National Interests in International Society

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Chapter One

Defining State Interests

How do states know what they want? One might think that this would be a central question for international relations scholars. After all, our major paradigms are all framed in terms of power and interest. The sources of state interests should matter to us. In fact, they have not—or not very much. Aspirations to develop a generalizable theory of international politics modeled on theories in the natural sciences and economics have led most international relations scholars in the United States since the 1960s to assume rather than problematize state interests. Interests across the states system had to be treated as both stable and roughly identical if systemic-level theory of this kind was to proceed. Thus, neorealist and neoliberal scholars currently dominating the field make parsimonious assumptions about what all states want. States are assumed to want some combination of power, security, and wealth. With these few assumptions, these scholars seek to explain, as Kenneth Waltz put it, “a small number of big and important things.”

These are good assumptions. States do want power, security, and wealth. But I take these scholars’ modesty seriously. A large number of “big and important things” remain to be explained in international politics. Among them are things that bear directly on the explanatory power of these assumptions. It is all fine and well to assume that states want power, security, and wealth, but what kind of power? Power for what ends? What kind of security? What does security mean? How do you en-

sure or obtain it? Similarly, what kind of wealth? Wealth for whom? How do you obtain it? Neorealists and neoliberalists have no systemic answers for these questions. If external threats and power constraints are not deterministic, such questions can be dealt with only on a case-by-case basis by country specialists or foreign policy analysts. International-level theory is helpless and mute.

This book addresses that silence. In it I develop a systemic approach to understanding state interests and state behavior by investigating an international structure, not of power, but of meaning and social value. We cannot understand what states want without understanding the international social structure of which they are a part. States are embedded in dense networks of transnational and international social relations that shape their perceptions of the world and their role in that world. States are socialized to want certain things by the international society in which they and the people in them live.

Ultimately, power and wealth are means, not ends. States must decide what to do with them. States may not always know what they want or how to use their resources. Foreign policy debates after the Cold War make this clear. Interests are not just "out there" waiting to be discovered; they are constructed through social interaction. States want to avoid invasion, extinction, and economic collapse, but for most states most of the time these negative interests do not narrow the set of possible wants very much. There remains a wide range of goals and values states could espouse in a wide variety of policy areas. Domestic politics can play a large, sometimes determining, role in defining national goals and interests, but as the cases here make clear, domestic politics and local conditions cannot explain many of the interests articulated and policy choices made.

State interests are defined in the context of internationally held norms and understandings about what is good and appropriate. That normative context influences the behavior of decisionmakers and of mass publics who may choose and constrain those decisionmakers. The normative context also changes over time, and as internationally held norms and values change, they create coordinated shifts in state interests and behavior across the system. It is these patterns of coordinated, system-wide

redefinition of interests that look odd from conventional perspectives and that this book addresses. The cases presented here demonstrate that states' redefinitions of interest are often not the result of external threats or demands by domestic groups. Rather, they are shaped by internationally shared norms and values that structure and give meaning to international political life.

Like much of social life, international social life is highly organized. Social relationships in international life may be informal, but many, especially those that most directly affect states, are structured and channeled through bureaucracies. Organization theorists have long recognized the role of norms in shaping organizational behavior inside and among bureaucracies. Some, especially those trained in economics, have emphasized the role of norms as tools of utility-maximizing firms in coordinating behavior and facilitating Pareto-optimal outcomes. It is this strain of organization theory that neorealist and neoliberal scholars have marshaled to elaborate their arguments. There are, however, other ways of thinking about norms and their influence on organized social life. Sociologists studying organizations have emphasized their role in institutionalizing and propagating cultural norms—norms that define identities, interests, and social realities for the people who inhabit those organizations.

This book draws on these sociological insights to demonstrate the influence of norms on state behavior. The case studies examine the activity of three international organizations (IOs), two governmental and one nongovernmental, that are active in three different issue areas. Each case shows ways in which IOs socialize states to accept new political goals and new values that have lasting impacts on the conduct of war, the workings of the international political economy, and the structure of states themselves.

Where most recent theorizing in political science has turned to economics for insights, my approach draws on sociology and sociological organization theory, particularly the "institutionalist" strain of analysis in that field. Methodologically, it is most closely related to what is coming to be called "constructivism" in political science in that it focuses on the socially constructed nature of international politics. Rather than taking ac-

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tors and interests as given, constructivist approaches problematize them, treating them as the objects of analysis. My three case studies demonstrate the utility of this sociological approach for understanding international politics across different substantive arenas.

My first case applies the approach to changes in states themselves. States are socially constructed entities. As recent debates over medieval politics and European integration make clear, there is nothing inevitable or immutable about the state-as-actor that our theories have traditionally taken for granted. States are continually evolving. They take on new tasks and create new bureaucracies to carry out those tasks. Since, in an important sense, states are what they do, these changes in state function at some level change the nature of the state itself. Chapter 2 examines one relatively recent instance of this, the creation of new science bureaucracies. Since this took place in virtually all states at roughly the same time, regardless of their science capabilities, the nature of the interest is not well explained by conventional approaches. I contend that states were taught that a science bureaucracy was a necessary component of "the modern state" by an international organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

A second case examines the conduct of war. We in political science tend to think of war as a Hobbesian state of nature, where anything goes because survival is at stake. In fact, war is a highly regulated social institution whose rules have changed over time. Chapter 3 investigates one of those rule changes—the adoption of the first Geneva Convention in 1864—and explores the reasons states found these rules to be "in their interest." I demonstrate that this "interest" was created and taught to decisionmakers in states by a transnational, nongovernmental group of individuals who came to be known as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The third case applies the approach to issues of international political economy and investigates how notions of development have changed. Development used to be a simple function of rising GNP or GNP per capita. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, notions of development expanded to incorporate distributional concerns. The alleviation of poverty and the meeting of basic human needs became an essential part of all development policy and planning for both donor states and developing states. Chapter 4 examines how this process occurred and asks, again, how states came to accept such a change as being "in their interest." I argue that the World Bank under the leadership of Robert McNamara was instrumental in redefining development.

The cases do not and, indeed, cannot "prove" that this approach is "right." Proof of this kind is impossible in social inquiry. They can, however, demonstrate its utility. They point to a pattern of consistent failure of conventional approaches in explaining certain phenomena and offer an alternative explanation consistent with the evidence. The conclusion to this book discusses the implications of this kind of analysis for the way we do research. The approach has weaknesses; it also has important strengths. It complements rather than replaces existing forms of analysis. It explains what are otherwise anomalies in international politics, and it also focuses our attention on some philosophic issues basic to our discipline, questions about the ends of political life and the nature of political community. Discussion of these issues has been the core of our discipline for more than two millennia. International politics has largely avoided engaging political philosophy for the better part of this century. It is time to reopen that discussion.

WHERE DO PREFERENCES COME FROM?

