

# Something old, something new, something borrowed: rerepresentations of anarchy in International Relations theory

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## Abstract

There are many stories to be told regarding the development of International Relations (IR) theory in the United States over the last century. Some have pointed out IR's evolutionary properties, emphasizing the debates that have produced fitter theory with empirical reality. Others have argued that the development has been largely scientific with knowledge built hierarchically through time. In this article, I propose an alternative view of American IR's development. Specifically, I argue that IR theory is best understood through heterarchical organization, with core ideas and concepts rerepresented in new ways, and various levels of analysis, over time. In making this argument I trace dual processes of borrowing ideas from other disciplines and rerepresenting those ideas in new forms in order to solve vexing theoretical problems. The article demonstrates how conceptions of anarchy have been significantly affected by other disciplines and relates

those conceptions to views of international security both at home and abroad, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

## 1 Introduction: rerepresentation and heterarchy in systems theory

In 1884, John Hughlings Jackson, noted British neurologist, made an important contribution to our understanding of physical systems. He argued that rather than being organized hierarchically, with a ‘mind’ on top and subservient functions serving the body below, neural systems should be considered as being organized *heterarchically*. He wrote: ‘There is no autocratic mind at the top to receive sensations as a sort of raw material, out of which to manufacture ideas, etc., and then to associate these ideas’, but rather there exists a system of unification of the whole organism whereby the entire self adjusts, and adapts, to the environment (cf. Taylor, 1931). This insight would have a profound effect on the way biologists and neuroscientists understood the body. Rather than viewing each level of the organism, such as the brain or autonomic nervous system, as possessing unique functions, the physical system of the body should be understood as a system of *rerepresentation of function* (Bernston and Cacioppo, 2008). For neural systems, this means that the brain develops not by adding function control upon function control, with higher level functions reserved for higher levels, but rather each level in a sense operates a version of the function found at higher and lower levels alike. For instance, simple reflex circuits at the level of the spinal cord are rerepresented in the brain in a more complicated, but complementary, fashion. Jackson’s contribution suggested that evolution had produced an intricate system whereby there was not subservience of function, but rather interdependence of function. Ultimately, what this insight suggested is that body has not replaced existing functionality with more fit functionality over time, but rather represented older and more simple functions in new ways and forms through time.

In this article, I will argue that something very similar has occurred in the development of International Relations (IR) theory in the United States. Rather than following the form of evolution, where less-fit theory is replaced with theory that better fits the empirics of the day, IR theory development can be understood as a dialectical process of rerepresenting

when I call core ideas in new forms over time. This rerepresentation often involves borrowing ideas and concepts from other disciplines in order to solve vexing problems. In order to make this case, I will look at one core concept of IR theory, anarchy, and illustrate how conceptions of anarchy have been represented and rerepresented over time. I will suggest that just as physical systems develop through this rerepresentation of function, so too has IR theory, and thus rerepresentation and heterarchy serve as a useful metaphor in thinking about IR's development.

In order to make this argument, I will begin by contrasting heterarchical IR theory with the more dominant hierarchical view in the discipline. I will suggest that the history of American IR theory is often told as a story of hierarchical evolution. American IR theorists develop theories, these theories are tested against empirical realities, ensuing 'great debates' are had between and among theorists, and the result is better theory. Bad theory that does not correspond or fit well with empirical reality dies off, and new stronger, more fit theory takes its place. As such IR theory, the standard story goes, has evolved from a relatively primitive, simplistic, and naïve organism in interwar idealism to a sophisticated, more advanced and more fit organism through great debates that have only made the enterprise stronger. This story is familiar and while attempts to debunk it have proliferated (cf. Schmidt, 2002), the contours of IR through evolution, I argue, remain a predominant way of thinking about American IR development (cf. Patomäki, 2002). The problem with this story is that it misses much of the social relations, discourses, and processes that contributed to IR's development in the United States. The evolutionary story belies a complicated and rich discursive and dialectical history that needs to be uncovered in order to appreciate the complexity, interdisciplinarity, and heterarchical nature of American IR. Having outlined the contours of an evolutionary IR, I will then turn to why I think this story misses the crucial dialectical nature of rerepresentation through time. I will make this argument by tracing the concept of anarchy through the inter-war period to the present, noting how at each turn theorists have looked to other disciplines to make sense of the anarchy's ramifications. By tracing anarchy's development through structural realism, liberalism, constructivism, relational, and finally psychological theory, we end up with a conception of anarchy that is in some ways completely different, but in many ways eminently similar, to the conception we started with decades ago.

The article will proceed as follows. First, the case for evolution as the standard story of IR development in the United States will be made. As others (cf. Schmidt, 2002) have made similar arguments in different terms, I will not belabor the point but rather briefly present my own view on how the standard story developed and has largely withstood the test of time. I argue that it stems the evolutionary orientation of our dominant epistemology: positivism. Next, the article will turn to the two interrelated streams of development I have identified, processes of rerepresentation and borrowing, and will investigate in depth the concept of anarchy, which has been rerepresented in various forms through the history of American IR theory development. I will demonstrate how understanding these processes help to make sense of both IR theory's development as well as the views of the United States' security situation in the 20th century. Finally, I conclude by assessing where new sources of borrowing and rerepresentation may be occurring in the 21st century.

## 2 Evolution as a 'standard story' in the social world

In order to understand the history of IR theory development in the United States, it is useful to begin, perhaps counterintuitively not with IR, but with a broader question of how we understand development of knowledge. That is, what does it mean for a set of theories, like those that attempt to explain international political outcomes, to 'develop'? This question can be answered from a variety of perspectives and levels of analysis. Some look at sociological considerations and address how disciplines grow, become popular, become unpopular, or, as Andrew Abbott (2001) argues, 'fractalizes' along functional lines. Others may look to politics and an understanding of how power can affect what is remembered about history and what is forgotten (cf. Zinn, 1990). More specific to American IR, some have taken a discursive approach, uncovering the nuanced debates and discourses that drive disciplines in certain directions (cf. Schmidt, 1998). Each of these perspectives would bring something different to the discussion and provide insights into how it is that we got where we are today. My interests here are in problematizing the dominant view of IR theory development in the United States, which I believe is linked to an understanding of epistemology. Therefore, I begin by asking some fundamental questions, but ones that I believe illustrate how we have come to understand IR theory development

*specifically* in the United States: How is IR knowledge created? How do we know when we have “better” knowledge? The answers to these questions have had a distinct, and I argue very significant, impact on how we perceive IR theory’s development. IR’s development in the United States has been interpreted through the perspective of the dominant philosophers of science in the discipline.

