seeking to chart a course independent of the orthodoxy of international institutions.

Finally, in the really extreme cases third world states have collapsed altogether, creating a neo-medieval anarchy of groups fighting over the scraps. This remains an unusual scenario, and one which International Relations scholars perhaps make too much of. However, the fact that this can happen at all in the modern world is an indictment of the present global order, and it is easy to see how some people have drawn the conclusion that decolonisation was a mistake.

These factors mean that there is a much greater latitude for Western intervention. But more significantly they create the basis for the creation of a new élite of collaborationists calling for intervention from within the third world. Africans are already adept at presenting their demands in the language of liberal NGOs. A powerful coalition is thus established against traditional notions of sovereignty. This point can be developed in relation to the discussion of the attack on the World Trade Centre, which prompts speculation about where these dynamics are leading.

By declaring a war on terrorism, George Bush has set in place a process that could be used to manage international relations in a world where America is at once hegemonic and hidebound. Whilst there is more to this new crusade than crudely trying to re-create the Cold War (a task that everyone now sees as futile), it represents the consolidation of certain trends in international relations that have been developing for some time rather than an entirely new departure.

The United States has proved to be an uncertain superpower. After the Cold War it was without a great enemy, but it soon discovered that it was without close friends as well. Japan and the other allies haggled over their Gulf War contributions, Somalis whom they had gone to help shot back at them, NGOs that had argued their case for intervention pointed the finger back at their sponsor, highlighting its record on racism and capital punishment. At home, the public has shown short-term approval for

dramatic interventions, but this has not translated into longer-term national solidarity or identification with political élites. One paradigm has succeeded another – the End of History, the Clash of Civilizations, the New Interventionism – they have all come and gone. Now we face the question of whether the crusade against terrorism will have the durability that previous attempts at organising hegemony have lacked.

On the surface, it has everything in its favour. America, the arrogant imperialist, is now cast as the victim. States, NGOs, journalists and individuals have united in grief for the innocent dead. For some years now, victimhood has provided a moral authority that the establishment has lacked. Now this criticism could be directed in America's favour. A public reluctant to support entangling alliances and lengthy wars now has a stake in a righteous crusade. The question of whether they back overwhelming force or a more subtle approach is moot at this point. States that have had their human rights records questioned over their draconian approach to subversion see a way to build bridges with America. Europe, brusquely pushed aside over the Kyoto Protocol, can draw America back in to the diplomatic process. Middle Eastern states that have been trying to make their peace with the West ever since the Soviet Union collapsed have quickly seized the opportunity to line up with America. And since the enemy is unknown and everybody has gone to great lengths to clarify that this is not a war on Islam, fewer groups will be immediately alienated than has been the case when America has pointed the finger in the past.

But this will not be an easy process to negotiate. The problems that have been widely highlighted are the least important. The problems of identifying the terrorists and intervening in difficult terrain are the most immediate, but least pertinent. For America to achieve anything from this apparent catastrophe, they need to manage the process of fighting terror, which means managing relationships that they have little experience of. Different actors will have different stakes in the process, and be looking for different outcomes. America has tended to vacillate between unilateralism and multilateralism. The scope for unilateralism over the past decade has been historically unprecedented; there is simply nobody ready to challenge

America. However, the nervous superpower has been reluctant to go ahead without support, and it cannot sustain the costs of hegemony indefinitely. On the other hand, multilateral action, involving both states and NGOs, raises the spectre of conflict in cases where the NGOs have different aspirations from their governmental sponsors and are unwilling to toe the American line.

For this to succeed, it cannot be brought to a resolution. Even if Osama bin Laden is eliminated, America will need to uncover new conspiracies, and persuade its newfound friends that they all have an interest in targeting them as well. At this point, the process becomes more difficult to manage, as it acquires an independent dynamic and the war against terrorism tears itself away from the hands of those who instigated it. The world's sympathy is unlikely to be sustained for that long.

Maintaining domestic interest and support could prove an even greater challenge. While the war party prepares for action, the popular mood is moving towards a therapeutic solution. For every Bruce Willis wannabe, there are many other voices calling for us to understand the rage of the oppressed. These responses are sometimes misunderstood as the return of the old anti-war movement. But where the anti-imperialists of yore wanted the oppressed to have their freedom, the dominant response now is to call upon America to take up its responsibilities for administering the third world. The response is that we must not only feed the hungry, we must govern the ill governed, teach the stupid, and counsel the traumatised. No doubt there are many in the higher reaches of the American administration who would love to harness this idealism, but in the end it makes impossible demands upon them.