The claim of this book—that states are socialized to accept new norms, values, and perceptions of interest by international organizations—has important implications for the way we think about the international political world and the way we do research. It reverses traditional causal arrows. We have usually taken states as the starting point for analysis and examined the ways in which they create and interact with the various bits of furniture in the international system—international organizations, treaties, legal structures, multinational corporations, other states. This analysis looks at the way the international system, here in the form of IOs, changes and reconstitutes states. We are used to speaking a language of constraint. The international system is said to be important because it constrains states from taking actions they would otherwise take. The argument here is different. The international system can change what states want. It is constitutive and genera-
The claims made here about the importance of norms and values also shift attention from the largely material conceptions of international politics espoused by neorealists and neoliberals to a more social and ideational conception. Material facts acquire meaning only through human cognition and social interaction. My defensive measure is your security threat; my assault on free trade is your attempt to protect jobs at home. We have long understood that different social meanings assigned to the same set of facts can create different behaviors and even lead to conflict. We have paid much less attention to ways in which shared understandings of the material world create similar behaviors, and we have not thought much about what the implications of such shared understandings and similar behavior might be. Material facts do not speak for themselves, and attempts to make them do so have limited utility.

In this chapter I outline a social structural approach to international politics and describe how its utility vis-à-vis conventional approaches might be demonstrated empirically. The empirical demonstration derives from the different ways in which preferences are treated. Conventional theories treat preferences as inherent qualities of actors. Their proponents would expect different actors with different preferences to behave differently. Similar action by dissimilar actors in the absence of constraint is anomalous under these theories. Such behavior is to be expected, however, within a social structural framework. International norms of behavior and shared values may make similar behavioral claims on dissimilar actors.

The next section contrasts conventional treatments of preferences with those presented in this book and elaborates a basis for empirical investigation. The view of the international system offered here, however, also has important implications both for the macrotheoretic orientations and for the microfoundational understandings of behavior that researchers hold. Specifically, the case studies I offer suggest that our discipline, which has been dominated by agent-oriented approaches, might benefit from attention to the structure side of the agent-structure debate. These studies also call into question the discipline’s fascination with means-ends rationality as the sole mode of action and suggest that other logics of action deserve attention. I examine both of these issues—macrotheory and microfoundations—in subsequent sections of the chapter and conclude with a brief discussion of research design issues and the theoretical significance of this project.

5. The most prominent example of concern with this problem is the “security dilemma” created by the material indistinguishability of most offensive and defensive military preparations. The most prominent work on perception in the field is Robert Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

6. There is no a priori reason to think that shared understandings are ethically “good” or will lead to peaceful behavior. Intersubjective agreement on the desirability of a scarce commodity will cause conflict. Shared understandings enable imperialists to exploit and ethnic cleansers to kill.

Preferences in Empirical Research

Preferences as Inherent in States

Most theoretical approaches in international relations share one or both of two assumptions in their treatment of preferences. First, they may assume that preferences are unproblematic; that is, that states and other actors know what they want and that those wants are readily discernable to researchers. Second, they directly or indirectly locate the source of state preferences inside the state. Comparativists and many foreign policy analysts tend to make the second of these assumptions but not the first. They often allow policy preferences as problematic by specifying state decision-making about policy preferences as the dependent variable in their research design and then go on to provide detailed accounts of the internal demand-making and politicking by social groups and state officials that go into the formulation of those preferences.

However, these scholars make the second assumption—that preferences come from inside the state—implicitly by choosing single-country research designs. At one level, this kind of design simply creates problems of emphasis. By focusing research on actions in a single state, they reduce the likelihood of detecting international systemic or international societal influences. But the problem in single country research designs is more fundamental. Specifically, such research designs run afoul of Galton’s problem: that findings based on the analysis of causal relationships within states (or other units of analysis) may be distorted by inter-state (or inter-unit) communication and diffusion. Single country designs, focused on unraveling causal relationships within a country, implicitly assume that individual countries constitute inde-
dependent observations. To the extent that diffusion processes operate and that countries learn from the international environment, findings based only on the analysis of causal relationships within countries may be unreliable. 7

Theoretical approaches used by international relations scholars outside the area of foreign policy analysis tend to make both of these assumptions about preferences and make them explicitly. They assume that preferences are unproblematic, well known to both states and researchers, and that they are inherent properties of states. Scholars working in rational choice and strategic interaction frameworks are clearest about this, but less formalized research projects are similarly structured. 8

They assume preferences can be readily deduced from objective conditions and material characteristics of a state. Changes in policy preferences or the appearance of new policy preferences are understood as responses to changes in these conditions and characteristics. To the extent that this response mechanism is elaborated and researchers open up the "black box" of policymaking, they look inside the state for changed preferences and tie the changes to demands by domestic actors. Some change in material conditions reconfigures the interests of actors inside the state so that they are prompted to demand a shift in state policy. In this way, the proximate source of state interests is located inside the state rather than outside. This basic logic applies even when the conditions in question are external to the state; for example, when they concern state security and the power relations among states. The shift in power distributions may lie outside the state, but the preference for security is inherent in the state, and the way that preference is translated into policies and behavior is either unproblematic and consistent across states or depends on politics and decisionmaking within the state independent of transnational influences. 9

The assumption that these preferences are unproblematic and readily deducible from the objective characteristics and conditions of states is, at least in part, a consequence of the aspirations of scholars to construct a generalizable and deductively-derived theory of international politics on the model of economics or the natural sciences. Simply assuming or imputing preferences as essential characteristics of the actors is a necessary part of the foundation on which such theories must rest. Without specifying a priori and exogenously both actors and their preferences, these theories cannot explain and predict international interactions.

The two major international relations paradigms, neorealism and neoliberalism, both rest on foundations of this type. Both begin by specifying three things: the relevant actors, the capabilities of those actors, and their preferences. Both then go on to explain international interactions as the result of relevant actors using their capabilities to pursue pre-specified preferences. 10 Neorealism is by far the clearest and most self-conscious example. Waltz explicitly specifies states as relevant actors, measures capabilities in terms of power, and specifies preferences in terms of maximizing capabilities. 11 Neoliberalism in the form most recently articulated by Robert Keohane is structurally similar. The debate between these schools is primarily over the content of preferences assigned—for example, the degree to which states pursue economic versus military power or absolute gains versus relative gains, and the nature of the anarchy they inhabit. States-as-actors and state preferences are still assumed, not problematized. 12