‘Science’, the New York Times recently suggested in an article regarding the pharmaceutical drug studies, ‘so the story goes, is a meticulously built edifice. Discoveries balance on ones that preceded them. Research is stimulated by studies that went on before’ (Kolata, 2011). This is a claim about the hierarchy of knowledge. It is, I believe, the same claim often made about IR: knowledge is built by adding to the edifice, informing, and replacing that which is below. I argue that with respect to knowledge building in the IR context, the dominant triumvirate of philosophers of science, Popper, Kuhn, and Lakatos, the forefathers on which modern positivism and therefore IR theory, is built, employ what Modelski (2001) might label a medium–strong evolutionary analogy to epistemology. It is this evolutionary analogy that helps to account for an evolutionary view of IR development in the United States. This argument is a controversial one and will require two steps in order to make it. First, Thomas Kuhn and especially Imre Lakatos are often read as proponents of a knowledge-building endeavor that explicitly rejects the notion that knowledge always builds in a progressive way. For Kuhn, knowledge building is at best discontinuous. For Lakatos, knowledge creation programs can even be ‘degenerative’. The first step therefore is to illustrate how each of these insights is in keeping with a rather strong evolutionary analogy. Secondly, once it has been demonstrated that our epistemological basis is inherently evolutionary, it must be shown that this has affected the way we reread the history of IR’s development. I turn first to briefly making the case that our dominant epistemology in American IR in recent times is evolutionary and then I will turn to making the case that this has affected the way we view IR theory’s development.

### *2.1 Epistemology as evolution*

Popper viewed knowledge development as akin to linear progression through piecemeal engineering that occurs through observation and

hypothesis testing. It is through this hypothesis testing and empirical falsification that more fit knowledge with objective reality replaces older knowledge that is less fit. Popper, of the three philosophers of science discussed here, was the most forward about the evolutionary nature of his theorizing. ‘Our knowledge consists, at every moment, of those hypotheses which have shown their (comparative) fitness by surviving so far in the struggle for existence; . . . [the idea of] a competitive struggle which eliminates those hypotheses which are unfit . . . can be applied to animal knowledge, pre-scientific knowledge, and to scientific knowledge’ (Popper, 1979 (1972), p. 261). The example *par excellence* of the type of unfit theory that Popper was responding to was a perceived shortcoming in Marxist theory. For Popper, Marxism was not so much linear as it was circular. The Marxist wagons could always be circled to update the theory based on conditions on the ground, and therefore suffered from problems of falsifiability. Sound science, Popper argued, was about empirical falsification, not simple theory updating. Important for our purposes is the evolutionary selection mechanism at work here: congruence with observables. Marxism was selected out precisely because it had a less compelling fit with the observable world, as indicated by rigorous hypothesis testing and observation. It simply could not survive, according to Popper, with more compelling fit theories abounding.

Thomas Kuhn brings sociology of knowledge to the discourse, suggesting to Popper that science does not occur in an vacuum devoid of subjectivities, but as Singh (2005) puts it, an environment where ‘social contagion effects underlie scientific belief systems known as paradigms’. Scientists, as subjects rather than objects, find difficulty in abandoning their core theories and research paradigms until they have been significantly discredited through unexplained anomalies and another paradigm arrives to take its place. As a result, science does not progress through linear accumulation of facts, in the way that Popper conceived of it, but rather through scientific revolutions or ‘paradigm shifts’. Yet similar to Popper, Kuhn’s theory of science maintains this core evolutionary analogy. Paradigms are selected in or out based on fitness *as perceived by the scientific community*. The addition Kuhn brings to Popper is that it is not simply falsification that matters when it comes to fitness, but the willingness of scientists to understand that a new paradigm is more fit than the older one. ‘The resolution of revolutions is by selection within the scientific community of the *fittest way* to practice future science’

(Kuhn, 1970, p. 170, my emphasis). The use of word ‘fittest’ here is not incidental, and is meant, I argue, to invoke an evolutionary perspective. Determining fitness required, in Kuhn’s view, establishing verification. ‘Verification’, he said, ‘is like natural selection: it picks out the most viable among the actual alternatives in a historical situation’ (Kuhn, 1970, p. 146). The result here is one paradigm replacing another based on which is better able to answer the questions of the day, as judged through processes of verification. Put another way, to be selected in, a new paradigm must, to use Kuhn’s words, be able to demonstrate better fitness with respect to other paradigms. Similar to Popper, less fit sets of theories (paradigms) will lose out in the evolutionary game to more fit sets of theories.

Finally, Lakatos (1970) serves as a type of middle ground between Popper and Kuhn, marrying the scientific method with sociology of knowledge, suggesting that scientists test rival claims of competing paradigms while holding on to core heuristic assumptions. His analogy to evolution is a marriage of the evolutionary analogies invoked by Popper and Kuhn. Lakatos’ notion of a progressive research program, one that can ‘explain its application to a larger and larger set of cases, or strives for a more precise treatment of the cases it presently covers’ (Godfrey-Smith, 2003, p. 105) is the same natural selection analogy with which Popper and Kuhn had been working. The more fit research program, in other words, is one that is able to defeat refutation by illustrating its predictive power and empirical validity, *relative to other research programs*. The difference for Lakatos is that this selection takes place among competing research programs. As Godfrey-Smith (2003) points out, this has a certain evolutionary feel to it. ‘In biology, what we often find is consensus about very basic principles but competition between research programs at a slightly lower level. Looked at very broadly, evolutionary biology might contain something close to a single paradigm: the “synthetic theory,” a combination of Darwinism and genetics. But at a lower level of generality, we seem to find competing research programs’ (106–107). Thus Lakatos’ contribution that we can have many different programs operating in parallel should not be viewed as anti-evolutionary, but rather, quite the opposite.