The tragedy is that the crisis is generated in America, not Afghanistan. The desperate action of the zealots who attacked the World Trade Centre is a measure of the weakness of anti-Americanism, not its strength. It does not speak to a popular movement, and it does not even hope to mobilise anti-Americanism abroad. It was a futile gesture by isolated individuals. Indeed, it could be said that the collapse of any competing global visions is at the root of America's foreign policy dilemmas. It

lurches from crisis point to crisis point, from one slogan to another, without any of the organising principles that were provided by the negative example of third world liberationism and global communism. Despite the attempts to talk up the global terror waiting to strike at the West, the demons are all at home.

In the meantime, a war on terrorism will bring barbarism to all. In the west, liberties will be withdrawn in the interests of a spurious sense of security that will only be further weakened by the imposition of official vigilance. Abroad, states that stand up to the anti-terrorism measures imposed will find themselves targeted by the full might of the western war machine. And none of it will do anything to prevent random acts of terror.

This chapter has tried to avoid the temptation of simply counterposing the claims about globalisation to evidence of internationalisation from a longer historical period, as some critics have done. Instead, I have tried to explain the appeal of globalisation theory. In doing this, I have taken the opportunity to distinguish my position from other arguments that superficially seem to be defending the idea of sovereignty.

These theories express a sense of insecurity and powerlessness, which is externalised into fears about global crime and terrorism, capital flight, brain drain and environmental catastrophe. The absence of competing visions of political community since the end of the Cold War has removed the most pressing challenge to the exercise of sovereignty. Other threats pale into insignificance.

Before leaving this point, it is worth re-iterating a point from the introduction. The perceived decline in the capabilities of particular states, and of states in general, is not a direct cause of the changing way in which sovereignty is understood. The undermining of the principle of autonomy is far more important. This is why the changes discussed in this chapter are so important, although they seem modest by comparison with the extravagant claims of certain globalisation theorists

The globalisation debate is important for the approach to sovereignty taken in this thesis because it understates the role of agency in international relations. Both the power attributed to forces outside conscious control such as flows of finance capital and the radical espousal of local forms of resistance serve to undermine the idea that states and individuals can act consciously and purposively upon the world. It is that aspect of the globalisation debate that this thesis takes issue with.

Conclusion

This thesis has offered a critical assessment of the treatment of sovereignty in recent writing on International Relations. Its claim, simply put, is that for all the problems associated with it, the notion of sovereignty still remains the most effective way of guaranteeing the rights of people who live within bounded territories, despite recent developments and in the teeth of much contemporary international theorising. It has thus in part been a negative critique of those aspects of the discipline of international relations over the last few decades that have suggested otherwise. By way of a conclusion I want to offer some general reflections on this argument and also articulate some possible responses to various possible lines of criticism. Finally, I shall offer some thoughts as to what this argument as a whole means for thinking about international relations in the contemporary period.

Answering the Critics

The winding down of the Cold War has prompted endless speculation about the changing international system. Foreign policy makers have based their decisions on new assumptions, and many theorists have assumed that we are confronted with quite new threats and opportunities (see chapters 2 and 3). This thesis has treated these claims with profound scepticism, suggesting that these theoretical and political changes owe more to the fears and uncertainties about the world than to real structural changes. Instead of following the fashion for assuming that the state is increasingly outmoded, I have claimed that the right of self-determination remains valid. In this section it remains for me to anticipate some of the more obvious lines of argument against this old-fashioned focus.

Given that I have presented a theory of international relations that holds that we must respect sovereignty as a privilege right, sceptical readers may reasonably ask what can be done when sovereign states behave abominably towards their own people.

Even if the sceptic accepts the arguments put forward in chapter 7, for example, there is still the question of what could be done in a hypothetical case of, say, genocide.

One response is to deny the magnitude of the situation where intervention is demanded, and indeed there may be cases where the crisis is exaggerated. Nonetheless, the basic question still remains; after all allowances are made sometimes there will be genocidal governments. Under such circumstances what should we do? The short answer is that there are still a number of possibilities. To begin with, in the event of true humanitarian disasters there is a time-honoured self-help mechanism; flight. This is certainly not optimal, but it is surely better than any of the alternatives. The barrier to this today, however, is often that privileged Western states are determined to deny foreigners – and especially poor and disadvantaged foreigners – the right to entry. There are often quite understandable reasons for this, but even a fairly crude utilitarian calculation would probably suggest that this solution is better than intervention, when measured against the vast cost of military operations and post-war reconstruction, quite apart from the humanitarian case. Given that this is a counterfactual, no conclusive scorecard can be produced, but the cost of the Iraq intervention must give pause for thought.

But, taking the counterfactual one stage further, what could be done if a sovereign state engaging in genocide, actively prevents its victims leaving? Under such extreme conditions I allow that intervention is justified but only if there is a true commitment on the part of the intervening state to a real solution to the issue and only if it is a last resort.

