

# **Contemporary Developments in International Relations Theory**

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# Block I: Concepts, Roles and Functions of Theories in International Relations: Changing Demands, Expectations and Promises

## *1.1) Starting assumptions*

Looking back at the development of International Relations as a scientific subject over the last 50 years or so, we can make a puzzling observation (based on Dougherty/Pfaltzgraff 2001; Schieder/Spindler 2003; Burchill et al. 2005, Baylis/Smith 2005): that of a **multiplicity of meanings** of the **concept of theory**:

1. with regard to substance, "theory" represents the focus of a whole field or range of uses, bundling together the history of international ideas, the history of I.R. as a scientific discipline, the social philosophy of I.R., and the epistemology and methodology of I.R. (cf.Fig.1)
2. with regard to form, definitions of "theory" depend on (logical) structure, range, and (explanatory or predictive) performance of abstract constructs which are imposed on a selected body of phenomena, objects, events, or processes (cf.Fig.2)
3. with regard to function, definitions of "theory" depend on the particular task they fulfill in the process of (scientific) discovery, perception, and knowledge formation (cf.Fig.3).

Despite this bewildering array of theory concepts in I.R., up to the 1980s, the discipline agreed on a **minimal definition** of "theory":

"International theory is that part of the study of international relations which offers descriptive and explanatory statements about patterns, regularities, and change in structural properties and processes of international systems and their major component units. It is concerned with classes of events (typical behavior or trends), not with specific occurrences." ... "It delineates a problem area (the dependent variable) and specifies a range of causal variables. Analysis is designed to transcend time, location, event, and personality." ... "Though not presented in a formally rigorous fashion, it nevertheless has the form of most general social scientific propositions: a change in variable or property x produces a major (new) consequence in the pattern of behavior y. But the format of the statement is not the critical question. It is, rather, the scope of the proposition: theorists seek to discover relationships and causes of change in them for classes of events, not for particulars." (K.J.Holsti: Change in the International System, Aldershot 1991:166)

As may well be seen, the character of this minimal definition is epistemological rather than ontological: it does not contain any reference a) to the **actors** of I.R., b) to the **milieu**, to the structure of the international environment in the context of which actors act. However, up to the 1980s there was also a wide consensus as to the ontological context of I.R. - though the **formal** character of that consensus must be stressed:

<b>Actor</b>	<b>Milieu</b>	<b>Structural Principle</b>	<b>Image/Model</b>
Individual	World Society	Universalistic Constitution	World Order (Federation)
Nation – State	State System	Vertical Segmentation	Billiard Ball Model
Economic Class	International Class Society	Horizontal Layering	Layer Cake Model
Individual or Societal Actors	Transnational Society	Boundary – transgressing Network Formation	Cobweb Model

It is my contention that the fissiparous state of present-day I.R. theory is not due - at least not in the first instance - to a large number of contending methodologies or canons of proof of scientific statements, but much more so to the **competitive coexistence** of a number of **ontological referents** - call them **world views, grand theories, paradigms** or the like - which (re-)construct respectively **different images of I.R.**, in the lights of which the central formal categories of the discipline - actor, structure, and process - are differently "filled" with "ontological content", i.e. assume different *gestalt* qualities (cf. Fig. 4)

The explanation for this contention is two-fold: it hinges

- a) on a specific interpretation of the social function of I.R. as a science of crisis interpretation, crisis management, and crisis resolution
- b) on a concomitant view of I.R. theory generation and theory development which sees a new theory as the answer of the scientific community to extra-scientific - i.e. political, socio-economic, ecological etc. - crisis phenomena which cannot any longer be interpreted, managed, or resolved within the ontological and categorical framework of established, overcome theories.

In contrast to Kuhn's "Structure of Scientific Revolutions" I claim furthermore that - though new crises produce new theories - there is no paradigm shift in I.R., i.e. no replacement of a theory by an *ersatz* theory (Stegmüller 1987,

280ff). Rather, theory development follows a process of bi-/multi-furcation . i .e. new theories branch off the body of established theories at particular points in time (extrascientific crises), yet leaving the established theories in the overall corpus of crisis interpretations/crisis management or resolution means. The resultant genetic structure resembles that known from Chomsky's transformational-generative grammar: it looks like a tree (cf. Fig.5)

It is my contention too that the fissiparous state of present-day international relations theory is also due to the fact that since the reception of Critical Theory in I.R. (if not perhaps even before that) I.R. theory has maneuvered itself into a meta-theoretical quandary - between (classic) **Explanatory Theory** on the one hand, and **Constitutive Theory** on the other. At question is the basic **function of theory**:\_should it

a) **offer explanatory accounts** of International Relations

- Premiss: the social world is like the natural world – an object existing outside of and independent from our perception and our theories
- Position: naïve empiricism

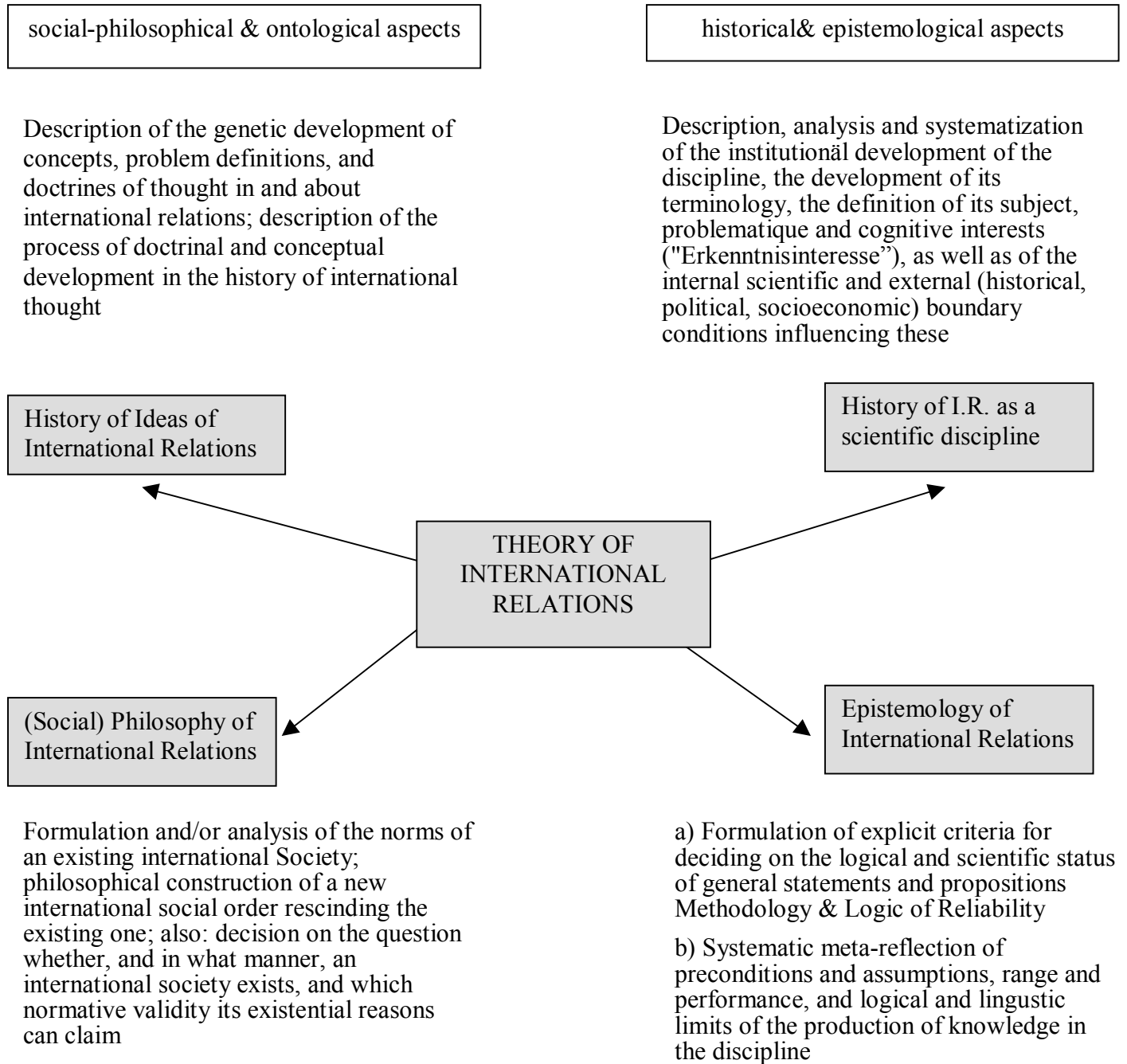
**OR**

b) **constitute the “reality”** of International Relations

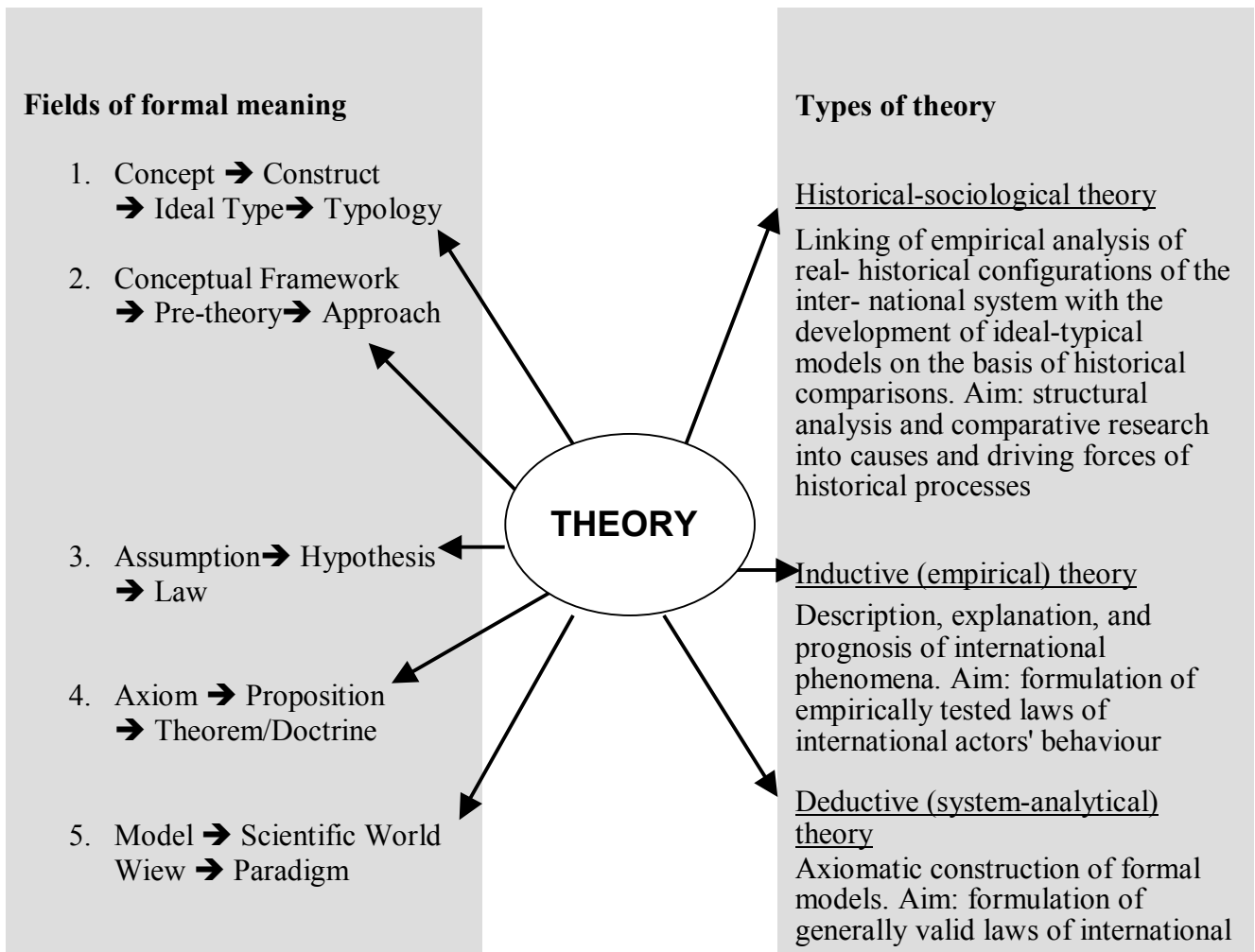
- Premiss: the social world is what we make it to be by constructing it with the help of /on the basis of our theories
- Position: all knowledge is theory-laden or theory-dependent

(N.B. there is only a short step from Hermeneutics to Constructivism...)