This brief survey of three of the major names in American IR epistemology is not enough to make the strong case that their theories are based on natural selection on evolution. It should, however, illustrate that at

the very least what we see in each are epistemological perspectives that are in keeping with the evolutionary analogy. It is important to point this out because the development of IR has been read by scholars through precisely this epistemological framework: IR theories are viewed as a type of biological entity that is either selected in or out based on its ability to explain and predict. This is ultimately the story behind the so-called Great Debates specifically and the general trend of American IR more generally. I use the word story not incidentally for it will be argued that the story is as much fiction as it is fact. It is to that story that we now turn.

## 2.2 *The evolutionary story of IR development in the United States*

For reasons of this epistemological perspective, as identified above, the history of IR theory development in the United States is often told as an evolutionary story. As Schmidt (2002) notes, the typical rendition of the history suggests a progression through phases. The selection mechanism in this evolution is said to be a series of ‘great debates’, the general contours of which are likely familiar to most IR scholars. The debates are said to have focused on questions of both ontology (of what is the international politics made?) and epistemology (how should we study that world?). Idealists debated realists; positivists debated traditionalists; rationalists debated reflectivists, and so on (Schmidt, 2002, p. 4). As Hedley Bull pointed out in 1972, these debates or phases were progressive in nature, representing ‘successive waves of theoretical activity’ (Bull, 1972, p. 33). Progress was engendered through *replacement*. Better theory won the debate and older theory would simply die off.

Two examples drawn from the ‘Great Debates’ of IR intellectual history illustrate this prevalence of evolutionary analogy.

### 2.3 *Replacement in the first great debate: idealists and realists*

World War I and the ensuing interwar period are often said to have fundamentally shifted and transformed the discipline of IR. E.H. Carr’s seminal *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919–1939* is exemplary of this view. Carr takes to task the post-World War I optimists, whose policy preferences were embodied in institutions such as the League of Nations and international cooperative treaties, and demonstrates how the ideas of



peace and cooperation could not survive in the ultimately chaotic international realm. Carr is not necessarily deterministic about the plight of the international system due to the animus of human nature, but rather suggests that the conduct of international affairs need to occur with a relative balance of power maintained. This view, which the ‘idealists’ who believe in a utopian world where good ideas and rhetoric can constrain behaviors are woefully unrealistic, would easily find sympathetic ears.

Steve Smith, for instance, notes that in the 1930s the ‘response to the failure of idealism to explain the dominant events of the 1930s was the emergence, in good Kuhnian fashion, of an alternative paradigm, realism’ (Ashworth, 2002). The new paradigm of realism could explain anomalies that idealist could not. Pre-World War II idealism could not make much sense of how a transformed and peaceful world order after World War I could shortly again result in widespread violence. The fissure between those that wanted to hold on to the idealist paradigm and those who favored a more realistic approach was made worse with the failure of appeasement in World War II. The notion that Hitler could not be stopped by ideas and words made for a growing divide between the ‘utopians’ with an unrealistic worldview and the ‘realists’ who were not at all surprised by the failure of the ideas to constrain behavior (Ashworth, 2002). From a Kuhnian perspective, the idealist research paradigm was hit by a tremendous exogenous and discontinuous historical shock of Hitler that was difficult to explain. James Der Derian sums up the prevailing paradigm shift succinctly: Realism comes ‘from idealism’s failure to stop Hitlerism’. The new paradigm of Realism, with scholars such as Hans Morgenthau who could explain repeating violence in the system with claims about human nature, was waiting in the wings.

This evolutionary story of ‘realism over idealism’ is at best a bit misleading and at worst something of a fiction. Kahler (1997) has termed the first great debate the ‘foundational myth of the field’. There are a number of reasons why the first debate may be mythical. First, it is not clear precisely how much ‘debating’ occurred between the two camps. Peter Wilson’s reading of E.H. Carr and his contemporaries notes that the idealists/utopians ‘did not feel particularly devastated by [*The Twenty Years’ Crisis*]’. As Lucian Ashworth has convincingly shown, while idealists such as Angell, Leonard Woolf, and Alfred Zimmern were constructing their own intricate theories, much of the

realist critique was based on only a small section of the theory. For instance, the criticism of Norman Angell by Carr and Morgenthau rests on pre-World War I works, not post-1918 updates to the theory (Ashworth, 2002, p. 38). Similar examples exist in the realist discussions of human nature. As Ashworth points out, ‘Carr and Morgenthau had caricatured liberal internationalism as fundamentally ignoring human nature, and assuming that the intellect was dominant. This is certainly not true . . . Angell was well aware of the power of human nature, but he had argued that the failings of human nature could be rectified by the intellect’ (Ashworth, 2002, p. 38). The result of this dissection of the realist argument for historians of the discipline such as Ashworth is that the realism of the 1930s and 1940s does not so much present a critique of liberal internationalism, but more of an orthogonal theory. The notion that there was even a debate, as in critique and exchange, seems to be overblown.

#### *2.4 The second great debate*

A similar evolutionary story is told with the Second Great debate. The backdrop to this debate is the behavioral revolution that had effects on nearly all social sciences, political science included. Behavioralism suggested that the study of IR should be objective and largely modeled after the natural sciences. Those in this camp favored Hume’s hypothetico-deductive model of scientific deduction and believed generally in a logical-positivist philosophy of science (Schmidt, 2002, p. 11). Revolutions, as Kuhn tells us, pit one paradigm against another. Pitted against the new ‘political science as natural science’ paradigm was the ‘traditionalist’ school who exemplified a ‘classical approach’ (Bull, 1966), or view that the social world was simply not amenable to scientific study for a variety of reasons. Most generally, while the natural world is constituted by objects, the social world is constituted by subjects. This distinction hinges on individuals possessing free will, being able to constitute meaning, etc.