Interventionism is of course presented as enlightened and humane, and the other side of this is that interventionists are sometimes guilty of denigrating their opponents as either naïve or callous. To give one very obvious example, Noam Chomsky is cited with almost wearying regularity as the beginning and the end of the interventionist case. Nicholas Wheeler argues that Chomsky's 'realist' critique is invalid because he ignores the fact that humanitarian ideology constrains subsequent actions, and

because humanitarianism is in large part a response to popular pressure in the west.¹ It is surprising that Wheeler fails to notice that Chomsky's critique derives its force precisely from the fact that Western leaders feel pressure to conform to their own rhetorical pronouncements. He is exposing their hypocrisy and arguing that their actions cannot possibly fulfil their stated aims. Chomsky is a powerful polemicist, but he does not claim to be providing a theoretical elaboration of changing norms of intervention. It is therefore telling that he provokes so many dismissive references, and that they fail to engage with his arguments.

Although interventionists often refer to the suffering of particular victims, the interventionist case rarely delves into the specific problems or has to deal with the longer term implications for these people. Writers like Martin Shaw offer a rather naïve assurance that power has been civilised, and that the radical campaigns of the past are no longer relevant to a world where the greatest evils are being perpetuated in the third world. There is a sense in which they are unable to relate to the victims that they claim to be helping as real people. They are ciphers for the universal victim rather than people capable of shaping their own societies or acting on their own initiatives. This is reflected in the diminished sense of agency in the post-positivist theories discussed in chapters 2 and 3, and can be seen in the way that discussions of democratisation circumscribe democracy to limit the ability of people to elect nationalist governments.

Sovereignty has been eroded chiefly in the sense that many in the elites of the major powers (corporate and intellectual as well as political) have rejected the idea of collective autonomy in favour of an elitist model of global management. The ideal of political independence has, however, not been lost, and this thesis is a contribution to the revival and defence of this principle. The goal of an egalitarian global society can only be reached by elevating the ideal of self-determining individuals, not by substituting an often abstract concern for individual victims.

¹ Nicholas J. Wheeler *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000) p. 288

One of the more grotesque aspects of the new interventionism is that many of the advocates of humanitarian intervention rarely pause to consider the balance sheet of interventions in the twentieth century. Sanctions in Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian war, ongoing interventions in the Balkans have claimed many lives. But none of these situations has been 'resolved', and the number of lives saved cannot be quantified. Doing something certainly provides a sense of moral worth to the interventionists, who can identify themselves with a humanitarian project. But it is hard to prove that the recipients of this beneficence really benefit, and in many cases intervention is a prelude to even more intervention as optimistic assumptions about transition are frustrated. In Bosnia and now in Iraq there is no foreseeable end to Western presence.

International Relations

Let me now move to the implications of these arguments for the field of International Relations itself. International Relations has been peculiarly obsessed by its status as a discipline. Although I believe that this introspection is unhelpful, and that we should be concerned with studying the world rather than studying how we can go about studying the world, it is necessary to say a few words about the discipline in the conclusion to a work such as this. I am not going to propose a new 'research agenda'. Indeed, I identify the proliferation of research agendas as part of the problem. In part, this has been the result of the professionalisation (and ghettoisation) of the study of international relations, which has caused academics to develop their reputations on adherence to a particular research agenda. The pretensions of positivist social science to be able to produce definitive answers to social problems has contributed to this, but post-positivists have, in their own way, shown strong tribal loyalties to their own research agendas.

In the past there were radical thinkers who looked at international relations as part of a social whole, refusing to elevate the division of the world into sovereign states as an eternal human problem (see the discussion of Lenin in chapter 5). The discipline of

International Relations, on the other hand, took just such a division for granted. As a result, radical thinkers tended to be on the outside, as critics of the discipline.

From 1919, when International Relations was institutionalised as an academic discipline, radical approaches to world politics were informed by a number of factors many of which have recently vanished, or been vanquished. First, for good or ill, the Soviet Union provided a solid example of an alternative to market society. Even those who despised Soviet Communism could draw inspiration from the fact that there was a concrete alternative. Second, radicals were informed by a sense of the clear injustice of colonialism, an institution whose nature was further clarified by anti-colonial movements holding imperialist states to account on their own claims to represent civilization, freedom and progress. Finally, although often muted and contradictory, there was an internationalist ethos in certain sections of the Western left, manifested in the International, and later in third world solidarity campaigns.