**Fig. 1: Theory: the conceptual field**

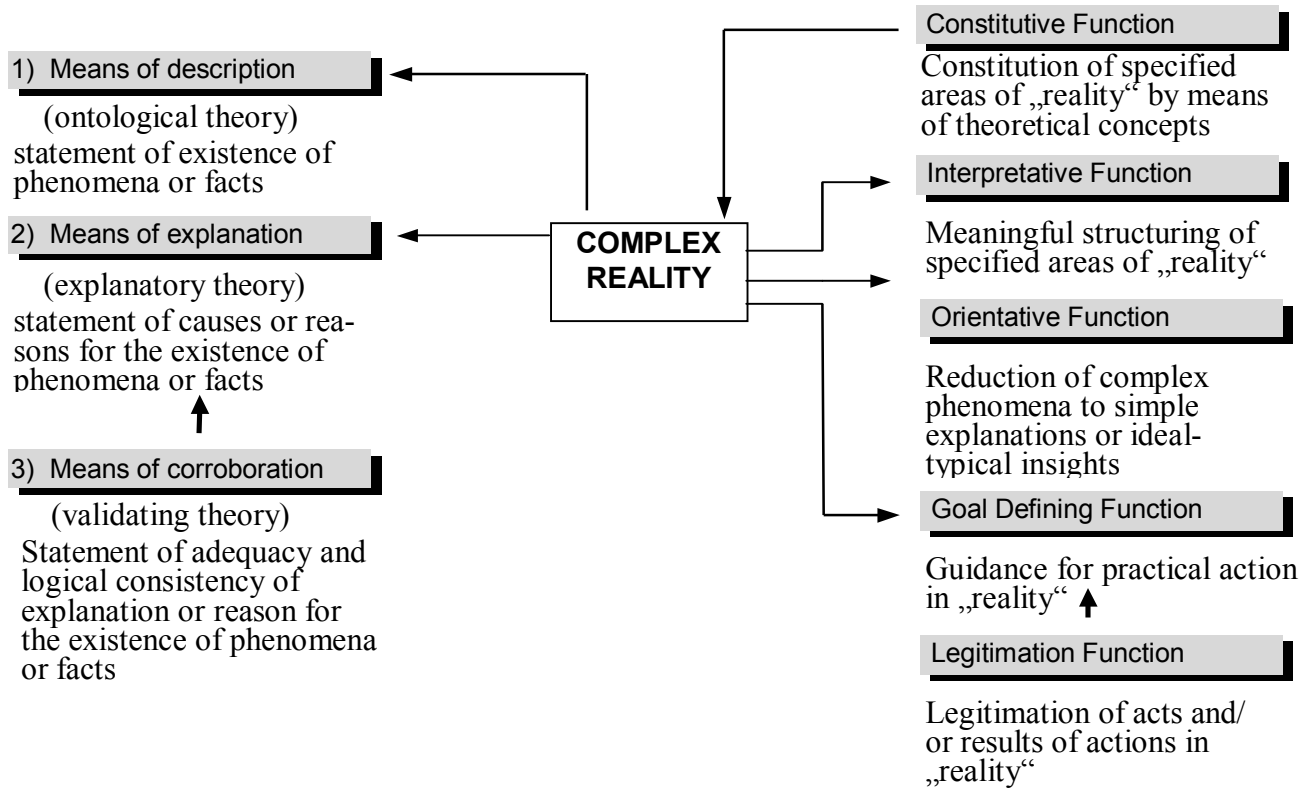


**Fig. 2: Theory: Fields of formal meaning**





**Fig. 3: Theory: Typical Functions**



Theories are mental constructs enabling us to deal with the welter of information about „reality“ by which we are confronted. They help us to structure/ reduce to manageable portions/ impose a conceptual and systematic order on the mass of information about „reality“. They also enable us to explain individual phenomena by describing the place of these phenomena in a larger context of information and/ or by formulating causal or genetic-temporal relationships between individual phenomena and other phenomena/ sets of phenomena.

**Fig. 4: Grand Theories of International Relations**

<b>Grand theory</b>	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Milieu</b>	<b>Structural Principle</b>
Realism	National Actors, Nation States	World of states as an international anarchic state of nature	vertical segmentation, unlimited zero-sum game für power, influence, and territorial/economic resources
English School of International Relations		World of states as (legally constituted international society of states	vertical segmentation, zero-sum games regulated by norms and common interests ("cooperation under anarchy")
Idealism	Individual	World society as international society of individuals	universalistic constitution; Federalism
interdependency-oriented Globalism	Individual or societal actors	Transnational Society	functional: state-boundary transgressing network formation
Theories of ; Imperialism	Individual or societal actors representing class interests	International class society	societal: horizontal state-boundary transgressing stratification; (power-) political: vertical segmentation of imperialistic competitors
dependency-oriented Globalism; dependency theories and world system theories	societal and state actors representing class interests	Capitalist world system as a layer-cake model comprising metropolises and peripheries	horizontal: stratification of national actors in the world system (power pyramid); structural dependency of peripheries from metropolises; structural heterogeneity of peripheries

## ***1.2) Metatheory - criteria for theory classification***

Reference to Explanatory and Constitutive Theories brings us to the question of criteria for theory classification.

Traditionally, these criteria were of an epistemological character: logical consistency, parsimony, elegance of formulation, (mathematical) formalization etc.

A closer look at these criteria demonstrates that they are to a considerable extent bound up with a peculiar 1950s and 1960s western-atlanticist conception of social science: the idea that the analysis of society - and the analysis of international relations as a subfield of that enterprise - should proceed along purely empirical, positivist lines.

"To explain a puzzling set of facts was taken to be a matter of showing that their occurrence can be deduced and hence predicted from a known natural or at least statistical law. The prestige of this analysis not only served to direct social scientists to look for regularities as the only acceptable basis for explaining social phenomena. It also required them to believe that there was no reason in principle why human action should not be viewed and explained in just the same way as natural events. The result was that 'man as a subject for science'..." ... "...came to seem not just a possible but the only respectable goal for the social disciplines..." (Quentin Skinner (ed.): *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences*, Cambridge 1990: 4f)

From the late 1960s onwards, this scientific ideal - **scientism** - was questioned by a younger generation of social scientists due to their socialization into the protest culture of the student revolt. Ostensibly, political reaction against U.S. engagement in Vietnam furnished the focal point for much questioning of the role of western social science in the propping-up of established conservative authorities. Scientistic social science, due to its technocratic outlook upon the manipulation of social phenomena, was regarded as a "**Herrschaftswissenschaft**" - a science allied with the forces of domination. Its aspiration for value-free general statements, empirically tested hypotheses and deductive laws of social behaviour was reproached with a mistake: the refusal to suppose that the true business of moral, social, and political philosophy as well as of social science should be to provide us with reasoned defences of particular ideals, values, or ethically-guided practice. What we experienced was nothing less than a moral revolution in social science - albeit one which largely turned to scientific perspectives suppressed by Cold War politics in the 1950s and 1960s: dialectical reasoning, neo-marxism, critical theory.

The common characteristic of all these transformations of the scientist scientific ideal was the widespread reaction

"...against the assumption that the natural sciences offer an adequate or even a relevant model for the practice of the social disciplines. The clearest reflection of this growing doubt has been the revival of the suggestion that the explanation of human behaviour and the explanation of natural events are logically distinct undertakings, and thus that the positivist contention that all successful explanation must conform to the same deductive model must be fundamentally misconceived. From many different directions the cry has instead gone up for the development of a hermeneutic approach to the human sciences, an approach that will do justice to the claim that the explanation of human action must always include - and perhaps even take the form of - an attempt to recover and interpret the meanings of social actions from the point of view of the agents performing them." (Skinner 1990:6)

To cut a long story short - the **abdication of scientism** as the ruling norm of social science, enhanced by an epistemological reaction against the Popperian criterion of refutability as a basis for the validation of general scientific statements (Feyerabend: "Anything goes"), cleared the ground for the reintroduction of **ontological criteria** into the enterprise of classification and corroboration of theories. Thus, at present we **classify theories** with regard to two sets of criteria:

a) **ontological criteria**, leading to the question: which images, which *gestalt* qualities, which scientific world-view does a theory generate with respect to the object of a particular discipline ?

b) **epistemological criteria**, leading to the question: how does a theory establish, substantiate, justify and legitimize its statements about the object to which it refers ?

Using these sets of criteria, it can be shown that the more recent genetic history of I.R. theory has been structured by a number of debates, which on the one hand took ontological differences of theories as their starting point, on the other hand reverberated around different epistemological canons of construction and validation of statements about the object of I.R. as a scientific discipline.

Ontological debates	Epistemological debates
Idealism vs. Realism Globalism vs. Neorealism Neoliberal Institutionalism vs. Structural Realism	Traditionalism vs. Scientism Scientism vs. Critical Theory Critical Theory vs. Postmodernism

### ***1.3) Grand theories***

The moral revolution in social science alluded to earlier opened up a vista on a number of properties of theory which cannot be subsumed under an ontological or epistemological heading.