In typical Kuhnian evolutionary fashion, behavioralism was greatly heralded as it ushered in a new, and better, way of studying IR. As George Liska described this debate, he noted that the division was ‘between those who are primarily interested in IR and those who are primarily committed to the elaboration of social science’ (Liska, 1966, p. 7). The ramification

of the scientific positivists ‘winning’ was, as Schmidt argues, the fostering of a scientific identity of the field and the widespread use of scientific methods in IR inquiry (Schmidt, 2002, p. 11). From these scientific methods, a number of new research programs were developed. Kaplan (1957) ushered in systems analysis, arguing that it was possible to isolate basic social and political rules that agents follow and was able to model various types of international systems, including the ‘balance of power’ system, loose/tight bipolar systems, a hierarchical system, etc. (Jackson and Sørensen, 2007). Schelling (1960) introduced what would become a flourishing game theory program. J. David Singer’s (1972) *Correlates of War* project at the University of Michigan sought to collect data on the history of conflict among states, utilizing scientific principles of replications, data reliability, documentation, review, transparency, and sound statistical principles in generating data sets and quantitative indicators of variables.

As with the first debate, the evolutionary story is overstated here as well. The first problem that arises in reviewing the history of the debate is that it is not clear that, at least early on, there was a debate at all. John Vasquez’s *The Power of Power Politics* (1983) is the first to seriously problematize the myth of a great debate between traditionalists and behavioralists. As Vasquez argues, the extent to which there was a debate was centered on issues of methodology and not substantive concerns. Others (cf. Hollis and Smith, 1991; Guzzini, 1998) would buttress this reading of the second debate as being solely about epistemology and methodology, rather than ontology. As Vasquez argued, the behavioralists were really within the Realist paradigm and their efforts to revolutionize in a Kuhnian sense were limited to the methods of inquiry *within realism*. That is, the debate took place ‘within a single [realist] theoretical orientation’ and was ‘about how to conduct inquiry within that approach’ (Hollis and Smith, 1991, p. 31 quotes in Schmidt, 2002). The ‘behavioral revolution did not inaugurate a new way of looking at the world, a new paradigm, or a new set of normative problems’ (Holsti, 1998, p. 33) in the same way that a Kuhnian revolution is surmised to. Rather, the tools of inquiry within a given paradigm, albeit the dominant one for much of the latter half of the 20th century, had shifted. Where the first ‘debate’ had been largely about ontology, the second debate, inasmuch as it was a debate, was relegated to methods.

A second issue that arises is that it is not entirely clear *which* science emerged out of the debate between traditionalists and positivists. For instance, as Kahler (1997) and Schmidt (2002) have pointed out, the ‘Chicago School’ of the 1920s and 1930s believed that they were creating a science of politics. ‘The Chicago School’s idea of a science of international politics was one that viewed International Relations as merely a single subdivision of a more inclusive approach that focused on the role of power across a broad range of associations from the local to the global level’ (Schmidt, 2002, p. 14). A few decades later, in the 1950s and 1960s, the singular approach of assessing power at the local and global levels had been updated with a systems-view, one that took emphasis away from what goes on *within* states to trying to understand what occurs *between* states. The method here was based on quantitative study of state interaction (Buzan and Little, 2000). As Buzan and Little point out, what constituted a system in these studies was very much contested. The methods of inquiry employed were borrowed from science, but what the object of inquiry should be was where the real debate was taking place.

### 3 Borrowing and rerepresentation: anarchy through the ages

If the evolutionary paradigm-replacement view of IR’s development in the United States is problematic, at least with respect to the standard story of great debates, how else should we understand the structure of IR theory over time? Perhaps more importantly, granting that the ‘debate’ aspects of the intellectual history may be overstated, what hinges on this distinction being incorrect? A careful reading of the early American literature suggests that rather than concepts, arguments, and theories being selected in or out based on fitness with reality, what we see instead is a rerepresentation of some core ideas over time in the discourse, based on the social and political context that they help to explain. This is not to say that there has been nothing new added to IR in the last 50 years; indeed there has, and this will be discussed below. Rather, many of the core concepts we have used, and continue to use, are modified versions from the past. At the same time, novel ideas from other disciplines are brought in, often serving as the source of change for the older concept. This has significant implications for how we conceive of American IR development and where we should look in the future for new ideas.

This section will trace how a central concept in American IR, anarchy, was present in sophisticated form from the very beginning of American IR discourse and rerepresented by various paradigms and approaches over the decades and into the present through the use of novel ideas from other disciplines. Crucially, this process did not occur through evolutionary logic. At each representation of anarchy, schools of thought coalesced around that version of the concept. That is, newer conceptualizations did not replace older, but rather informed and entered into a dialogue with the other through time.

### 3.1 Early conceptions of anarchy

Anarchy is perhaps the fundamental proposition regarding the structure of the international system. As Helen Milner suggests, ‘In much current theorizing, anarchy has once again been declared to be the fundamental assumption about international politics’ (Milner, 1991, p. 67). It is traditional to consider anarchy as a relatively recent contribution to the IR literature, beginning with structural realists such as Kenneth Waltz and his seminal *Theory of International Politics* (1979). Waltz viewed anarchy, the absence of authority, as the organizing principle of the international system. This is contrasted with hierarchy that results not only in a very different structure of the system, but difference consequences for the actors (states), in the system (cf. Lake, 1996). While Waltz had previously discussed international anarchy in *Man, the State, and War* (1959), it gains explanatory power and purchase in *TIP*, effectively suggesting how states will respond to it, namely through imitation and balancing. While Waltz’ contribution with respect to anarchy is difficult to overstate, it would be a mistake to view the notion as the result of a progressive evolutionary process that grew out of classical realists replacing idealists and structural realists replacing classical realists. The anarchy discourse goes back a long way and was being actively cultivated by interwar idealists. As Schmidt points out, ‘The interwar scholars were keenly aware of the fact that their subject matter, which included an analysis of the causes of war and peace, directly dealt with issues arising from the existence of sovereign states in a condition of anarchy’ (Schmidt, 2002, p. 12).