The basis of my argument has been that a progressive approach to international relations must be based on a predisposition to see other people as essentially 'like us'. Superficially, this seems to be the case with the critical approaches that I have surveyed, but I have shown that their underlying impulse is regulatory. They are trying to create a world run by civilised 'people like them', where potential conflict is regulated through respecting our difference rather than affirming our commonality. Furthermore, I have contrasted my approach to the multiculturalist argument, by claiming that in spite of an infinite variety of difference between individual humans, there are no essential differences between groups of humans that need to be accorded any special kind of recognition.

International Relations is no longer concerned with studying and understanding the relations between nations, still less with changing them. It has become a self-referential game of competing theories and research agendas with less and less connection to the real world of global politics. Phrases like 'post-positivism' and 'complex multipolarity' embody a host of assumptions that are understood only by

players in the game. Arcane language and pointless terminology create an aura of mystique around ideas that are very simple. Approaching real issues and using real language would be far more helpful.

However, despite the enthusiasm with which International Relations scholars discuss their own discipline, it is not the main problem. More important is the turn away from the idea of equality towards a more relativistic approach among radical critics. Part of this involves a renewed elitism which disdains the masses and despairs of the possibility of rational and open democratic deliberation. I have treated this theme extensively in this thesis, and so I now turn to the other aspect of this, which is that the idea of development has also been rejected in the name of environmentalism and cultural diversity.

Development and Freedom

The ideal of social development has been almost entirely rejected today. Ideals like democracy and diversity are promoted as important in their own right, but the idea that people in the third world should have the opportunity to share our standard of living is widely rejected as culturally insensitive. The focus of this thesis has been on the need for developing countries to be granted autonomy, but this autonomy will mean very little without the development of their societies. We can anticipate that this process of development will alleviate many of the tensions that are at the root of many of the problems identified by interventionists today.

In part, development has been cynically promoted in the interests of global social stability. Rita Abrahamsen is particularly perceptive on this point, "Development is always presented as a humanitarian and moral concern, an ethical obligation on behalf of the rich to help and care for those less fortunate. But behind this aura of humanitarianism lurks a certain fear of poverty and the poor. In the words of

President Truman, 'Their poverty is ... a threat both to them *and to more prosperous areas.*'²

Mark Duffield characterises the process thus, "In redefining underdevelopment as dangerous, from its position of dominance liberal discourse has suppressed those aspects of Third Worldism and international socialism that argued the existence of inequalities within the global system and, importantly, that the way in which wealth is created has a direct bearing on the extent and nature of poverty. The new logic of exclusion is reflected in the relativisation and internationalisation of the causes of conflict and political instability within the South. At the same time, the main burden of responsibility for solving the problems has been placed on Southern actors."³

It is interesting to note the treatment of inequality in discussions of globalisation. A recurrent theme is that inequality transcends nation states, creating a global underclass and a transnational élite.⁴ The apologetic aspect of this scarcely needs spelling out: the problem that is identified is global, and so remedying economic inequalities between states cannot be the solution. This theme also comes through in the discussion of third world corruption, and fanciful stories of trillions of dollars in Swiss bank accounts. Here, third world élites are blamed for the underdevelopment of their societies. In developmental discourse the focus has fundamentally shifted away from developing entire economies and societies towards a charitable concern for the very poorest members of third world societies.⁵ Alongside support for political autonomy, a progressive approach to international relations demands that we return to a belief in the universal benefits of economic and social development.

² Rita Abrahamsen *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa* (London: Zed 2000) p. 17; italics and ellipsis Abrahamsen's

³ Mark Duffield *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London: Zed 2001) p. 28

⁴ Especially in Zygmunt Bauman *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (Cambridge: Polity 1999)

⁵ This argument is effectively developed in John Pender, 'From "Structural Adjustment" to "Comprehensive Development Framework": Conditionality Transformed?' *Third World Quarterly* (22/3 2001 pp 397-411)

Sovereignty is being attacked for the wrong reasons. The ideal of a global society is laudable, but the attack on sovereignty does not propose this. Instead, it is an attack on the ability of people to organise themselves collectively. My approach to sovereignty begins from the assumption that humans are rational, social creatures which want to be able to control their destinies themselves. The critical accounts discussed in this thesis do not share this assumption, and are therefore drawn towards regulationism. In their world, affairs are conducted by people just like them – liberal, intelligent, enlightened – while politics is limited to cultural expression and occasional expressions of support through elections. This impoverished vision is no basis for cosmopolitanism. Those, including myself, who aspire to a global society where the particularist demands of nationality are removed need to show the ambition and vision necessary to convince people of its possibility, rather than endorsing global policing arrangements convenient to the great powers. A focus on liberty and development provides a firmer basis for a critical approach to international relations. Inasmuch as it is reasonable to follow the fashionable trend of placing ‘developed’ in inverted commas in ‘developed’ world, it is because the process of development has only just begun.

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