We realized that theory was not the product of a scientific ivory tower, fulfilling exclusively intra-scientific knowledge-generating and knowledge-structuring functions. Rather - as Critical Theory demonstrates in particular - all theory implicitly or explicitly addresses itself to **social practice** - in other words, answers the questions

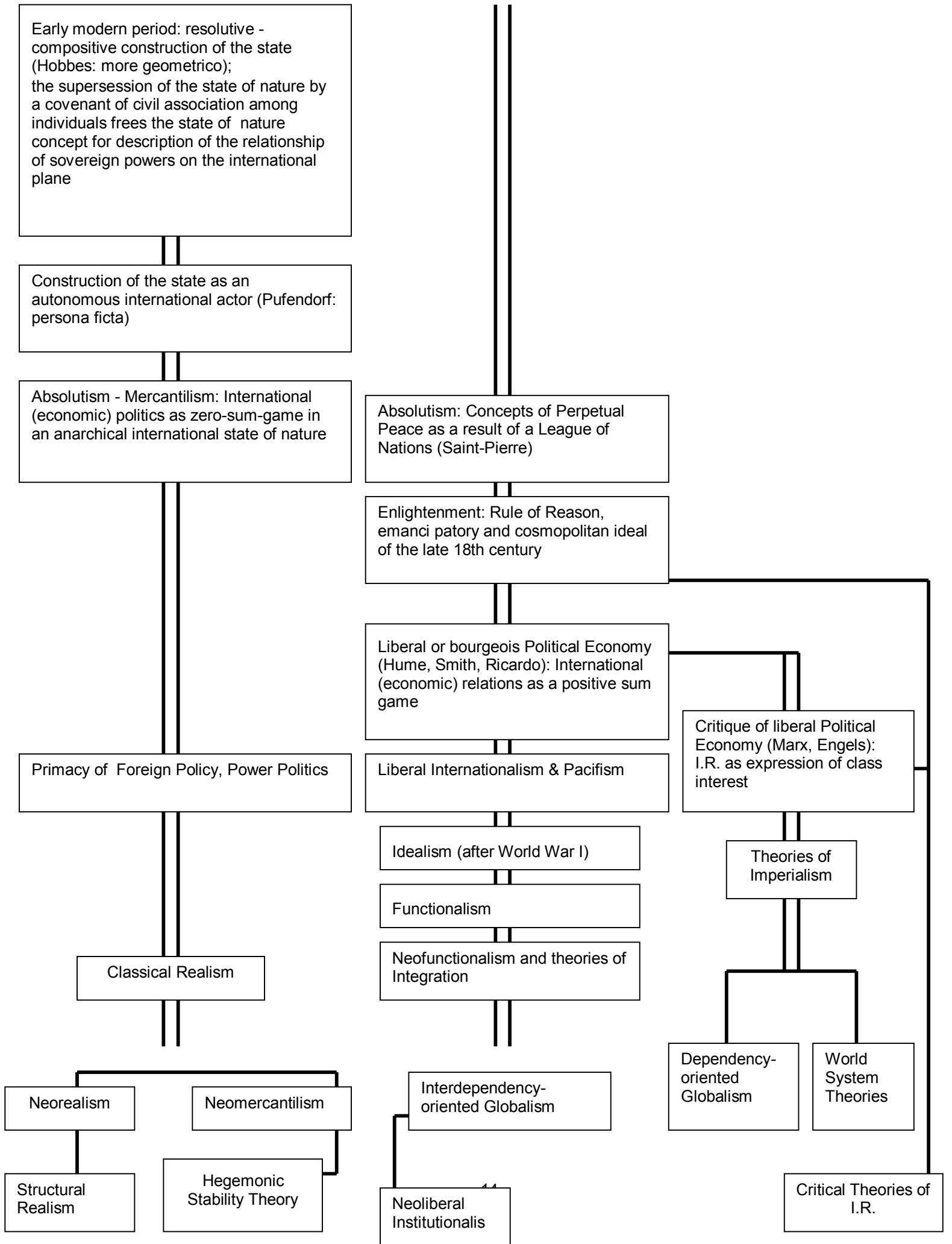
- What should I do ?

- How can I justify my social actions and behaviour ?

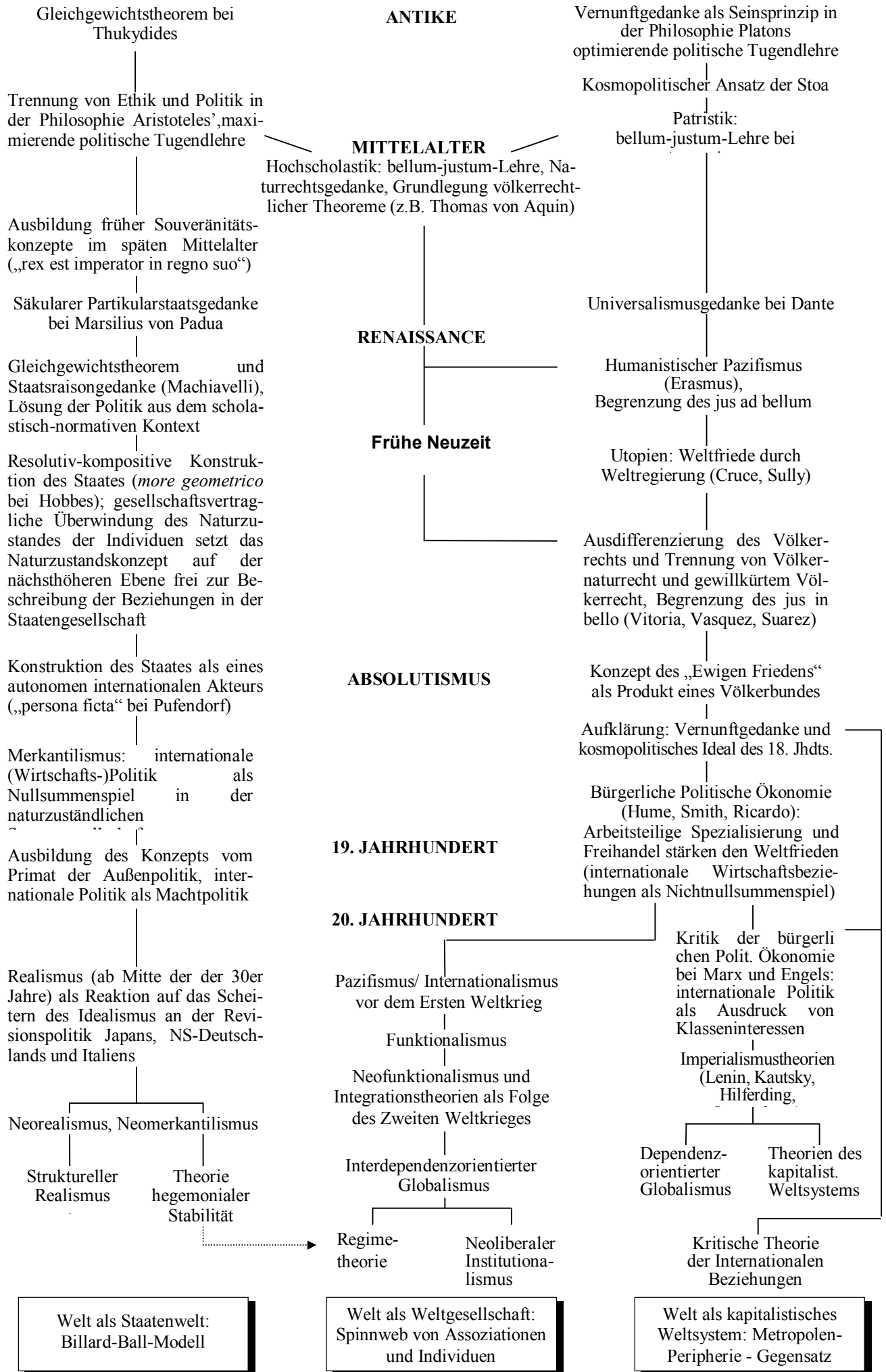
Phrased differently, my contention is that all theories - at least in the social sciences - have not only ontological and epistemological, but also normative-practical properties.

I follow here Quentin Skinner who calls theories which combine ontological, epistemological, and normative functions (cf. Fig. 7) "Grand Theories". The present state even of western-atlanticist social science and I.R. research is characterized by the fact that Grand Theories have not only returned to the Human Sciences, but have also taken over from Scientism as the new scientific ideal.

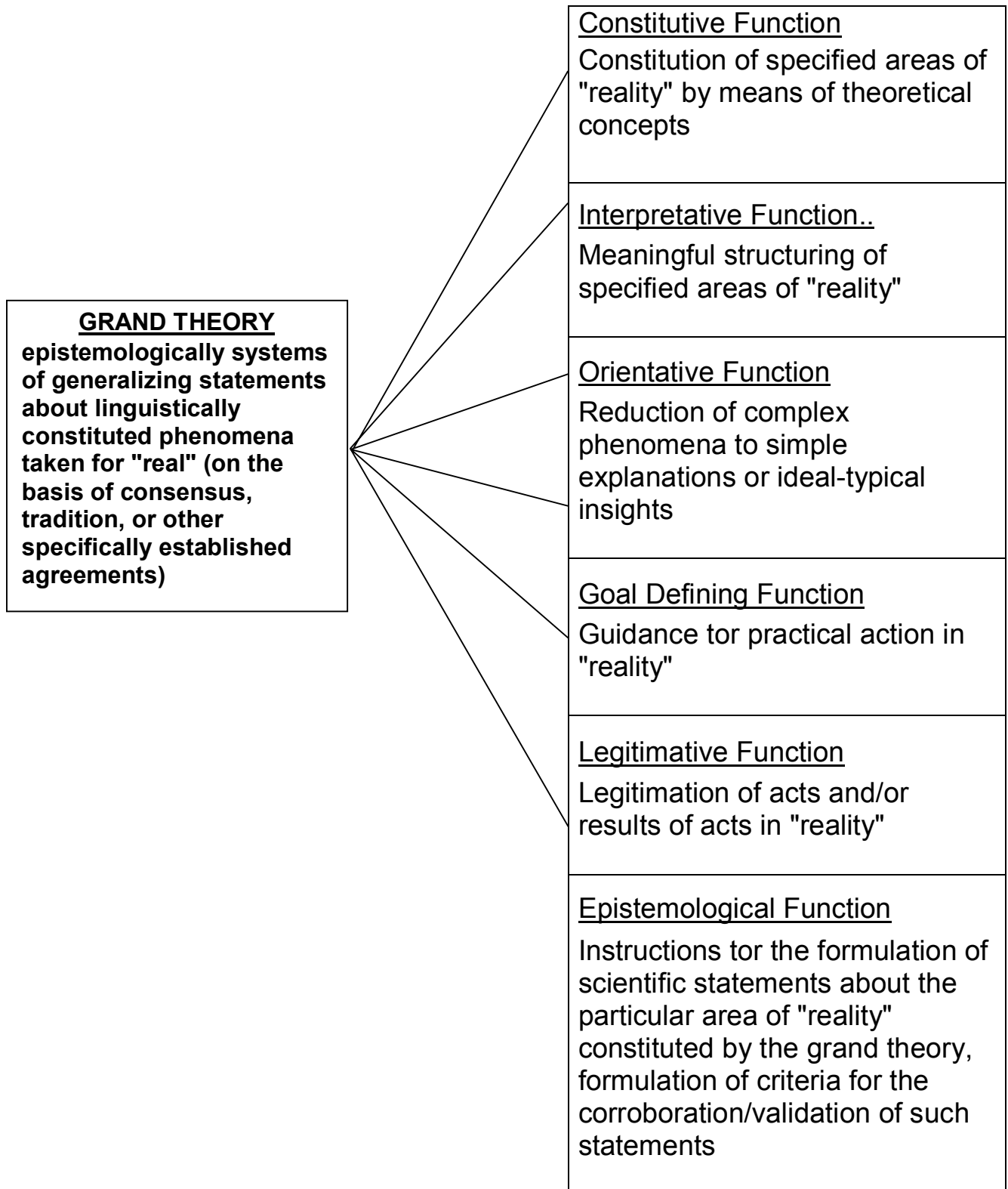
**Fig. 5: Genetic Theory Development in I.R.**