James Bryce, for instance, author of one of the foundational texts of the field, *International Relations* (1922), and card-carrying idealist (Bryce had argued that World War I was a result of ideational influences such

as religion and nationality), noted that states interact with each other in an anarchic *state of nature*:

[A]lthough in civilized countries every individual man is now under law and not in a State of Nature towards his fellow men, every political community, whatever its form, be it republican or monoarchical, is in a State of Nature towards every other community; that is to say, an independent community stands quite outside law, each community owning non control but its own, recognizing no legal rights to other communities and owing to them no legal duties. An independent community is, in fact, in that very condition in which savage men were before they were gathered together into communities legally organized (1922, p. 3).

There are a number of intriguing aspects of Bryce's theory. First, written in 1922, Bryce is foreshadowing the key distinction that Waltz will make over 50 years later: the domestic realm is ordered hierarchically with a legitimate authority (and therefore does not constitute a state of nature), whereas the international realm is not. Secondly, Bryce's notion of a community outside the law is a description of anarchy that is shared by Waltz: the international system is not a law-bound realm. Thirdly, as Schmidt points out, digging deeper into Bryce's theory about the ramification of anarchy, one can find statements that describe a 'security dilemma' between states (1998, p. 160). Finally, Bryce's use of the State of Nature language invokes classical realist Hobbes, anticipating the analogy that Waltz would draw between the international system and Hobbes' political theory in *Leviathan*.

Bryce was not the only interwar theorist to proffer ideas about anarchy. G. Lowes Dickinson, author of *The European Anarchy* (1916) and *Causes of International War* (1920), is perhaps best known for coining the idea and phrase of 'League of Nations'. In his early work, Dickinson was interested in ideational factors such as morals and religion; a careful reading of his writings demonstrates an interest in comparative differences between Greek, Chinese, and Western civilizations and cultures (Schmidt, 1998, p. 160). Dickinson was also a firm believer in the anarchy of the international system, but also saw the opportunity for performative aspects of the system. Dickinson noted that it was important to delineate the conditions and cause that lead to war under anarchy, so that war could be avoided in the future. He wrote that

‘a comprehension of the causes is important only because it is a condition for the cure’ (1920, 90). To be sure, Dickinson was an idealist insofar as he believed in the performative ability of ideas and ideals with respect to war, but he was also ‘realistic’ to the core: ‘Whenever and wherever the anarchy of armed states exists, war does become inevitable’, he wrote in *The International Anarchy, 1904–1914* (192). Like Bryce, Dickinson recognized the dangers of a security dilemma where states viewed with suspicion the intentions of others, drawing them closer to war at each turn.

Investigating the political contexts that Dickinson and his contemporaries were theorizing under suggests that anarchy and balancing are theorized precisely in those moments when difficult political events, both at home and abroad, require explanation. World War I represented a failure of the European balance-of-power system. Anarchy combined with heavily armed states led to a security dilemma that posed a significant challenge to theorists and politicians alike: what is the best way to move forward? President Wilson, echoing Dickinson’s call for a collective security system, made the question explicit:

The question upon which the whole future peace and policy of the world depends is this: Is the present war a struggle for just and secure peace, or only for a new balance of power?. . . There must be, not a balance of power, but a community of power; not organized rivalries, but an organized common peace (quoted in Kissinger, 1994, p. 51).

Thus American conceptions of balance-of-power, borrowed from the European perspective, begin in a political context of war (Kissinger, 1994). Balance of power, for those writing in the interwar period, was largely a source of tragedy, not stability. While the European balance of power had created the Concert of Europe, capable of producing relative peace for close to a century (*ibid*), the present incarnation of balance of power had led to full-scale Europe-wide war. It is not surprising, viewed from the perspective of World War I, that IR theorists would be pessimistic regarding the balance of power’s ability to achieve stability.

The pessimism regarding the nature of anarchy would continue through much of the 20th century as scholars dealt with a seemingly unfortunate reality of international law and concerts, such as the League of Nations, unable to restrict violence in the system: ‘International anarchy has broken the backbone of. . . these highly desirable devices,

and the institutions of international law, of international order, are violated with impunity and scorn by many aggressive states' (Brown *et al.*, 1939, pp. vii–viii). The experience leading up to, and through, World War II would do little to ease fears of aggressive states taking advantage of a lack of international order. The German émigré realist theorists, from John H. Herz, Hans J. Morgenthau, Henry Kissinger, etc. borrowed from the German perspective a justified pessimism about the nature of man, balance of power, and anarchy that engenders it or is engendered *from* it (cf. Rosenthal, 1991; Hacked, 2007). Consider Reinhold Niebuhr's views on the origins of international anarchy. 'The ultimate sources of social conflict and injustice are to be found in the ignorance and selfishness of men' (1932, p. 23). 'The will-to-power of competing national groups is the cause of the international anarchy which the moral sense of mankind has thus far vainly striven to overcome' (1932, pp. 18–19). Thus what we see in the interwar period is an examination of the origins of anarchy. The so-called idealists foreshadowed the structural view; classical realists such as Niebuhr privileged an individual view – anarchy is engendered from the minds of individuals that compose the system.

What is crucial here is that in order to explain the post-war system, theorists needed a new 'political philosophy for postwar America' (Rosenthal, 1991, p. 1). This new philosophy for America, borrowed from older European political concepts such as the balance of power, the nature of man, and European experiences with great war, had significant import for American theorists' understanding the Asia-Pacific region's politics in the interwar period and beyond. Following World War I, President Wilson sought to build multilateral institutions, as a way of preventing deadly balance of power politics from forming, not only in Europe, but in the Asia-Pacific region as well. As Lake and Morgan argue, the aim was to 'replace balance-of-power politics with multilateralism' (1997, p. 252). The Washington Conference of 1921–22 sought to limit the navies of the United States and Japan (among other powers) and was aimed, in part, at deterring Japanese expansion (Ziemke, 1992). The United States' concern with a power race in Asia is evidenced by its own concessions on a 10-year 'naval-building holiday' that would prevent Japan from modernizing its fleet (Ziemke, 1992, p. 88). Thus, conceptions of anarchy as leading to deadly balance of power politics,



informed from the European experience, had a significant effect on views of Asia-Pacific politics as well.