9. Krasner's attempt to elaborate a statist approach to international politics is a direct response to these implications of systemic, specifically neorealist, theory. The neorealist ontology of states with given interests is useful to researchers only if there are, in fact, stable, internally coherent preferences within states across time. Defending the National Interest is an attempt to demonstrate the empirical validity of that assumption. Stephen D. Krasner, Defending the National Interest (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). My Chapter 2 gives an extended discussion of this internal preference formation in an empirical setting.
10. To the extent that Gilpin and Krasner's well-known summaries of theories in the field are correct, other less state-centric strains of liberalism as well as Marxism fit this form: the dynamic of these theories is one of pre-specified actors pursuing pre-specified preferences. In fact, however, Gilpin and Krasner's characterizations do significant violence to Marx's theories, and radical scholarship has moved in more structural directions since the mid-1970s, as evidenced by the work of Immanuel Wallerstein and Robert Cox. Liberalism, too, is a more complex set of notions than these summaries suggest, and some forms of liberalism may be complementary to the kinds of analysis outlined here, as discussed below. See Robert Gilpin, U.S. Power and the Multinational Corporation: The Political Economy of Direct Foreign Investment (New York: Basic Books, 1975), chap. 1; Krasner, Defending the National Interest, chap. 1.
12. I am simplifying an extended debate here. For good summaries and insightful analyses, see David Baldwin, ed., Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), and Robert Powell, "Anarchy in International Relations Theory: the Neorealist-Neoliberal Debate," International Organisation 48 (1994): 313–44. My concern in this book is with what Powell would call preferences over outcomes (rather than preferences over actions), which he agrees are not addressed by these theories. This debate comes closest to addressing some of the issues raised here when it deals with the nature of anarchy. As Milner discusses, one issue that separates neorealists from at
The assumptions that state preferences derive from internal sources and that preferences are somehow inherent in actors are important to both the single country researchers and to neorealists and neoliberals. For the comparativists and foreign policy analysts, state preferences must be the result of internal politicking in order to justify their focus on single country case studies. To the extent that the sources of state preferences lie outside the state and are not rooted in internal demands and internal conditions, their research designs are faulty and their research agenda is misdirected.

Neorealists and neoliberals maintain that preferences must be derivable from imputed functional needs dictated by state conditions if these theories are to explain and predict in a Lakatosian and cumulative manner. The notions that states can be supplied with new preferences externally and that those preferences may be unrelated to state conditions or functional need (as in the cases below) pose problems for these theorists. Some analysts might argue that one could accommodate externally-supplied preferences simply by taking new preferences, incorporating them into the state’s utility function, and proceeding with analysis as usual. To do so, however, would be “ad hoc” of the first order. If preferences and actors cannot be specified exogenously before analysis begins, then all claims to explain and predict in a parsimonious fashion disappear into post hoc rationalization. These researchers would then be reduced to looking at outcomes and constructing the utility functions or specifying the preferences that produce them.

At least some neoliberals is the degree and form of “governance” that obtains even under anarchy. Most neoliberals conceive of this governance in a way that is sociologically very thin, containing little social content. Governance is understood to mean institutions, usually formal organizations, that create “rules of the game.” The notion that institutions might also reconfigure preferences and actors is not often explored by neoliberals, but works by Wayne Sandholtz on the European Union and Andrew Moravcsik on liberal theory suggest that by pushing this avenue of inquiry bridges could be built between some forms of neoliberalism and the kind of sociological approach outlined here. See Helen Milner, “The Assumption of Anarchy in International Relations Theory: A Critique,” in Baldwin, Neorealism and Neoliberalism, 143-69; Wayne Sandholtz, “Membership Matters: The European Community and State Preferences,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., September 1993; Andrew Moravcsik, “Liberalism and International Relations Theory,” Center for International Affairs, Working Paper 92-6, Harvard University, revised April 1993. The possibility of building bridges between liberalism and constructivism has been noted earlier by Alexander Wendt in “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” International Organization 46 (1992): 391-425. I expand on these connections and their limitations in the concluding chapter of this book.

Preferences Supplied Externally: Learning versus Teaching

Much of international relations theory rests on the assumption that states know what they want. Preferences are treated as inherent in states; they come from within the state as a result of material conditions and functional needs. The changes detailed in this study suggest, however, that preferences may not be inherent in states and may not be wedded to material conditions. Instead, state preferences are malleable. States may not always know what they want and are receptive to teaching about what are appropriate and useful actions to take. How would we think about such a process theoretically?

Adherents to an internal demand-driven view of state preference formation might argue that the “learning” of preferences documented here can be explained within the more conventional learning frameworks used in foreign policy analysis. The international system is, after all, an environment full of uncertainty, and states, like most actors, suffer from bounded rationality. Boundedly rational actors operating in environments of uncertainty frequently look for solutions to their problems in the solutions tried by other, apparently successful actors. Imitation, in a world of uncertainty, is often a perfectly rational strategy to adopt. Imitative learning processes of this type have been documented by a number of scholars. Hugh Heclo’s study of the creation of social welfare bureaucracies in the United Kingdom and Sweden, for example, describes the way state officials wrestling with social welfare problems deliberately reviewed the policies and bureaucracies of other states, particularly Germany, in crafting solutions of their own.13 John Ikenberry documents emulation of British and Japanese privatization policies by officials in other governments attempting to cope with fiscal crises in the late 1970s.14

These processes differ from the phenomena I document in this study. In the cases just cited, state officials change policies because they are under pressure to solve some already-identified problem. In Heclo’s account, there are domestic groups making strong demands for the creation or modification of social welfare programs. In Ikenberry’s account, officials are responding to pressing fiscal and budgetary crises.

The problem for state administrators is how to respond to these demands. The impetus for action comes from within the state, even if the solution does not. By contrast, in the cases I investigate, state officials were not looking for a solution to a problem. Both the “problem” and the solution were supplied to states by outside actors. Prior to the actions of UNICEF, most states, especially less developed countries (LDCs), had no notion that they needed or wanted a state science bureaucracy. Similarly, European heads of state were not particularly concerned about treatment of the war wounded until Henry Dunant and the International Committee of the Red Cross made it an issue. Global poverty alleviation, particularly, European heads of state pressing responsibility of states, particularly of developed states, until the World Bank under Robert McNamara made it a necessary part of development.

The difference between the processes Heclo and Ikenberry describe and those investigated in this book can be characterized as the difference between teaching and learning. In the first case, states learn from one another (or, potentially, from non-state actors such as international organizations), but the impetus for the learning process lies inside the states. What is causal in this process lies at the state or sub-state level. There are no active teachers in this process. To the extent states are taught, they are self-taught. In the cases presented in this study, however, there are active teachers with well defined lesson plans for their pupils. Other actors are setting agendas, defining tasks, and shaping interests of states. In the science case, international organizations and the experts they used taught states that they wanted or needed a science bureaucracy. In the Red Cross case, the ICRC taught states to take responsibility for the welfare and protection of suffering soldiers, even enemy soldiers, in wartime. In the development case, the World Bank taught states a new image of “the developed state” and new strategies to achieve that status. What is causal in all three processes lies outside states. Both the definition of the “problem” and strategies for solving it came from international organizations and the individuals who created and ran them.

Receptivity to the teaching of preferences implies a more social character for states than is generally acknowledged in international relations theory. It implies that the international environment is more than a “billiard table” constraining state action. It implies that states are embedded in a social structure and are “socialized” to a degree not allowed for by the more conventional, self-contained conceptions of the state. The role of “teacher” for international organizations similarly implies a more active and causal character than most theories currently allow. Most international relations theories are strongly state-centric. International organizations may mediate state interaction by providing rules of the game, supplying information, monitoring behavior, or creating transparency; ultimately, however, they are understood to be creations of states and servants of state interests. According them more autonomous and causal status, particularly as shapers of actors or interests, would violate the fundamental structure of neorealist and neoliberal theories. It would embed states in a more diverse context of causal factors and push beyond “the limits of realism.” Pushing beyond the limits of these theories is precisely what this book intends.