**Fig. 6: Ancestral Lineages of IR Theory**



**Fig. 7: Grand Theories - Functions**

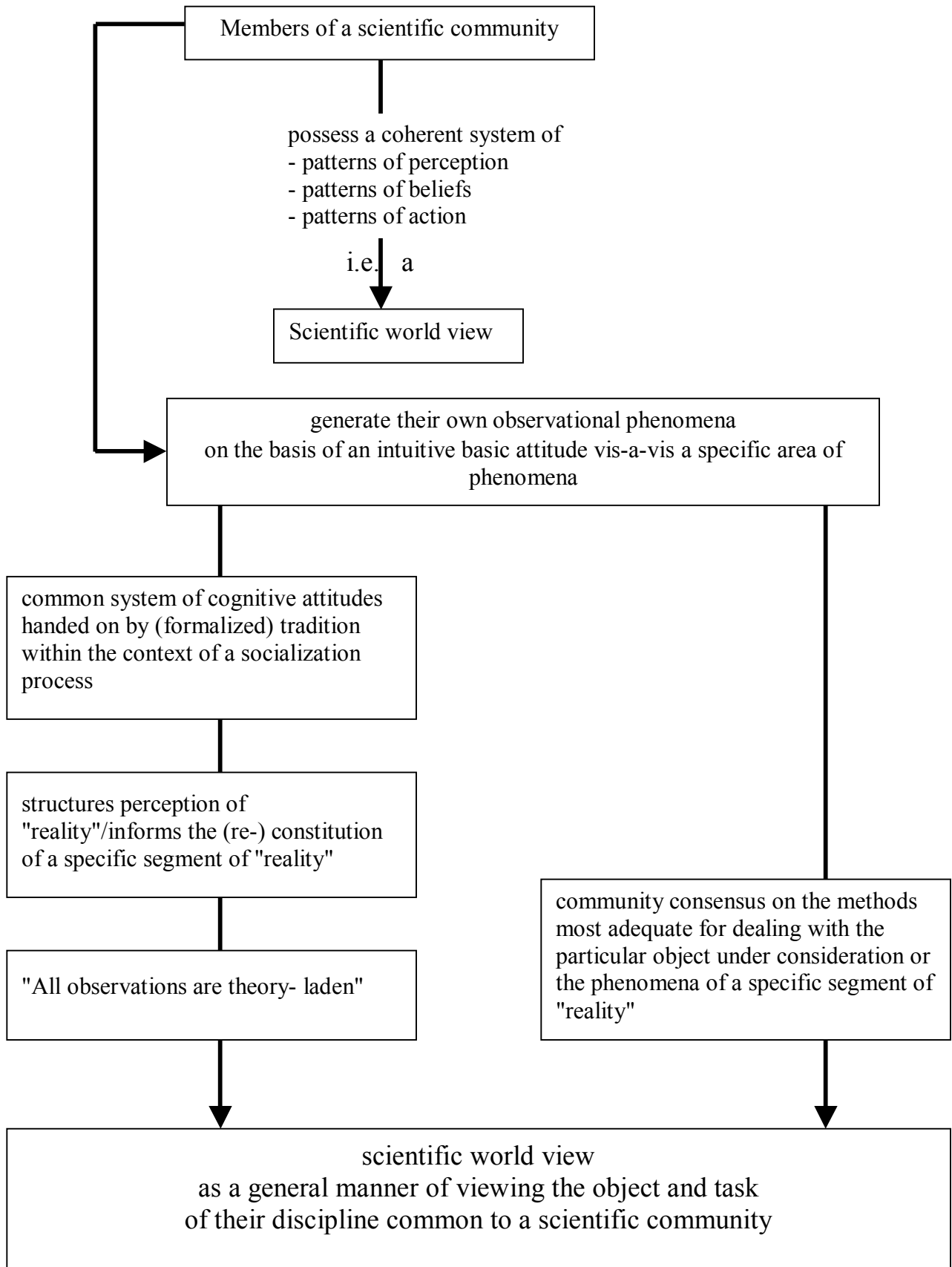




The importance of Grand Theories lies not only in their role as conceptual-linguistic constructs with the help of which we (re-)constitute, choose, and interpret the "facts" of international "reality", and decide the question which phenomena can aspire to the status of recognized facts of I.R. on what grounds.

Each individual Grand Theory also constitutes a specific scientific world view, ontologically singular, different from other world views constituted by other Grand Theories (cf. again Fig. 4). These world views form the cristallization points for traditions, schools of thought, epistemic communities and the like - all units in the social organisation of scientific labour which not only differentiate and refine their specific world view in competition with the adherents of other, ontologically different world views, but also further the historical development of science: They hand on their particular body of knowledge, subsumed under the "trade mark" of a particular Grand Theory, to future generations of scientists - a process of intra-scientific socialization well known to each aspiring university student (cf.Fig.8).

**Fig. 8: Importance of scientific World Views**



#### ***1. 4) Theory - a fresh look at the concept***

Our review of some of the more prominent characteristics of recent (meta-) theoretical developments in the social sciences leads to a final question: what can we expect from theory - and what sort of theory are we to expect ?

My own position would neither refer to the classical normative concept of theory - as a means to formulate and justify existential norms or to devise precepts for social action which aims at approximating concrete reality to a given norm - nor to the traditional scientific or empirical-inductive concept of theory - with its sequence of observation - description - hypothesis formulation - hypothesis testing - formulation of laws - prognosis.

Rather, I refer to the dialectical tension existing between societal problem management and conflict resolution on the one hand, and an enlightening, emancipatory questioning of existing structures of social power and domination on the other.

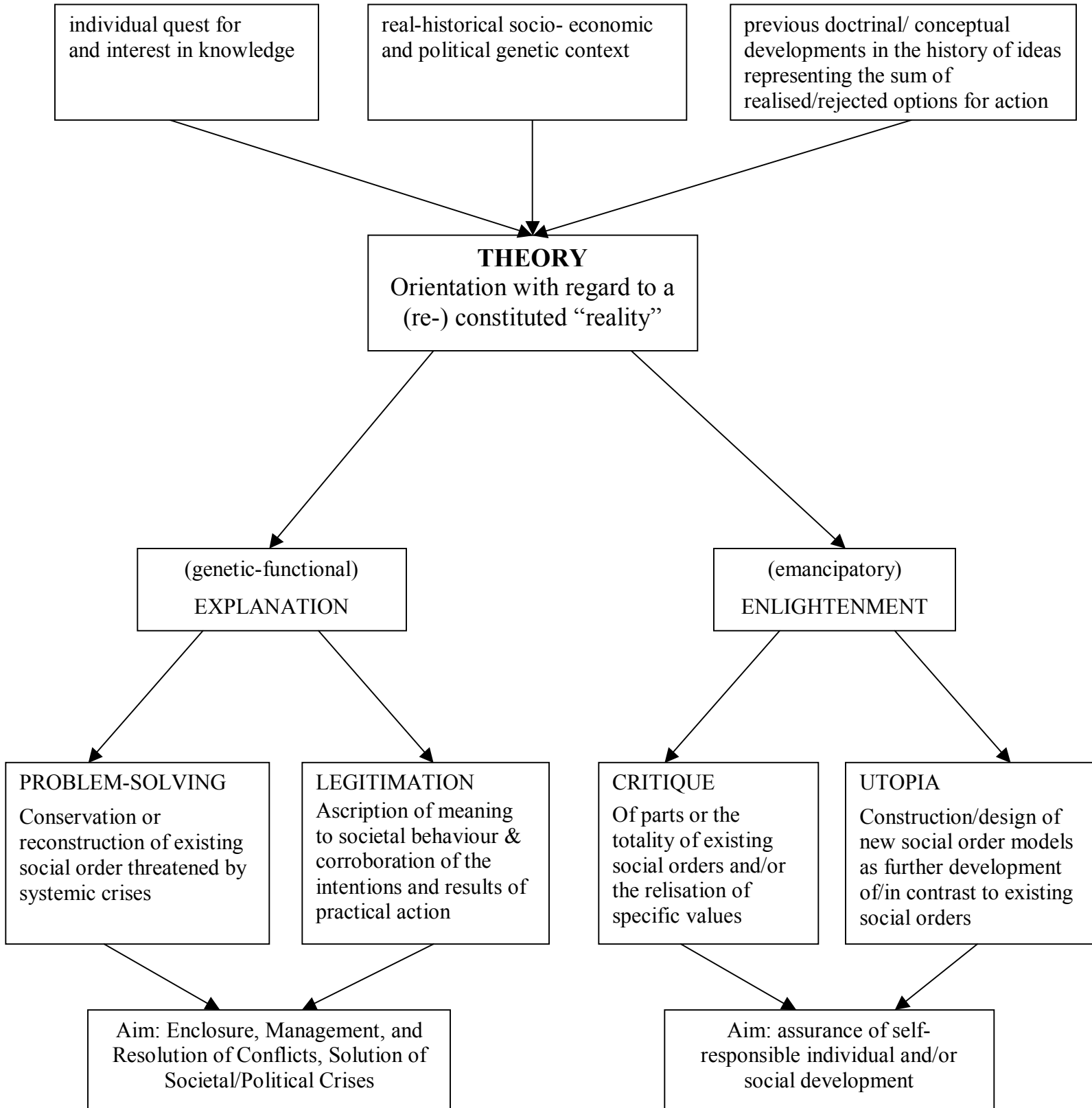
My concept of theory would not regard institutions, behavioral norms, social and power relations, political and socioeconomic interests and problematiques as givens, but it would try to localize their position, standing, and importance in historically concrete genetic contexts.

My concept of theory would try to ascertain the potency for change which could be attributed to all these social artefacts: to what extent can they contribute to the change and development of societal phenomena ?

My concept of theory would also try to ascertain the potential for change all these social artefacts show: to what extent are they open to self-change and self-development, i.e. for a process set in train by a more general, over-arching historical process of development, modernization, emancipation ?

Theory so defined produces orientation with regard to a (re-)constituted "reality". It tries to **explain** social phenomena - not by subsuming them as individual instances under general laws, but by looking at their genetic and functional contexts, their history, societal importance, socially attributed meaning and socially/linguistically constituted and transmitted interpretation. It also tries to **enlighten** about social phenomena: by critically analysing the difference between aim and realisation in the making of social order, by contrasting a specific historical-material realisation of a norm with the prospect of its fulfillment in a concrete - or perhaps also not so concrete - utopia. Or - to put it more bluntly: my kind of theory would not only have to ask the classical question "**Why ?**" It would also have to ask the question "**What for ?**" (and perhaps, having ascertained a satisfactory answer to that question, it would also ask "**How, and with/by which means ?**").