### 3.2 Neorealism

Waltz (1979) would contribute to the anarchy conceptualization with a new perspective borrowed less from the European or Asian political experience and more from the academic disciplines of sociology, organizational theory, and microeconomics. Some years removed from the great world wars and entrenched in a new Cold War of balancing power, anarchy and balance of power are rerepresented not *necessarily* as vehicles to war, but potential vehicles for peace as well. Unlike Dickinson, for Waltz anarchy of armed states may very well result in wars while balancing equilibria are formed (and reformed), but a bipolar system can be very stable as well. The political context that Waltz was operating under was the Cold War, with two strong superpowers balancing each other quite effectively. It is perhaps not surprising that the political context would shape the way that anarchy and balance of power would be rerepresented with their roots stemming back to World War I. This crucial change from balancing as recipe for war, as the interwar theorists suggested, to balancing as potential for either peace or war, as Waltz would suggest, can be attributed to Waltz' borrowing from the functionalism in sociology, organizational theory, and anthropology.

As Nexon and Goddard (2005) have shown, it is Waltz' structural–functionalist perspective, borrowed from these disciplines, that makes it clear why a theory of the international system cannot also be a study of individual state foreign policy. 'Foreign policy, in structural-functionalist terms, is concrete action, or the real doings of real states – it is multifaceted, and irreducible to a single system. In formulating a systems theory of international politics, Waltz maintains that the international system is merely one source of "shaping and shoving" foreign policy; relevant domestic systems and subsystems also provide analytically discrete inputs into the actual policies of states' (24). This insight, which a structural theory that predicts balancing behavior cannot at the same time predict foreign policy decisions, reconceptualizes the role anarchy plays in the system. Rather than predicting specific foreign policy decisions, the structural–functionalist account provides an explanation for 'continuity in the system' (Waltz, 1979, p. 68), not change that comes from actual policies

implemented by states. Anarchy in this perspective simply provides a permissive condition for various behaviors, with an overall prediction that balancing equilibria will prevail. Further, and importantly, Waltz's borrowing from microeconomics suggests a harsh and restrictive permissive condition. If states are akin to firms in a domestic economy, as Waltz suggests, then they must compete to survive and only the strong will survive.

This changed view from balance of power resulting in a deadly political race in the interwar and World War II period to balance of power as stability during the Cold War is reflected in the US approach to the Asia-Pacific. Whereas the previous period was characterized by naval treaties and attempts to build multilateral institutions, the post-World War II period was marked by a strong push for bilateral institutions. Reflecting the view that stability could result from balanced power, 'The United States contained Communist aggression and maintained regional stability by situating itself at the hub of a set of bilateral alliances with Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines' (Lake and Morgan, 1997, p. 255).

### 3.3 *Liberal institutionalism*

The concept of anarchy is further rerepresented in Keohane's (1984) *After Hegemony*. While Waltz was relatively sanguine about the possibilities for cooperation, since anarchical systems are characterized by self-help among the units, Keohane reworks some of Dickinson's optimism for a concert of cooperative nations in his international regime framework. For Keohane, cooperation was possible if states could overcome the transaction costs and uncertainty that anarchical systems present. 'In world politics, international regimes help to facilitate the making of agreements by reducing barriers created by high transaction costs and uncertainty. But these very difficulties make it hard to create the regimes themselves in the first place'. Keohane's solution is inspired by economics. Olson (1965) had pointed out many years earlier that collective action problems arise when there is a group sharing a collective good and a temptation arises to 'free-ride' off the provision of others. The insight for Keohane here is critical: individually rational action by states can impede mutual cooperation. The Prisoner Dilemma logics inform this as well: each individual can gain from defection, but both lose when both defect. The key question for rational functionalism is how a

strategic environment can be constructed where there is little incentive to defect. Further, since the transaction costs of cooperating are high, as realists point out, how can that strategic environment lower the costs of cooperating with each other?

Incorporating Coase's (1960) economic theorem of social action, Keohane notes that in cooperative agreements there are three conditions that need to be satisfied: (i) a legal framework establishing liability for actions, (ii) perfect information, and (iii) zero transaction costs. The problem with the international system is that these three conditions are not met by the system naturally. That is, anarchy means the absence of a unitary government to help provide a legal framework, provide information, etc. Since these conditions cannot be met by the system, in order to have sustained cooperation there needs to be a structure in place that allows for the Coasian conditions to be present. Institutions, Keohane argues, help to meet these conditions. First, institutions, while they cannot provide a strict legal framework, help to form stable expectations about the patterns of behavior of other members. As such, institutions raise the anticipated costs of violating agreements, creating a disincentive to defect. Secondly, while institutions cannot provide *perfect* information, they can greatly increase the information available to members, providing insight into who is defecting and who is not. The presence of information helps to further the disincentive to defect. Finally, while there cannot be *zero* transaction costs in the international system, violation of institutional rules can be made to be quite costly. Further, by linking issues together, 'economies of scale' are created: states can deal with a variety of issues at one time, rather than having to negotiate with each other on each separate issue area.

The result of Keohane's importing of economic ideas to IR theory is that he has provided a realistic and theoretically sound mechanism for arriving at the conclusion Dickinson had aspired to some decades earlier. Just as Waltz borrowed a structural–functionalist paradigm from Parsons, Weber, etc., to rerepresent the construct of anarchy and what it may mean for the international system, so too did Keohane borrow economic concepts from Olson and Coase to develop a sophisticated theory of cooperation among states. From a structural perspective, this change in views on anarchy would, again, have significant effects in the Asia-Pacific region. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of multilateral institutions spanning both security and economic issues were

functional and significantly affecting outcome. While the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) lacked the embedded legal frameworks of their Western institutional counterparts (Kahler, 2000), they nevertheless displayed the security interdependence and cooperation that liberal institutionalism predicted would occur (Khong, 1997).

### 3.4 Constructivism

Anarchy is further rerepresented with an incorporation of philosophical and sociological concepts in Wendt's *Social Theory of International Relations* (1999). Wendt contributes to structural IR theory by noting that a pure material structure, in the way that Waltz had conceived of it, is not the only way to think about the international system. Rather, while the international system is viewed as anarchical, the structure that defines it can be viewed largely in cultural rather than material terms. The actual culture of the system can take at least three different forms: Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian. What defines the culture of the system is how states identify themselves and others, either as enemies, rivals, or friends. Further, change in culture can occur where the system moves from a Hobbesian to Kantian one through collective identity formation. Thus, for Wendt, 'anarchy is what states make of it' (1992, 1999).