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15. Foreign policy analysts have also examined other types of learning, for example, the lessons states learn from past experiences and the causes and effects of certain types of policy actions (“the lessons of Munich”) and what they learn about the nature of other states or leaders in the system. Arguments about causes and effects in these types of learning tend to be state-specific, however, rather than system-wide; they might aim to explain U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union at a given time, for example, but do not claim to explain coordinated system-wide changes in policy. For that reason, they are not obviously applicable to the issues under investigation here. For examples and discussion, see George W. Breslauer and Philip E. Tietlock, eds., Learning in U.S. and Soviet Foreign Policy (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991) and Jack S. Levy, “Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield,” International Organization 48 (1994): 279–312.

16. Ikenberry also discusses the role of “external inducements” offered by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and various development banks in states’ decisions to adopt privatization policies. However, these IOs do not play the kind of teaching role in his analysis that they do in my cases. They do not create or define the problem states are trying to solve; they do not create normative definitions and new interests in an analogous way. Rather, in Ikenberry’s analysis, interests are essentially given and IOs are additional players wielding their own set of carrots and sticks in the internal governmental politicking process that defines policy. Ikenberry, “International Spread of Privatization Policies.”

17. According IOs more causal status also stands in contrast to the theoretical claims of more “statist” constructivists, such as Alexander Wendt, for whom the state is the unit of analysis. Privileging states may be tactically useful for such theorists in that it allows them to engage neorealists and neoliberals directly, but there is nothing about the logic of constructivism that would lead one to state-centrism. Indeed, the empirical findings in this book underscore the dangers of this assumption for constructivists. See Alexander Wendt, “Collective Identity Formation and the International State,” American Political Science Review 88 (1994): 384–96, and Social Theory of International Politics, chap. 1. I take up this issue again in the discussion of constructivism and liberalism in Chapter 5.

Structure versus Agents

The debate between theoretical frameworks in which states are treated as autonomous actors and those in which they are embedded in global structures is an old one and reflects the more general agent-structure debate that has been bubbling through social science for some years.19 At issue here is essentially what is at issue there, and that is whether, analytically, one treats actors (i.e., agents), capabilities, and preferences as given and derives social structures from their interaction, or whether one takes the social structures as given and treats actors, their preferences and powers, as defined by the social system(s) in which they are embedded.

Political science has been dominated by actor- or agent-oriented approaches. Analysis generally proceeds by positing both preferences and powers for some group of actors, be they voters, members of Congress, firms, social classes, or nation-states. Macro-level political outcomes are then derived from the sum of micro-level behaviors by these actors pursuing their pre-specified preferences. In international relations, neorealism proceeds in this way. While Waltz in his Theory of International Politics argues for the constraining force of international structure on state actors, the structure itself is an epiphenomenon of the preferences and powers of the constituent states. It has no independent ontological status. More to the point, it is not generative. It does not create and constitute actors and interests. Instead it is constituted by them.

Structure-oriented approaches, by contrast, treat social structures as causal variables and derive actors and interests from them. Structures, not agents, are ontologically primitive and the starting point for analysis. The best-known of these arguments in this vein for what I call constructivism. As the name suggests, scholars working in this vein share a general interest in social construction processes and their effects. They are concerned with the the impact of cultural practices, norms of behavior, and social values on political life and reject the notion that these can be derived from calculations of interests. They emphasize the importance of intersubjective understandings in structuring the ways in which actors understand what kinds of actions are valuable, appropriate, and necessary. These authors part ways with the more conventional actor-oriented approaches that Robert Keohane has called "rationalist" in that they elevate socially constructed variables—commonly held philosophic principles, identities, norms of behavior, or shared terms of discourse—to the status of basic causal variables that shape preferences, actors, and outcomes. In this way, they endogenize preferences. Preferences are strongly influenced and often constituted by social norms, culturally determined roles and rules, and historically contingent discourse.21


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Constructivism is also the most amorphous and least defined of the perspectives emphasizing the causal nature of social structures. As the preceding discussion indicates, constructivists investigate a wide variety of social structural elements, and it is not clear how these different aspects of social structures relate to one another either conceptually or substantively. Conceptually, the relationships among principles, norms, institutions, identities, roles, and rules are not well defined so that one analyst's norm might be another's institution and a third scholar's identity. Substantively, similar problems exist. The social elements investigated by these scholars tend to be limited in scope, usually to one issue area. They focus on a particular social framework in which interaction takes place in discrete issue areas and show how these shared beliefs, norms, and discourse shape actors and preferences. These scholars thus investigate social structures in the plural with little attention to questions about the relations among specific social elements—whether they can exist independently or whether they must appear as a part of a mutually reinforcing collection of norms, institutions, and discourse. They do not explore the possibility of overarching social structures or of a single coherent structure that coordinates international interaction along coherent and predictable lines (as do some other scholars working within other social structural frameworks, described below).

Some of the earliest of these analyses appeared as part of the otherwise quite rationalist regimes literature.22 John Ruggie, for example, elevates "legitimate social purpose" to the same level as hegemonic power in explaining the postwar economic order; he elevates social structures to causal status by arguing that recognition of the fact that liberal norms and values were "embedded" in U.S. hegemonic power is essential to understanding outcomes.23 Similarly, Donald Puchala and Raymond Hopkins argue that recognizing the existence of normative superstructures is decisive for understanding colonialism and international interactions over food.24 Ernst Haas has focused on cognitive processes more broadly and points to the shared experiences and commonly-held understandings developed within international institutions as determinants of outcomes.25 Elsewhere, Friedrich Kratochwil has argued that the norm-laden character of language itself guarantees that systems of norms and social conventions will circumscribe any calculations of rational utility maximization in important ways.26 More recent scholarship has continued the issue-specific and localized focus. Contributors to Peter Katzenstein's volume, The Culture of National Security, investigate the role of norms, identities, and social realities in weapons acquisition patterns, weapons taboos, humanitarian intervention, the dynamics of specific alliances, and military postures in specific countries.27

Each of these authors identifies a different socially constructed variable as causal and describes the causal process in a slightly different way, but all share a willingness to make social structures causal as well as a belief that these structures mold preferences in important ways. Liberal norms and principles shape U.S. preferences about how to exercise its power. Norms about self-determination and the avoidance of starvation shaped state preferences in the areas of colonialism and food. Preferences are the creation of larger social structures. They are endogenized in these approaches rather than treated exogenously.

A second approach to social structures as causal variables can be found in what has been called the English School, best known to American scholars through the work of Hedley Bull.28 Despite debates in recent years over whether this collection of scholars can legitimately be called a "school,"29 these authors certainly share methods and per-

22. The issue-specific character of norms research in political science may in part be a legacy of the regimes scholarship from which it grew. Norms were (re)introduced into mainstream political science via regimes, which are explicitly treated as issue-specific in their definition: "principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue area." Krasner, International Regimes, 1.