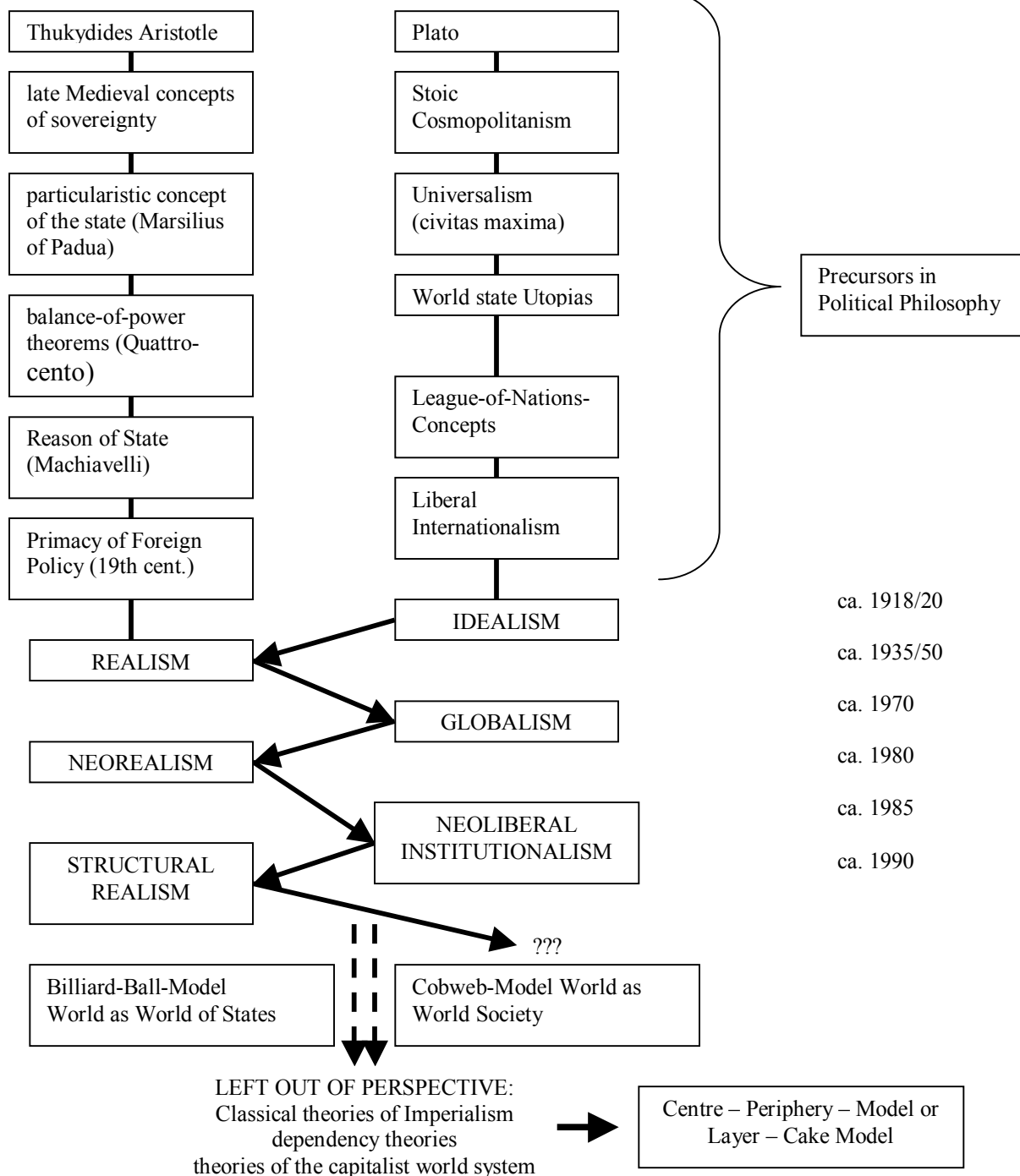
**Fig. 9: An alternative concept of theory**



## Block II: Theory development in International Relations. Ontological Base Lines

International Relations as a scientific discipline dates back to a particularly horrendous crisis in European history: it was founded as a direct result of the breakdown of Eurocentric international relations in the First World War. Throughout the first fifty years of its existence, the genesis and development of I.R. theory was interpreted largely in terms of a duopolistic development process, between the world views of Realism on the one hand, and liberal Internationalism or Idealism (as the latter tended to be called from the 1920s onwards) on the other (Olson/Groom 1991; Dunne/Cox/Booth 1998).

**Fig. 10: The Realism - Idealism Duopoly in the development of I. R. theory**



Only in the 1970s the realization of the state of the Third, then even more so of the Fourth World ('development of underdevelopment') the loosening of the tight grip the dichotomic structure of the Cold War had on I.R. research, and the questioning of established authorities in the wake of the student revolt opened up new avenues of thinking: the development of I.R. theory was no longer interpreted in terms of a two-cornered contest between Idealism and Realism, but rather in terms of a triangular competition between the former two and structural approaches to the analysis of world politics.

The 1980s consensus in the field (cf. e.g. Banks 1984) had it that, since the beginning of the 1980s, I.R. theory was characterized by an Inter-Paradigm debate between Realism, Pluralism (as the successors to Idealism came to be called in the 1970s), and Structuralism respectively (cf. Morse 1976; Light & Groom 1985) I quote a typical example:

"For realists, such as Morgenthau (1973) and Waltz (1979), the key actors are states, and the main processes at work involve a search for security, which is usually defined in military terms, although one of the key contributions of neo-realism has been to offer a powerful account of international political economy. States are treated, in good Weberian fashion, as monoliths with interests, dominant of which is the maximization of power. This combination of actors and processes leads to a world most notable for a struggle for dominance. War is therefore an ever-present possibility, and this is only held at bay by a mixture of skilful diplomacy, emerging international law, and, above all, the systemic mechanism of the balance of power. Indeed, one may discern two distinct strands in realism. The first is a structural strand, stressing the Impact of the system on its units, and this has a heritage that runs from Thucydides through to Waltz. The second strand is more practical in orientation, stressing the role of individuals in dealing with the dangers of anarchy through the use of diplomacy. This practical strand is most clearly exemplified by Machiavelli. Unfortunately, the 'father' of contemporary realism, Hans Morgenthau, can be read in both ways; I say 'unfortunately' because there is an obvious tension in these two accounts which I will return to at the end of this chapter.

Structuralists (see Brewer, 1990) examine international relations from a very different perspective altogether. For them, the state is dominant but only in the sense that it represents a set of economic interests. Inspired by Marx's writings on international economics and politics, this perspective sees states not as separate actors in themselves, but rather as the tools of the dominant economic class. International relations is, therefore, a struggle for power, but in a very different sense from that portrayed by the realists. The struggle is for economic dominance, and the key basic actors are classes. The state is important for its role in promoting class interests, which leads to the analysis of international relations in terms of core - periphery relations. International politics is the result of the fundamental developments at work in these core - periphery economic relations. International relations is therefore concerned with exploitation, imperialism and underdevelopment, and the main outcome is one of the continued exploitation of the poor periphery by the rich core. For structuralists, the pluralists' concern with management and changing hierarchies of values is nothing more than another form of core dominance. The long historical domination by capitalism indicates its ability to alter its form to continue domination. The so-called victory

of capitalism over communism makes capitalism *the* global model, thereby increasing the importance of the core-periphery cleavage as the dominant one in international relations.

Pluralists (see Keohane and Nye, 1972; Mansbach et al., 1976; Morse, 1976) accept the importance of the state, but argue that it increasingly has to operate in a world in which other types of actors are important. These non-state actors, such as revolutionary groups and, most notably, multinational corporations, reduce the autonomy of states and increase the costs for states to get their own way. An array of subnational, transnational and supranational actors challenge the dominance of the state across a wide range of issues. This results in a very different view of the world from that of the realists. Gone is the realist notion of a monolithic state pursuing national interests; gone is the idea, central to realists, of a clear analytic division between domestic and international politics; and gone is the conception of a hierarchy of values with military issues being most important. In their place is a world where national actors comprise many competing bureaucracies, with foreign policy being at best a compromise between these various organizations' views of the national interest and at worst the unintended outcome of the pulling and hauling between national bureaucracies. The nation of separate domestic and international environments disappears to be replaced with a cross-cutting view of world politics, with the question of where domestic politics begins and ends being essentially problematic. Finally, this is a world where a range of issues competes for decision-makers' attention, with there being no clear hierarchy of issues. In this mixed-actor system, the focus is on the twin forces of trans-nationalism and interdependence. The first of these removes the state from centre stage; the second forces us to look at the linkages between societies and to stress the importance of economic matters in foreign policy. Together, they refocus analysis away from national control and the balance of power towards the management of the structural situation of complex interdependence. This situation is one in which national actors struggle to control a fluid external environment, and where the analytic focus is on management and bargaining within and between national actors. "

[All quotes from Steve Smith: Foreign Policy Theory and the New Europe, in: Walter Carlsnaes/Steve Smith (eds.): European Foreign Policy. The EC and Changing Perspectives in Europe. London: Sage 1995, pp 1 - 20, quotes pp 4 - 5 ]

Obviously, this description is somewhat simplified (as recourse to Figs. 4 & 5 demonstrates). The genetic traditions and internal differentiations of the competing paradigms are much richer than this brief snap-shot allows us to assume. Furthermore, the new trinity of approaches to I.R. theorizing neglects the fact that from the late 1980s onwards, they themselves are assailed again by new conceptual movements which once again shift the focus of the debate from the ontological plane of different world-views to the epistemological arena - i.e.

- the rise of a critical theory of international relations from the early 1980s onwards
- the postmodern intervention into, if not deconstruction of international relations from the late 1980s onwards
- the various critical contributions against a male-dominated science made by feminist authoresses
- finally the contributions offered by a revived historical sociology.

We can deal with the latter phenomena, if at all, only rather cursorily and briefly (there is certainly scope for a part II of this course). However, what I suggest to do now and during the next few sessions is to demonstrate the richness - if one may not even say: the bewildering multi-furcations - of the genesis of I.R. theory (useful contemporary overviews can be found in Taylor 1978; Groom & Light 1994; Menzel & Varga 1999).

## **II. 1) The Debate between Liberal Internationalism/Idealism and Realism**

- both Grand Theories reflect, in view of their genetic context, my contention that I.R. is an enterprise in crisis interpretation and crisis management
- the main bone of contention between the two is the answer to the question: who are the actors of I.R. and in what milieu do they act ?