One of the key insights here is that while material (i.e. capabilities) still matters in the international system, how it matters is ultimately mediated by ideas. The interests and identities of states are constructed by the distribution of ideas within the system. *How* material structure/capabilities matter is mediated by interests and identities. Whereas Waltz had argued that anarchy leads to inevitable self-help and self-help is exercised through balancing behavior, Wendt argues that the notion of power politics and self-help is an idea held by actors and reproduced through a particular process: 'I argue that self-help and power politics do not follow either logically or causally from anarchy and that if today we find ourselves in a self-help world, this is due to process, not structure. 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' (1992, p. 394). Put

simply, Wendt points out that in order to move downstream from structure to action, you need to add something else to Waltz's structural framework: 'the intersubjectively constituted structure of identities and interests' (1992, p. 401). Identities are the relatively stable, role-specific understandings about the self and other, existing in a socially constructed world and serve as the 'basis of interests' (1992, p. 398).

What Wendt makes quite clear in *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999) is that these ideas that constitute identities and interests are not all that is there. That is, the social world, and in particular the international system within that social world, is not constituted by ideas 'all the way down' (ch. 3). This is an implicit reference to the well-known anecdote of 'turtles all the way down'. But rather, ideas go partly down and then hit, at base, some underlying material reality that Wendt calls 'rump materialism' (1999, p. 96). While this is a philosophical point, it is a crucial one for not only Wendt but anyone who invokes ideas in their explanations of social reality. The key problem is this: how far down do ideas go? If there is no material base upon which ideas land, then it is indeed 'turtles all the way down' and ideas are all that we have. Everything in the social world, as it were, is an idea in our heads (the mind is completely social). This is true idealism, not in the sense of optimistic thinking about the future, but in the sense that the world is *only* constituted by ideas. On the other end of the spectrum is the position that either ideas do not matter at all or matter so little that they cannot be used to explain political outcomes (a strong materialist position). Wendt's position is implicitly grounded in a Cartesian dualism where the mind ('ideas') and matter ('rump materialism') are not only distinct but irreducible substances (2005, p. 5). This position is similar to Searle's (1995) contention that the social world is composed of 'brute facts' (i.e. a material level) and 'social facts' (i.e. an ideational level). The move to philosophical dualism for Wendt allows him to put forth a theory that is at once positivist and interpretivist. The notion that ideas cannot be reduced to material is interpretivist, yet the theory proceeds in a positivist fashion, arguing that we can gain knowledge of the world through the scientific method (*ibid*). In short, the theory is positivist in epistemology and interpretivist in ontology.

Wendt's representation of anarchy follows the pattern identified above. The anarchy concept is rerepresented in a new way, informed by the insights of other disciplines. In Wendt's case, Cartesian dualism of

material/ideational and sociological/philosophical conceptions of identity, roles, and culture combine to transform anarchy away from a condition that makes ‘war inevitable’, as Dickinson argued decades earlier; away from anarchy as a condition leading to purely self-help logics; and, away from an economic system of transaction costs and uncertainty, to a dynamic condition where states make of it what they will. But Wendt does not discard Dickinson’s conceptualization entirely. Both Wendt and Dickinson provide for the ability for anarchy to result in peace, but through different mechanisms. For Dickinson, the performative aspect of international anarchy comes from institutions: it was the League of Nations that could ‘control’ anarchy and act as a vehicle for peace. For Wendt, the performative aspect of anarchy comes from the units themselves. War can be curbed through a particular distribution of ideas through the system, most notably Kantian cultures of friendship.

Empirically, *Khong (1997)* argues that it is precisely the move from the enmity to amity, engendered through identity construction based on interaction with each other that explains the depth and stability of multi-lateral institutions such as ASEAN in the Asia-Pacific region. As *Khong* argues, ‘The first decade of ASEAN’s existence saw the slow but gradual growth of the ASEAN spirit. This identification with one another facilitated security cooperation, and successful cooperation in turn enhanced the feeling of solidarity. In the second decade, ASEAN solidarity was tested by differing perceptions (within ASEAN) of the Vietnamese threat, but ASEAN emerged intact and strengthened’ (338). Under this view, the material level had less of an effect on security than did the commonly defined interests of each state, the manner in which each state identified with each other, and the ‘feeling’ or ‘spirit’ of cooperation, solidarity, and security that ASEAN engendered over time.

Yet, one of the remaining tensions in Wendt’s conceptualization of anarchy is the relationship between the material and the ideational. The philosophical dualism of mind (‘ideas’) and matter (‘rump materialism’) as distinct and irreducible substances works masterfully in *Social Theory* as it provides a way to incorporate both interpretivist and positivist epistemologies in a singular theory. As Wendt points out in his auto-critique (2005), few scientists and philosophers take seriously the notion of dualism. The problem with physicists not taking seriously the Cartesian dualism perspective is that physics provides a type of ‘reality constraint’ on the work of social scientists; if the contours of a theory does not hold

up to scrutiny in physics (such as the existence of fairies or ghosts, to use Wendt's examples), then we should not be comfortable with the theory.

But what if the assumption that the relationship between mind and body is one relying on classical physics is wrong? What if there was something else besides classical physics that helped us make sense of the social world? Wendt's auto-critique raises precisely this point and suggests an alternative way of thinking about the dualist problematique: quantum theory. That is, if quantum theory is correct (and Wendt suggests that this point that it is a 'bet' that it will), then the mind-body split is misleading because all matter has 'an intrinsically subjective aspect at the sub-atomic level' (Wendt, 2005, p. 17). Consciousness, consequently, then 'neither reduces to matter nor emerges from it, but is present in matter all along' (ibid). This ontology is quite different from the idea/material or mind/body ontology *Social Theory* accepted and implies something of a 'panpsychist' ontology where mind and body are both all about consciousness. Ideas and materials are, in the quantum approach, 'two aspects of one underlying reality' (53). The upshot of bringing quantum theory to bear on Wendt's dualist structural account of international politics is that quantum 'quantum in effect is consciousness, which in some form goes all the way down in matter' (17). If quantum is correct, then not only is the structure of the international system not material (Waltz, 1979) nor dualist (Wendt, 1999), but it may be in the heads of individuals (Wendt, 2010). In the end, resolving this tension between ideas and material, the dualist position, as it relates to anarchy in the international system will likely come from precisely the same mechanism that we have witnessed in other rerepresentations of the anarchy principle. Looking to quantum physics for a more robust understanding of the relationship between mind and matter will help to solve a long-standing IR puzzle and bring yet another scientific perspective to the table.