28. Other scholars working in this vein include Martin Wight, Charles Manning, Adam Watson, Gerrit Gong, Michael Donelan, F. S. Northedge, Robert Purnell, James Mayall, and John Vincent. Although Bull was not the founder of this school (Wight and Manning probably deserve that honor), his work is best known to Americans and most directly engages the debates outlined here. For that reason, I use him as exemplar. The term "English School" is somewhat misleading since two of the principal proponents are South African (Manning) and Australian (Bull). A more appropriate term might be "the LSE School" because the London School of Economics has been the institution at which most of these scholars came together.
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perspectives. Methodologically, they espouse holism explicitly and posit an “international society” of states which affects state behavior and state-ness at the center of their studies. The emphasis of English School scholars on the “structure” (as opposed to “agent”) side of the debate could not be clearer. They are also explicit in their rejection of the notion that international politics can or should be treated as a science in the manner that adherents to agent-oriented approaches might wish.

While they vary in their claims about the “thickness” and content of international society, these scholars agree that at its core lie some principled rules, institutions, and values that govern both who is a member of the society and how those members behave. In Bull’s work, this content stems from his philosophical examination of the moral implications of order. From the notion that order is a relational concept (in that things must be ordered to some particular end) Bull derives three common ends of all societies, including the international society: security against violence, ensuring that promises will be kept, and that property will be secure. Elsewhere, Bull, Adam Watson, Martin Wight, and Gerrit Gong make historical arguments that the content of international society comes from the liberal principles of Western European democracies and became internationalized with the expansion of the West. These scholars acknowledge a debt to and kinship with Grotius and an interest in natural law, although none characterizes his own work as based on natural law. Again, what interests these scholars is how social structure—the shared moral and philosophical environment in which states exist—shapes and tempers state preferences and actions.

A third approach to social structures as causal variables has been developed in sociology under the label “institutionalist” by John Meyer and his colleagues. In the sociological institutionalists’ view, social structure is constituted, not by an international society of states, but by an expanding and deepening world culture. The content of that culture is not unlike the Western values discussed by Bull, Watson, Wight, and Gong, but the institutionalists are much more explicit in their discussion of the logic underlying this cultural expansion. They argue that the modern international system is governed by a powerful set of worldwide cultural rules whose core is the Weberian (and Western) notion of rationality. These Western, rationalizing rules created the modern state, a political entity based on rational-legal authority rather than earlier traditional and charismatic forms of authority. In the current international system, these rules continue to shape states as system subunits, both by providing them with “rational” goals, such as the pursuit of “modernity”


34. Hedley Bull does use the term “Grotian” to describe an approach similar to his own. Bull, “The Grotian Concept of International Society.” However, in his later work, The Anarchical Society, he explicitly states that he is not making a natural law argument, therefore his argument cannot be completely Grotian. Note that the way Bull and the English School use the term “Grotian” is rather different from the way the term has become incorporated into American political science. In Krasner’s discussion of international regimes, “Grotian” is construed so broadly that it is used to describe a broad range of approaches including those described earlier as “constructivist.” Since few of the scholars in this large and ill-defined group have any interest in natural law—which is, after all, the main focus of Grotius’ work—I believe this appellation is misapplied. Bull, Wight, and their companions are, I believe, much more faithful to Grotius in their characterization of his work and their use of his name. See Krasner’s introduction and conclusion to International Regimes, 1-21 and 355-68.

and "progress," and by defining the "rational" institutions by which those goals will be achieved, for example markets and bureaucracies. 36

The structure of the institutionalists' argument is similar in some ways to that of Immanuel Wallerstein. Both arguments are holist, giving structure ontological primacy and deriving actors from it. Both are global, emphasizing the causal status of a "world-system" (Wallerstein) or "world-polity" (institutionalists). There are similarities in the content of the arguments as well. Like Wallerstein, the institutionalists understand the existing international system as an outgrowth of a historically unfolding dialectic which has its roots in medieval or early modern Europe. There is however a critical difference between the two arguments. The dynamic force in the Wallerstein's argument is material and economic: capitalism and markets drive change. The dynamic force in the institutionalist argument is cultural and normative: rationalizing rules about progress and modernity create not only capitalism and markets, but also bureaucracies, expanding individual rights, egalitarian notions of justice, and other distinctive features of modern politics. 37 Institutionalist arguments are thus social in a way that world-systems arguments are not. They locate causal force in the intersubjective, in powerful shared ideas and beliefs about the world, rather than in objective material conditions alone.

The institutionalists' approach is the most comprehensive and explicit formulation of an argument in which social structure is causal. Unlike the constructivists in political science, they view social structure as coherent and all-encompassing, for all of the various little social structures identified by constructivists can be linked to an overarching system of Western, rational values. Unlike the English School, which takes states as the primary actors, understands international society to be a society of states, and is primarily concerned with social influences on state actions, the institutionalists focus on a much broader range of actors. World culture can and does influence all sorts of organizations and individuals as well as states. 38 The global social structure of Western, rational culture has ontological primacy over any component actors, including states. World culture defines and empowers actors, including states, sub-state organizations, and even individuals. 39 International politics is understood, not as the result of interaction among actors, but as an outgrowth of the structure of worldwide Western culture. The three approaches described above illustrate the variety of different ways international social structures can be conceived of and treated as causal. They are not presented as competing views. In fact, it is not at all clear that they can compete, for it is not clear that they are mutually exclusive. For example, the logic underlying the institutionalists' arguments subsumes the other two approaches and their findings within the institutionalist framework. In institutionalist terms, the society of states described by the English School and the norms and understandings identified by the constructivists in political science can be understood as manifestations of much larger and more comprehensive world cultural forces. From an institutionalist perspective, the other societal approaches are not so much wrong as incomplete; they do not go far enough in imparting causality to social structure. Similarly, Ruggie's embedded liberalism analysis is not incompatible with the understandings of international society put forward by Wight and Bull, but it is only a single example of a much more widespread phenomenon. 40

My purpose is not to test these social-structural approaches against each other; rather, it is to demonstrate the utility of social structural approaches generally against more conventional, agent-oriented approaches. The demonstration is possible because expectations about state action are dif-


38. For an extended argument about the role of non-governmental organizations as carriers and creators of world culture see John Boli and George M. Thomas, eds., World Polity Formation since 1875: World Culture and International Non-Governmental Organizations (Stanford: Stanford University Press, forthcoming).

39. John Meyer provides a discussion of the ways in which Western world culture has defined the individual as a social unit and endowed it with rights and worth not previously recognized. John W. Meyer, "Self and Life Course: Institutionalization and its Effects" in Thomas, et al., Institutional Structure, 2.42–60. For Meyer's account of the construction of the state as the site of legitimate political authority, see his essay, "The World Polity and the Authority of the Nation State," reprinted in the same volume, 41–70.