	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Milieu</b>
<b>REALISM</b>	Sovereign States & International Governmental Organisations	an-archically structured system of states in which actors enter zero-sum-game competitions for territory, power and resources
<b>IDEALISM</b>	Plurality of actors including states, IGOs, INGOs, societal actors, individuals	international society made up of a myriad of cobweb-type relations transgressing national boundaries and undercutting state authority; actors engage in functional positive-sum games



Fig. 11: Idealism and Realism: Main Contrasts

Basic Positions	IDEALISM	REALISM
<b>Anthropological Conception</b>	Man is endowed with <b>Reason</b> by Nature; his actions are governed by norms and ideals founded in Reason and therefore intelligible; these norms and ideals predicate his actions upon the concept of <b>progress</b> to an ever more perfect world (idea of perfectibility)	Man is thrown into the contradiction of norm and reality, into the conflict of creative and destructive realisation potentials of liberty; this situation instils <b>fear</b> ; fear is countered by efforts to achieve security by means of the acquisition, demonstration, and augmentation of <b>power</b> (over others)
<b>governing disciplinary interest</b>	Achievement and conservation of world peace by supersession of competition of states in favour of a world society (consisting of, and uniting in the end, individuals and their free associations)	Achievement and conservation of world peace by taking insight into the lessons of the past and making use of these lessons for the solution of contemporary problems
<b>Problematique</b>	Which norms have to be formulated in order to direct political and societal action towards the realisation of  a) world peace  b) world society  Or: <b>How</b> should international politics be like ?	Which comparable, typical conditions, forms, and forces determine relations between states or/and international governmental organisations?  Or: <b>What</b> is international politics really like ?
<b>Object of discipline</b>	World society (as a unitary world community <i>in statu nascendi</i> ) and the individuals living in this world society	an-archic, i .e. open, multi-polar system of states lacking a central decision-making and order-enforcing authority

<b>Principal actors of international politics</b>	Individuals and their societal associations (International Non-Governmental Organisations: INGOs)	Sovereign National States and Governmental International Organisations (IGOs)
<b>Central aim of actors</b>	Achievement and conservation of a peaceful world order	Protection of states' individual existence and security; assertion of states' national interests in the international system
<b>typical means and instruments in the achievement of aims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appeal to Reason</li> <li>- Enlightenment about common interests of mankind</li> <li>- Education to norm-oriented action</li> <li>- Democratisation of authoritarian, rule-of-law-unobeying regimes</li> <li>- cobweblike netting and concatenation of international organisations and associations of individuals on a world scale</li> </ul>	<p>Acquisition, Conservation, Augmentation, Demonstration of Power Balance-of-Power Politics</p> <p>Deterrence politics based on superior arsenal of armaments</p>
<b>Milieu</b>	universal world state (as federal organisation of free individual associations) or universal world community	fragmented milieu, anarchic international state of nature of sovereign entities not recognising any higher authority
<b>Characteristic feature of inter- national politics</b>	<p>Positive sum game</p> <p>Progressive development of forces of production and progressive differentiation and specialization of international division of</p>	<p>Zero sum game</p> <p>Changes in the distribution of goods favouring one actor weaken the position of one or more other actors comparatively; the overall mass of goods</p>

	labour in a free market/free trade system produces continual increases in the volume, number, and value of goods redistributable within the system; actors' rising expectations can be satisfied out of the growth margin of the world social product	redistributable within the system does neither increase nor decrease (cf. politics of mercantilism)
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This summary exposition will be followed by a number of more detailed break-downs of individual aspects of the tradition of Liberal Idealism on the one hand. the tradition of Classical Realism (as it has become known over the last 20 years or so in order to separate it from the structural arguments of Neo-Realism and Structural Realism) on the other.

Recommended reading:

Idealism/Liberal Internationalism:

- Evan Luard: *Economic Relationships Among States. A Further Study in International Sociology.* London: Macmillan 1984

Classical Realism – Originals:

- Edward Hallett Carr: *The 20 Years' Crisis 1919 - 1939. An Introduction to the Study of International Relations.* Repr. London: Macmillan 1974
- Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Fifth Edition, Revised, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978
- Kenneth N. Waltz: *Man, the state, and war. A theoretical analysis*, New York: Columbia UP 1959

Debating Classical Realism – Secondary Works:

- Michael Joseph Smith: *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP 1986
- Benjamin Frankel (ed.): *Realism: Restatements and Renewal.* London: Frank Cass 1996
- Greg Russell: *Hans J. Morgenthau and the Ethics of American Statecraft.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP 1990
- Charles W. Kegley, Jr. (ed.): *Controversies in International Relations Theory. Realism and the Neoliberal Challenge.* New York: St. Martin's Press 1995
- John A. Vasquez: *The Power of Power Politics: From Classical Realism to Neotraditionalism.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1998

**Fig. 12: Liberal Internationalism: Premisses**

**a) intellectual roots**

<u>Scientific Revolution</u>	<u>Natural Rights Theories</u>	<u>Puritanism/ Calvinism</u>	<u>Physiocratic Economics</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- clear distinction between the real, objective, mathematically observable world and the subjective world of opinion and illusion</li> <li>- explanation of how the universe operates rather than why - or: preference for resolute - compositive analysis rather than teleological reasoning</li> <li>- experience and careful reflection on empirical evidence only criteria of truth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- natural law of mankind ideally enacted by natural communities (.i.e. commonwealths of basically free and equal individuals) respecting both divine will and impersonal forces of nature</li> <li>- man is a rational animal (animal rationale); his faculties of rational reasoning enable him to gain insight into the perennial validity of natural rights norms and the need to exercise sympathetic concerns for others</li> <li>- the development of the natural and social worlds are governed by Reason</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- work ethic glorifying individualistic pursuit of material wealth</li> <li>- qualities of diligence, frugality, and rational calculation (cost/benefit-analysis) - possessive individualism</li> <li>- individual's profit-maximizing objectives require freedom from state control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- goods and services produced for market exchange purposes</li> <li>- market process circular flow of income and expenditure</li> <li>- social phenomena governed by natural laws independent of human will and intention</li> <li>- economic world a system of spontaneous order operating through market processes</li> <li>- class structure of society defined not in traditional status terms, but in economic categories</li> <li>- idea of economic surplus ("net product")</li> <li>- Maxim of "Laissez-faire, laissez-aller"</li> </ul>



**Rationalist Tradition**



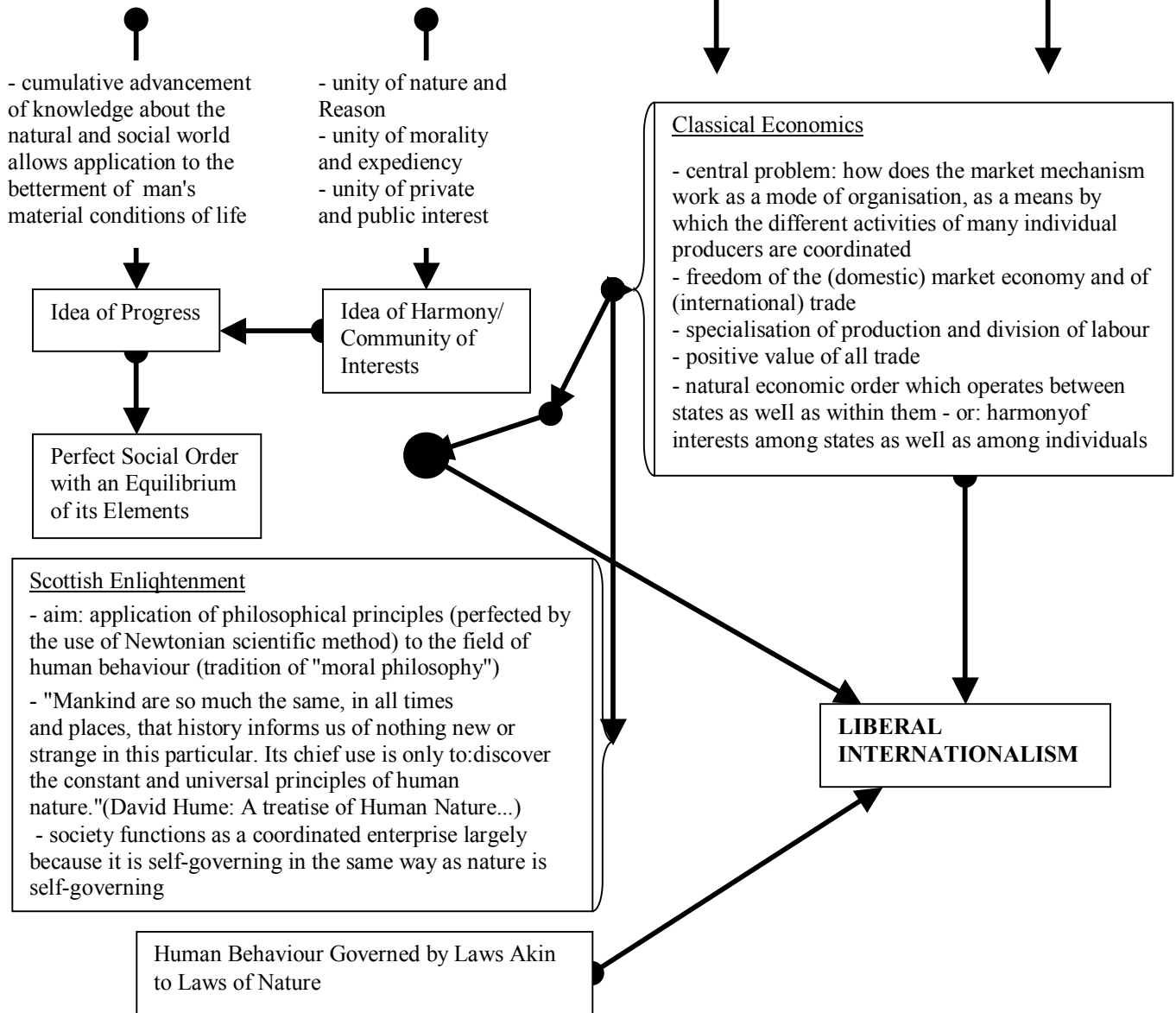
**Maxim: Act Rationally – sapere aude**



**Economic Virtues of Acquisitive Society**



**Economic Model Building**



### David Ricardo

On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation, in: P.Sraffa (ed.): The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo. Vol.I: Cambridge 1951, p 133

“Under a system of perfectly free commerce, each country naturally devotes its capital and labour to such employments as are most beneficial to each. The pursuit of individual advantage is admirably connected with the universal good of the whole. By stimulating industry, by rewarding ingenuity and by using most efficaciously the peculiar powers bestowed by nature, it distributes labour most effectively and most economically: while by increasing the general mass of productions it diffuses general benefit, and binds together by one common tie of interest and intercourse, the universal society of nations throughout the civilized world.”