Thus, the overall trajectory of this rerepresentation of anarchy over time can be summarized by a number of characteristics. First, anarchy itself loses causal power over time. Put another way, anarchy begins as a highly restrictive condition. For Dickinson, it was a brute cause of violence, pushing states toward violent conflict. For Waltz, it pushed states toward certain behaviors of self-help and equilibria derived from balancing. For Keohane, anarchy presented certain challenges for states to overcome, but behaviors were not necessarily determined by anarchy's restrictive nature. For Wendt's *Social Theory* behavior is not only *not*

**Table 1** Rerepresentation of anarchy and the role of individuals in IR theory

<i>Anarchy</i>	<b>More restrictive</b>	<i>Structural realism</i> Waltz (1979) <i>Liberal institutionalism</i> Keohane (1984) <i>Constructivism</i> Wendt (1999)	<i>Classical realism</i> Niebuhr (1932) <i>Quantum theory</i> Wendt (2010)
	<b>Less restrictive</b>	<b>Structure</b> <i>Agent–structure distinction</i>	<b>Individuals</b>

determined, but also it is precisely the other way around that the system works: states shape anarchy rather than anarchy shaping states. Finally, if anarchy is in the heads of individuals, then in an important sense it is individuals shaping the behavior of anarchy, not the other way around.

Secondly, and on the point of individuals, the modern state of American IR theory suggests a rerepresentation of the role of individuals over time. Individuals today are as important as they were for classical realists such as Niebuhr, but for entirely different reasons. Whereas for Niebuhr, individuals crafted anarchy through their human nature, for Wendt individuals craft anarchy through the existence of the international system in their own minds. For Niebuhr, this individualized anarchy was highly restrictive, pushing individuals to act in certain ways. For Wendt, individualized anarchy is performative in nature: each individual represents not only one point of the system but indeed has all of the necessary information to *recreate* or perhaps rerepresent the system in his or her own mind.

These two dimensions of anarchy over time, the restrictiveness of anarchy and the role of individuals, can be summarized in Table 1.

Modifying Wendt's 'map of structural theorizing' (1999, p. 22) slightly, we can place the distinction between structure and individuals on one axis and what I call the restrictiveness of anarchy on the other. Doing so makes clear that neither the difference anarchy makes nor the role of individuals followed an evolutionary trajectory, but rather, were rerepresented over time.

## 4 Conclusion: hierarchy vs. heterarchy in the Asia-Pacific region

By way of conclusion, it is worth addressing how heterarchical theory is being applied to the politics of Asia-Pacific. Network theory and the



‘relational turn’ in IR theory has problematized the idea that international structure can be understood in simple hierarchical or balancing terms and instead proffers a new set of ontologies collected under the label of relationalism (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Abbott, 1995; Emirbayer, 1997; Jackson and Nexon, 1999; Goddard, 2009; Hafner-Burton *et al.*, 2009; Lake and Wong, 2009; Nexon, 2009a,b; Sikkink, 2009). As Nexon argues, ‘Instead of approaching international politics through pre-given levels of analysis, therefore, we should think about international structures as ‘network[s] of networks’ co-constituted by the network-structures of the actors that populate it, and also by the structure of social ties across and between them’ (2009a,b, p. 26). The implication here is that hierarchical or balanced systems are *possible* descriptions of international political structure, though they may not be the only valid descriptions. Once we adopt the idea that systems may be designed heterarchically, an idea developed from the biological sciences and network theory, new insights into international change may emerge and new views about the actors involved in that change may develop (Holmes, 2011).

Consider change in the Asia-Pacific region in the 20th century. As mentioned above, the region’s power and alliance structures have changed markedly after World War II. As Crone argues, the ‘distribution of political and economic capabilities has shifted from a pattern that reflected an American hegemonic presence toward a more complex balance of power’ (1993, p. 501). The maintenance of this complex security order is sustained not just through hierarchy defined by material capabilities, but rather multiple and sometimes overlapping structural elements: hegemony, alliances, concert, institutions, multilateralism, bilateralism, self-help, and so forth – all characterize aspects of the current order (Alagappa, 2003, p. xi). Further, security is also determined not just by material capabilities of states, but at least three key pillars: consolidation of Asian countries as modern nation-states; development of a normative structure privileging cooperation; and the rapid growth of Asian economics and rule-governed interactions between actors (Alagappa, 2003, p. xii). Finally, authority and legitimacy in the region are developed not just through power dynamics but *socially* through the interaction between actors, specifically ruler and ruled. This is only made possible through a contingent and dynamic process of norm creation and the sharing of common values (Alagappa, 1995, pp. 29–30).

Viewed in this context, the Asia-Pacific region is an example of an international political structure that is difficult to explain through only hierarchical design. Indeed, the structure of power and authority in the region is contingent on the relations and interactions between actors at a variety of levels: nation-states, institutions, individuals, and so forth. Understanding how this structure emerges and is maintained cannot be accomplished by looking for where the hierarchies are and how they operate since, as illustrated in this article, the very relations and processes that the structure emerges from are not necessarily characterized by a hierarchical arrangement. Rather, understanding sources of change in the region requires investigating the complex emergence of an intricate hierarchical arrangement where horizontal power and authority positions exert as much influence as hierarchical arrangements. Network theory and relational theorizing therefore represent perhaps the next phase of borrowing and rerepresentation in IR theory as we attempt to uncover the processes of emergence in complex non-hierarchical structures.

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