40. It is not clear how constructivists in political science and English School scholars would react to the sociological institutionalists' claim to have subsumed their arguments. There has been little published discussion among these groups. Logically, however, they would have to dispute the institutionalists on one (or both) of two grounds. Either they would have to attack the claims for a relatively coherent and unitary culture spread across the world or they would have to attack claims about the Western, Weberian content of that culture. Since one could do research on both the content and coherence of global social structures, the debate would be an interesting one. I take up this issue again in Chapter 5. For a different and more detailed taxonomy of social-structural and other approaches see Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics, chap. 1, and Ron Jepperson, Alexander Wendt, and Peter J. Katzenstein, "Norms, Identity, Culture, and National Security," in Katzenstein, ed., The Culture of National Security.
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often depending upon where the source of state preferences lie. As was noted earlier, each type of approach specifies a different source for state action and the preferences that drive that action. If preferences are inherent in or properties of states, formulated through internal demands by state and social actors, one would expect states with different characteristics and different functional needs to act differently. Similar actions in the face of different conditions or characteristics would be anomalous. However, from a social-structural perspective, such similar action would have an obvious cause. International norms, shared beliefs, discourse, culture, and other social structures may make uniform behavioral claims upon similar actors. They may shape and define the preferences of actors in ways not related to internal conditions, characteristics, or functional need.

Patterns of change are one indicator that social structures are at work. Rapid global changes across dissimilar units suggest structure-level rather than agent-level causes. They do not, however, prove them. One also needs to specify the mechanism of change and show the common source of the new preference and behavior. For this reason each of the cases traces the process whereby the new preference was constructed inside an international organization and reveals the ways preferences were taught to states. These processes vary from case to case. The bureaucratic structure of the IO is critical in the World Bank and UNESCO cases but not in the Red Cross case (although it may be that the lack of a large structured bureaucracy was important in the ICRC case). Individual agency and moral principles matter a great deal in the Red Cross case, and to a lesser extent the World Bank case, but are not so important in the UNESCO case. While persuasion dominates the UNESCO and Red Cross cases, coercion is important in some aspects of the Bank case. IOs can thus affect state preferences in a variety of ways. What is important for this study is that they, and not states, are the agents of change.

NORMS AS SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Among the various elements of social structure, this study focuses on norms of behavior rather than discourse or culture more generally. I define norms in a simple and sociologically standard way as shared expectations about appropriate behavior held by a community of actors. Unlike ideas which may be held privately, norms are shared and social; they are not just subjective but intersubjective. Ideas may or may not have behavioral implications; norms by definition concern behavior. One could say that they are collectively held ideas about behavior.41 This is not to say that norms are never violated—they are—but the very fact that one can talk about a violation indicates the existence of a norm. Many norms are so internalized and taken for granted that violations do not occur and the norm is hard to recognize. The norm of statehood as the only appropriate and legitimate political unit in international politics has only recently been placed on the table for examination by scholars; most scholarship has treated and continues to treat states as naturally occurring and inevitable rather than as socially constructed and historically contingent. Norms about the market organization in economic life have a similar taken-for-granted quality. Microeconomics has convinced us that somehow people in the state of nature would develop markets. It is only with the conscious attempt to engineer markets in former communist countries that we are beginning to realize just how much social and normative support is required for even moderately efficient markets.42

Evidence for the existence of norms can be found in at least two places. First, norms create patterns of behavior in accordance with their prescriptions. Each of the cases here documents such a pattern. Second, norms may be articulated in discourse (although this will not be true of

41. Recent scholarship on ideas in international relations, as exemplified by the essays in Goldstein and Keohane's volume, has been driven by many of the same concerns that drive my approach. See Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). We all are looking to "occupy the middle ground," as John Hall puts it, between approaches that focus solely on material utility maximization and those that suggest cultural determinism. We differ somewhat in the ground we stake out, however. Goldstein, Keohane, and many (but not all) of their contributors hold fast to essentially agentic models and try to find room for ideas within those models. New world views are incorporated into actors' utility functions; ideas embedded in institutions become "rules of the game" for strategic interaction. My argument is that this effort will not prove satisfactory in a great many important cases. Changing beliefs about what Goldstein and Keohane call cause-effect relationships may easily be incorporated into agentic paradigms; however, changing beliefs about what they call world views and, in some cases, ethical principles are not so easily incorporated since these involve fundamental shifts in the actor identities and interests that agentic paradigms take as given. Goldstein and Keohane are led down this road at least in part by their object of study—ideas defined as "beliefs held by individuals." This definition obscures the social nature and attendant consequences of a great many ideas, though some contributors to the volume, notably John Hall and John Ferejohn, deal explicitly with these issues. (See Hall's discussion of community on p. 49 and Ferejohn's discussion of intelligibility, pp. 228–29.)

the most internalized and taken-for-granted norms since they are often not the subject of conscious reflection). Because they are intersubjective and collectively held, norms are often the subject of discussion among actors. Actors may specifically articulate norms in justifying actions, or they may call upon norms to persuade others to act. To complement the behavioral findings of each case, I therefore examine discourse surrounding that behavior.

Structuring the analysis around discrete sets of norms in the cases is not intended as an espousal of any one of the three aforementioned conceptions of social structure. I do not believe that these arguments, as currently articulated, can compete and be tested against each other. A sociological institutionalist might read these cases and see them as part of a global expansion of world culture. The values embodied in the norms described—bureaucratic expansion of the state, increased concern with the individual, and expanding claims of human equality—are all compatible with the neo-Weberian world culture whose power is emphasized by these scholars. But the cases can also be read as discrete examples of social-structural influence with no necessary relationship to one another. In either reading, the cases challenge the conventional agent-centered paradigms.

**Constructivism and the Return of Agency**

Demonstrating the power of social structures—both that they influence states and how they influence states—is only half of my goal. The other aim of the project is to bring agency back into these social-structural accounts. For this reason, I investigate the origins of the normative structures influencing states: who created them and how they became embedded in the organizations that disseminated them. In doing so, I follow a constructivist research design. I emphasize the construction of social structures by agents as well as the way in which those structures, in turn, influence and reconstruct agents. Both agency and structural approaches to social analysis are abstractions—simplifications that make complex phenomena tractable for social inquiry. As recent discussions of the agent-structure problem make clear, agents and structures are mutually constitutive. To understand the relationship between the two, I first bracket agency and show the power of social structures in each of my cases. I begin with the structure side of the relationship only because that is the side most neglected by the dominant approaches in international relations. I then reverse the brackets and ask where the normative structures influencing states came from. In each case, I try to identify at least proximate agents of social structural change.

What I am trying to explain in these cases is precisely what conventional approaches seek to explain: state behavior. I want to explain why all states create science bureaucracies at the same time, why they all agree to new rules of war, why they agree to redefinitions of development and changed policies accordingly. Explaining state behavior in a constructivist framework requires attention to the mutually constituted character of agents and structures. Consequently, each case study contains two strands of analysis. The structural strand, and the starting point for each study, examines coordinated system-wide shifts in state behavior and traces the cause of these shifts to normative claims pushed by an international organization. The agency strand examines how the international organization came to hold these normative views and the mechanisms by which it was able to "teach" those views to states. Thus, while the overall object of explanation is state behavior, this explanation must be built on contributing analyses of normative change within these organizations and the relationships between the IOs and states.