**Fig. 13: Liberal Internationalism: Genealogy (I)**

	<b>Principles</b>	<b>International Application</b>
<p><b>David Hume</b> (1711 - 1776) Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary (1752)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- international division of labour</li> <li>- self-correcting balance of trade</li> <li>- harmony of (economic) interests between nations &amp; states</li> <li>- mutuality of trade and prosperity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- anti-Mercantilism (international trade no longer a zero-sum-game, but a variable sum game)</li> <li>- preparatory argumentative stages in favour of trade liberalisation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Adam Smith</b> (1723 - 1790) An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (1776)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- anti-Mercantilism</li> <li>- economic growth and productive gains are best secured by rational egoists freely pursuing individual material interests - or: rational egoism of individual economic actor(s) --- invisible hand (competition in a free market) &gt; public good</li> <li>- Precondition: freedom of trade and market(s); division of labour, specialisation and economic inter-dependence &gt; further efficient production and accumulation of wealth (defined as general productive capacities of an economy)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vent-for-surplus-Theory: foreign trade absorbs the output of underused domestic production factors</li> <li>- Theorem of absolute advantage: free trade is universally beneficial when each nation can produce some particular commodity more efficiently than any other; gains from trade are based on absolute advantage in production &gt; application of principle of specialisation and division of labour on a global scale</li> </ul>
<p><b>David Ricardo</b> (1772 - 1823) The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation (1817)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- anti-landed interest</li> <li>- finiteness of agricultural production factors (cf. also Malthus !) plus rise in population drive up cost of natural</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- world markets offer means of overcoming the agricultural obstacle to development by trade</li> <li>- foreign trade nationally</li> </ul>

	(subsistence) wage of labour, thus reducing investable business profits; without investment, economic growth suffers and will finally come to a standstill	beneficial (only) insofar as it contributes (via food imports) to lower wages which in turn mean rising profits & investments & new economic growth - to gain most from foreign trade, nations should concentrate on comparative advantage in production - monetary forces unimportant due to self-correcting specie flow mechanism
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### Further elaborations

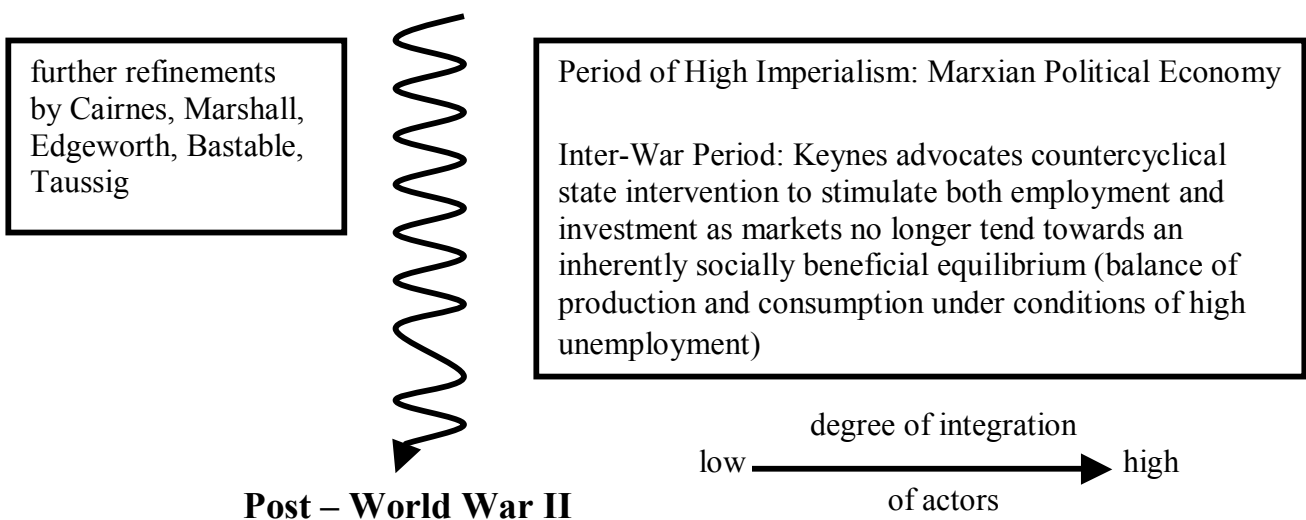
<b>Richard Cobden</b> (1804 - 1865) The Political Writings of Richard Cobden (1867)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Political and parliamentary support for free trade</li> <li>- Anti-Corn-Law League 1839</li> <li>- Cobden Treaty with France 1860</li> </ul> "Free trade is God's diplomacy, and there is no other certain way of uniting people in bonds of peace." "Free trade, by perfecting the intercourse and securing the interdependence of countries one upon another, must inevitably snatch the power from the government to plunge their people into wars." "The people of the two nations must be brought into mutual dependence by supplying each other's wants. There is no other way of counteracting the antagonism of language and race. It is God's own method of producing an entente cordiale and no other plan is worth a farthing." (on occasion of negotiating the treaty with France in 1860)
<b>John Stuart Mill</b> (1806 - 1873) Principles of Political Economy (1848)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- joining of the idea of progress and ever-increasing perfectibility of the human race with the principle of free trade</li> </ul> "...it is commerce which is rapidly rendering war obsolete, by strengthening and multiplying the personal interests which are in natural opposition to it. And it may be said without exaggeration that the great extent and rapid increase of international trade, in being the principal guarantee of the peace of the world, is the great permanent security for the uninterrupted progress of the ideas, the institutions and the character of the human race."

**Fig. 14: Liberal Internationalism: Genealogy (II)**

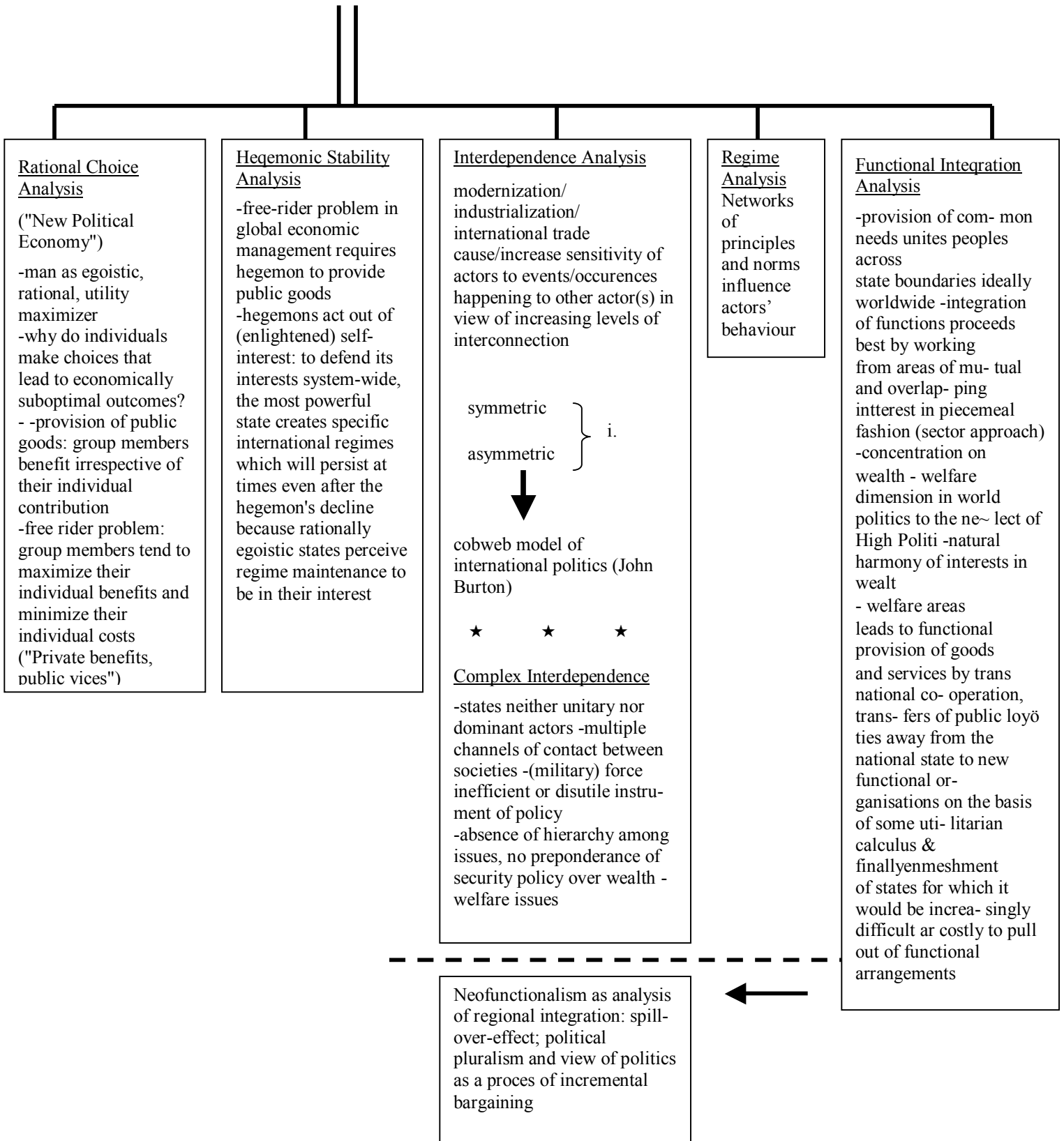
To sum up the first hundred years:

According to the classical view of liberal internationalism

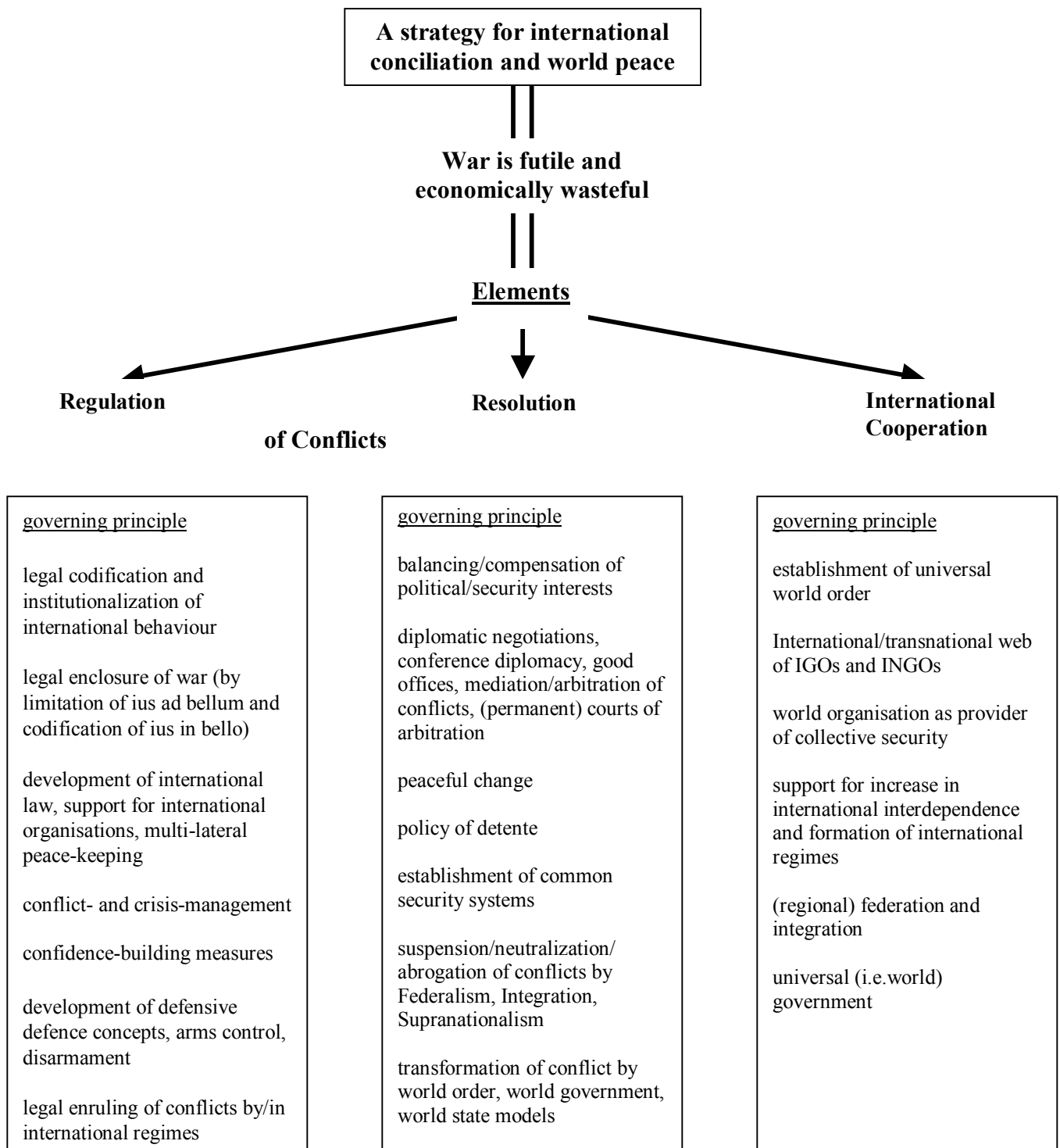
- economics has a logic distinct from politics and should not be interfered with, messed up or hampered by politics
- freely functioning markets, based upon a division of labour, will maximize efficiency and prosperity
- the "invisible hand" of competition will naturally ensure that the pursuit of self-interest will lead to the common good of all
- political economy is conceptualized almost wholly in terms of interrelationships among rational economic actors on all possible levels of analysis: individual consumers in a national economy; individual groups; individual national economies interacting in the international economy
- the world market appears as same sort of transnational cosmopolitan consumer society - a harmonious summation of a huge number of free transactions among rational economic agents related by the principle of comparative advantage, striving for a certain semi-automatic equilibrium by means of the quantity theory of money, which ties in changes in reserves to changes in domestic prices and thus ensures that trade and payments imbalances are self-corrective
- Political Economy becomes the science par excellence of peace; it harbours a "...dream...of a great republic of world commerce, in which national boundaries would cease to have any great economic importance and the web of trade would bind all the peoples of the world in prosperity of peace..." (J.B.Condliffe: The commerce of nations, London 1951:136)