While my project and conventional approaches are similar in that they both try to explain state behavior, it is not the case that we have the same "dependent variable" because, of course, there is no variation in behavior (the "dependent variable") in my study. It is precisely the similarity in behavior where none should exist that makes these cases theoretically anomalous and worthy of investigation. A study of similarity rather than difference raises a number of basic methodological issues. Conventional wisdom in the discipline, reiterated most recently by King, Keohane, and Verba, is that such studies should be avoided because they cannot establish causal effects. This position ignores what such investigations can do. As David Collier has pointed out, studies of similarity can allow investigators "to eliminate some hypothesized causes, which can be a useful first step

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44. Obviously, the loops of agent-structure relationships are complex and never ending. One can always ask about the social structures of nineteenth-century European bourgeois life that gave Dunant and his colleagues their humanitarian interests or about notions of social justice in Catholicism that gave McNamara his interest in poverty. Similarly, there could be material structures that influence these interests. My purpose is simply to show that both agents and structures matter and to provide some sense of how this is so.
from conventional realist and liberal theories, the cases may give the im-


pression that constructivism as a theoretical approach stands in opposition to realism and liberalism. This is not so: the relationship is complementary, not competing. My argument is not that norms matter but interests do not, nor is it that norms are more important than interests. My argument is that norms shape interests. Consequently, the two cannot logically be opposed.

To demonstrate this social construction of interests to neorealists and neoliberals, however, I need to show that it explains behavior that their treatment of interests, which tends to be both material and static, does not. For this reason, I have chosen cases that look anomalous from conventional perspectives. This is what gives the "competing hypotheses" flavor to the empirical studies and makes possible arbitration among the approaches on the basis of empirical evidence. In fact, though, my argument is not so much that neorealism and neoliberalism are wrong as that they are grossly incomplete. They can explain only a small amount of what goes on in the world, and attempts to apply these theories beyond that limited scope by imputing more and more interests less and less tied to anarchy will lead to results that are misleading or wrong.46 The goals of this book are to analyze how this is so, to develop an alternative approach that can address these problems, and to demonstrate the use of that alternative approach empirically.

Constructivism is a social theory, not a theory of politics. It makes claims about the nature of social life and social change and suggests ways of doing research to uncover the links between structural and agentic forces. It does not, however, make any particular claims about the content of those social structures or the nature of the agents.47 In this sense, it is akin to rational choice theory. Rational choice also makes claims about the nature of social interaction but not its content. Agents act rationally to maximize utilities, but the specification of actors and utilities lies outside the analysis; it must be provided a priori, before analysis can begin.48

46. Even close connection with anarchy may not solve these theorists' problems if they cannot agree on the nature of anarchy. See the debate in Baldwin, ed., Neorealism and Neoliberalism, especially chapters by Helen Milner, Robert Keohane, Joseph Grieco, and Robert Powell.

47. Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics, chap. 1. It is precisely the failure of Wendt and others to investigate the substantive content of social structures and marry constructivism with substantive theory that motivates my book.

48. Elster's recent work provides an interesting rationalist counterpoint to the arguments I make here. He has moved from a rational choice perspective to one in which social norms matter, but he continues to claim that this move can be made within a strictly agent-oriented perspective. No move to holism or structure analysis is required. He is correct only if one never wants to engage the questions I raise here—questions about the constitutive...
Neither constructivism nor rational choice provides substantive explanations of international political behavior until coupled with some theoretical understanding of what or what are relevant agents and structures as well as some empirical understanding of what those agents might want and what the content of that social structure might be. Rational choice has been used in the service of agentic theories such as neorealism and neoliberalism in which agents are states and interests are some combination of military security and wealth. Substantive theorizing about social structures in international politics has received less attention, but both the English School and the sociological institutionalists point to the expansive power of the West and its notions of rationality as the core of an international social structure. This social structure privileges the state and the market—both rational (in the Weberian sense) forms of social organization—and emphasizes rules that support these institutions (such as protection of private property and organized monopolies on violence) as hallmarks of "civilized" conduct in world affairs. The international social structure has also privileged claims of human equality, increasingly so in recent years. All of these effects are documented in the case studies but these findings still leave unresolved many issues concerning the nature and content of international social structure. I take up these issues again in Chapter 5.

**Social Structures and Logics of Action**

Rational choice is called into service by theories that consider agents and interests unproblematic. When interests or actors become the subject of analysis, the dependent variable rather than an independent one, such methods become less useful. Rational choice requires knowledge of utilities; one must know what one wants before one can calculate means to those ends. Action without a clear understanding of what one wants must occur by some other process. The sociological institutionalists engage this issue and outline an alternative. Social structures—norms of behavior and social institutions—can provide states with direction and goals for action. The values they embody and the rules and roles they define channel behavior. Actors conform to them in part for "rational" reasons (for instance, because of the costs involved in "bucking the system" and the resources that become available through conformity) but also because they become socialized to accept these values, rules, and roles. They internalize the rules and rules as scripts to which they conform, not out of conscious choice, but because they understand these behaviors to be appropriate.

To say that action may follow a "logic of appropriateness" is not to say that it is irrational or stupid. Rules, norms, and routines may be followed for carefully considered reasons. They may embody subtle lessons culled from accumulated experience. Furthermore, determining which rules and norms apply in different situations involves sophisticated reasoning processes. It is, however, reasoning of a different type than that involved in consequentialist action, for it involves reasoning by analogy and metaphor rather than reasoning about ends and means. Actors may ask themselves, "What kind of situation is this?" and "What am I supposed to do now?" rather than, "How do I get what I want?" Thoughtful, intelligent political behavior, like other behavior, may be governed by notions of duty and obligation as much as by notions of self-interest and gain.49

The "logic of appropriateness" contrasts with a "logic of consequences" (such as that embodied in utility maximization) in ways important to the research here. The first is driven by social structure. Social structures of norms and rules govern the kinds of action that will be contemplated and taken. They also define responsibilities and duties, thus determining who will contemplate and take action. The logic of 49 Cognitive psychology has produced extensive research on the importance of cognitive scripts in individual behavior and the ways in which these override utility-maximizing choice. For general overviews of this material, see Susan Fiske and Shelley Taylor, Social Cognition (New York: Random House, 1984); R. E. Nisbett and L. Ross, Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgement (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1980); Tom Gilovich, How We Know What’s Not: The Fallibility of Reason in Everyday Life (New York: Free Press, 1991); Clyde Wilcox and Leonard Williams, "Taking Stock of Schema Theory," Social Science Journal 27 (1990): 373–93. March and Olsen, among others, have tied cognitive research into the organization literature and the study of political institutions. The terms "logic of appropriateness" and "logic of consequences" are theirs. See James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics (New York: Free Press, 1989), especially chap. 2 for a more detailed exposition of the differences between these two types of action and an extended critique of the over-reliance on consequentialist logic in the social sciences. For an earlier formulation of this problem that makes perhaps stronger anti-consequentialist claims, see John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan, "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony," American Journal of Sociology 84 (1977): 440–63.
consequences is driven by agents. Pre-specified actors or agents make
means-ends calculations and devise strategies to maximize utilities.
Norms, rules, and routines will be created as part of this process, but
these will serve the interests of powerful actors; they will not survive
long if they do not. The logic of appropriateness would predict similar
behavior from dissimilar actors because rules and norms may make
similar behavioral claims on dissimilar actors. The logic of consequences
would predict dissimilar behavior from dissimilar actors because actors
with different utility functions and capabilities will act differently. The
distinction should not be overdrawn, however. Ultimately, like struc­
tures and agents, the two logics are intimately connected. Actors create
structures which take on a life of their own and in turn shape subse­
dquent action. Social structures create and empower actors who may act
to overturn structures for reasons of their own. In any given situation
both play some role. Separating the two, as I do here, is an analytic con­
venience not a statement about reality.

The case studies that follow illustrate both the working and interaction
of these two logics. At one level, the science policy case demonstrates the
power of appropriateness to prompt behavior even in the absence of any
functional reason for it. States set up bureaucracies to coordinate science
even when they had no science to coordinate. However, the genesis of
this bureaucratic form was highly functional and consequentialist. Sci­
cence bureaucracies appeared first in science-intensive states facing wars
but later spread to science-less states. Thus, the construction of the social
value placed on state involvement in science was driven by one logic; the
spread of that value was driven by another.

This would imply that we can neatly associate consequentialism with
the agent half of structure-agent analysis and appropriateness with the
structure half: agents create social structures for consequentialist rea­
sons but they spread for reasons of appropriateness. However, the other
two cases suggest a more complex picture. There is no rational, func­
tional, consequentialist reason for Henry Dunant to spend three days
helping the war wounded, write a book about the experience, print it at
his own expense, and spend months trying to persuade governments of
the rightness, not the utility, of his cause. Such moral concerns about
rightness and justice are more easily accommodated within some social-
structural account that links Dunant’s actions and those of the states­
men who signed the Geneva Conventions to Christian morality and
Western civility. Dunant and the others claimed to act as they did be­
because these actions were required of them as civilized Christian gentle­
men.\(^{50}\) In this case, the construction and dissemination of a new nor­
mative structure (the Geneva Conventions) both appear to have a large
element of appropriateness mixed in. The World Bank case suggests yet
another mix. The construction of poverty alleviation as an international
responsibility served a straightforward utilitarian interest in bureau­
ocratic aggrandizement because it meant huge expansion of the organi­
ization. But the evidence suggests that this was not, in fact, what
prompted McNamara’s actions. Moral concerns about right, just, and
appropriate action played a large role in constructing the anti-poverty
norm and persuading other states to adopt it. Again, both logics seem to
have played a role in the construction and the dissemination process.

I have no grand theory as to why or under what conditions one type of
logic might prevail or to what degree it will prevail. My concern is rather
to point out that consequentialist utility maximization does not explain
much of what goes on in international politics. Among other things, it
does not explain global shifts in political goals of the kind investigated
here. Coordinated and systemic reorientations such as these are better
understood with social-structural accounts and constructivist ap­
proaches.

**CASE SELECTION AND THEORETICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Any research design involves trade-offs, and this book is no exception.
I present no cases that concern grand events of “high politics”; I present
no cases of major wars or economic catastrophes. Critics might there­
fore argue that what I say here may be theoretically true, but empirically
trivial. I have several responses. First, the task of challenging realists on
their own “high politics” turf of national security has been taken up by
myself and others elsewhere.\(^{51}\) Second, and more to the point, making
an empirical demonstration of the theoretical propositions is in itself

\(^{50}\) As was noted earlier, the globalization of Western standards of civilization and West­
ern morality is a prominent topic among both English School researchers and sociological
institutionalists. See Bull and Watson, eds., The Expansion of International Society, Gong, The
Standard of ‘Civilisation’ and John W. Meyer, John Boli, and George M. Thomas, “Ontology
and Rationalization in the Western Cultural Account,” in George M. Thomas, John W.
Meyer, Francisco O. Ramirez, and John Boli, eds., Institutional Structure: Constituting State, So­

\(^{51}\) Katzenstein, ed., The Culture of National Security, contains chapters on such topics as
weapons proliferation, weapons of mass destruction, military intervention, and alliance
behavior, as well as analyses of the strategic policies of major states that show the importance
of social variables in understanding behavior and outcomes.
non-trivial. Wendt, Dessler, Kratochwil, Ruggie, Onuf, and other early proponents of these sociological approaches have repeatedly been criticized for not demonstrating empirical applications. This book does that. In making an initial demonstration, the terms of debate are always set by the dominant paradigms, so I chose cases for this study in which I could show that rational utility maximization was inadequate to explain the outcomes. The fact that two of the cases examine norms we might consider ethically "good" (humanitarian protection, poverty alleviation) is a comment on the paradigms I am engaging, not on my approach. Neorealists and neoliberals understand interest to be self-interest; other-regarding behavior is not well-explained and so creates the kinds of anomalies we look for when doing empirical research. But there is nothing inherently "good" about social norms. Social norms can prescribe ethically reprehensible behavior—slavery, violence, intolerance—as well as charity and kindness.

The case selection is also limited in that it focuses exclusively on IOs. Social norms and social structures have wide-ranging effects on all aspects of international life. However, in designing this study, I had to limit the range of social structural influences under investigation if I was to make any focused arguments about the causal properties of social structures. Again, the cases allow that: they were chosen to show one manifestation of social structural influence, that of IOs on states, and show it across a wide variety of issue areas. This creates some consistency across cases and allows for generalization.

Finally, I question the standards of empirical triviality implicit in the criticism. Yes, wars and economic collapse are undesirable. One reason to study international politics is to investigate ways to avoid them. But if things "matter" only in cases of war or economic collapse, and if such disasters occur because states pursue opposing interests, one would want very much to know where those interests come from. To answer the demand, "Show me that it matters," one must first understand in some general way how things come to "matter," how interests come to be constructed in such a way as to create violence and deprivation.

Much of the conflict of the twentieth century has been wars of national liberation, yet nationalism is a social and socially constructed interest. Post-Cold War military activity has been dominated by humanitarian intervention. Yet, as I have shown elsewhere, notions about who is human and deserving of protection and notions about legitimate intervention are socially constructed. Much of twentieth-century political economy has been concerned with conflicts between growth and equity, but the equity goals (and arguably both goals) exist because of social understandings about what is appropriate and just in political life. To understand war and economic change, one must understand the kinds of interests which lead states into conflict and the kinds of interests to which states direct their economic resources. Those interests are socially constructed. The construction process may be easier to discern in some cases than others. The cases that matter most according to any given set of criteria (most people killed, most change in state capacities, most movement of economic resources) may not be the cases in which the underlying processes at work are most visible. The cases here offer a theoretical window onto a process that may be obscured or varied in larger, more complex world events.

52. See, for example, Goldstein and Keohane's comments in Ideas and Foreign Policy, 5-6, 26-27.


54. Arguably, both goals are socially constructed. The preoccupation of states with continually rising GNP per capita is distinctly modern. Prior to the sixteenth century and perhaps even prior to the nineteenth, economic success was defined by wealth in a much more static way.