**Fig. 15: Liberal Internationalism: Promises**



governing precondition

- enlightened instruction on harmony/community of interests
- neutralization of prejudices by furtherance of international contacts
- transfer of loyalties from state to international/world society level
- advocacy of human rights, civil liberties, democratic government
- building up of supportive public opinion

## Liberal Internationalism: Problems

As a peace strategy, Liberal Internationalism was not particularly successful. From 1839 to 1878 the international system was afflicted by 19 wars. (cf. William K. Domke: War and the changing global system, Yale U.P.1988)

\* \* \*

As a general strategy for international economic relations, Liberal Internationalism variously shipwrecked on the respective cliffs of Colonialism and Imperialism, nationalism and national economic autarky, the mixed economy, the formation of integrated trading blocks (like the EC with its maxim of "Smith at home, F. List abroad"), and the North-South divide (horizontal structure of trade between developed industrial manufacturing countries vs. vertical structure of trade between industrial producers and underdeveloped primary producers).

\* \* \*

As a policy emphasizing individual economic welfare and "consumption as the sole end and purpose of production" (A. Smith), Liberal Internationalism is about to founder on the horns of the ecology dilemma (or the problem of the global commons: peace with nature as a public good involving a massive free-rider problem)

\* \* \*

As an ideal-typical economic model - based on the static operational context of a two-nation, two-commodity relationship, where labour is mobile nationally but immobile internationally, with perfect competition prevailing in all factor and production markets, constant costs of production, no economies (or diseconomies) of scale, zero transport costs and no barter trade, and production measured nationally in terms of its relative domestic real labour costs - comparing national sets of labour costs ratios and showing that a basis for trade exists where absolute and/or comparative advantage persist, Liberal Internationalism is miles away from any semblance to present-day reality.

\* \* \*

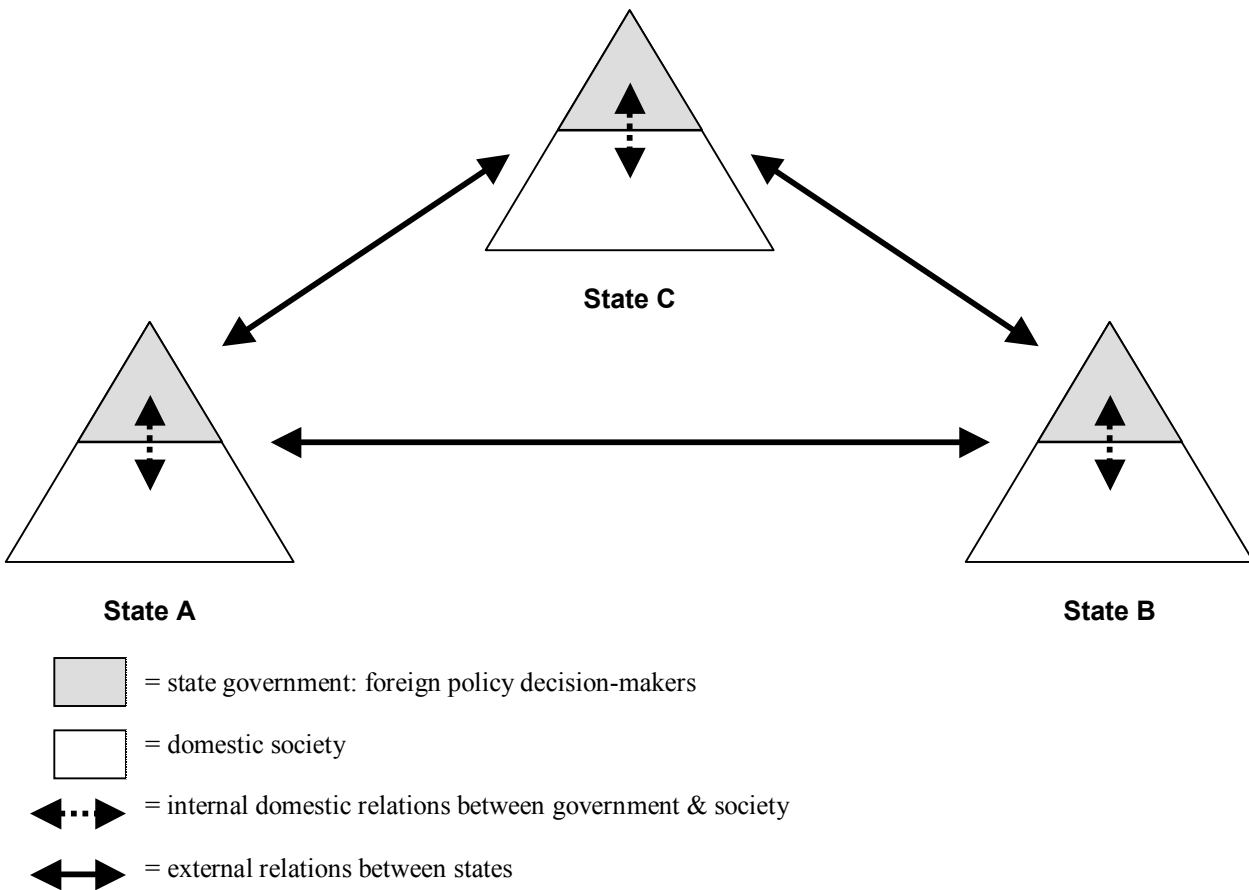
"The traditional approach to international relations, by confining itself to the sterile analysis of trade between (usually two) anonymous countries, has produced a body of theory which is at worst positively misleading, and at best merely vacuous." Thomas Balogh: Fact and Fancy in International Relations, Pergamon Press 1973, p.16)

**Fig. 16: Realism - Premisses**

I) All politics is governed by objective laws - i.e. causal relations existing independently of individuals' perception. The aim of international theory is to recognise these laws amidst the welter of individual historical cases. Once formulated, these laws serve as a tool in the interpretation and analysis of concrete cases of international politics. They also form the basis of a praxeology of international politics - i.e. of an attempt to formulate guidance rules for future action in specific international situations. These rules should heed the maxims of political prudence and moderation.

II) States are the only important actors of international politics. The analytic object of I.R. as a scientific discipline are the relations between states. Thus, its primary research interests are the behaviour and motives of international actors - or, more precisely, of those legitimized foreign policy decision makers representing their state vis-a-vis other states. Other international actors gain importance only to the extent they can be regarded as agents or tools of states.

**The State as Actor (and Gatekeeper) in International Politics**



III) International relations are the result of individual interactions of states as international actors. The aims of these actors are defined in categories of military power and national security ( "High Politics"). National security in turn is defined in the categories of territorial rule and/or ideological domination undisturbed by outside influences. All other political aims (i.e. economic and social security, cultural development etc.) are defined as "low politics"; in the inventory of state aims and values they enjoy only a minor role.

IV) The key concept of political theory is the concept of power; the acquisition, conservation, augmentation, and demonstration of power is a basic need of man's anthropological condition.

V) International actors strive for power. Insofar as they are sovereign actors, they cannot be controlled by a higher authority enjoying the monopoly of the legitimate exercise of physical power. Thus, the essence of international politics is an an-archic competition for power amongst its actors.

VI) In such a fragmented, an-archic milieu general ethical norms cannot be asserted. Maxims for political action valid in a specific historical situation are, as a rule, functions of the interests of the more powerful international actors. Thus, cooperation of actors under anarchy serves their individual interests, particularly their interest in conserving and/or improving their relative power position. The factual existence of international norms and of international cooperation do not furnish any clues to the existence of an international society of states (regulated, in the common interest of actors, by international law).

VII) In such a fragmented, an-archic milieu states generally pursue their national interests. The national interest is defined in the category of conserving a state's absolute or relative power position in the international system. Thus, domestic politics have to serve the basic interest of securing the territorial and political integrity of an actor. This posits the primacy of foreign policy.

VIII) International relations are a zero-sum-game; improvements in the position of one actor cause corresponding deteriorations in the position of another/all other actors. The decisional mode of this game is conflict; military force serves implicitly or explicitly as a means of conflict regulation and conflict resolution.

IX) Due to the lack of an effective, legitimate higher authority superimposed upon the international actors, the international system is a self-help system. Recourse to the application of military force is the ultima ratio of international politics. The primary aim of politics following the interest of power must be the conservation of national sovereignty. Thus, the overall context of an actor's international politics is ruled by security and defence; foreign policy is subjugated to the primacy of security politics.

X) The historical development process of international politics is a contingent one: there is no evolution to a final, pre-ordained aim or end.

**Fig. 17: Classical Realism – Genesis**

**Historical background**

Genesis of the territorial state and radication of political control (cf.Fig.18)  
 Genesis of the (domestic) peace-making & law-,order-,and security-providing functions of the territorial state  
 Drawing of political boundaries and distinction between domestic and international spheres of competence  
 Genesis of the European System of States since 1648/1713

**History of ideas - sources**

Machiavelli:

Development of the concept of Reason of State as legitimacy focus of the self-assertion of the modern territorial state

Hobbes:

Supersession of the state of nature between individuals by social contract establishing the Ruler as the sole holder of the monopoly of physical power; legitimation of the ruler as the guarantor of a territorially distinct security community recognizing no higher authority (essence of sovereignty); freeing of the concept of the state of nature for the purpose of describing the relations between such security communities (i.e. sovereign states)

Natural Law doctrines (16th/18th cent.):

Development of the concept of the state as a legal person; metaphoric hypertrophy of this concept by the Historical Law School (19th cent.): state as independent international actor acting on the international plane out of its own free will

Idealtypical – metaphoric characteristics

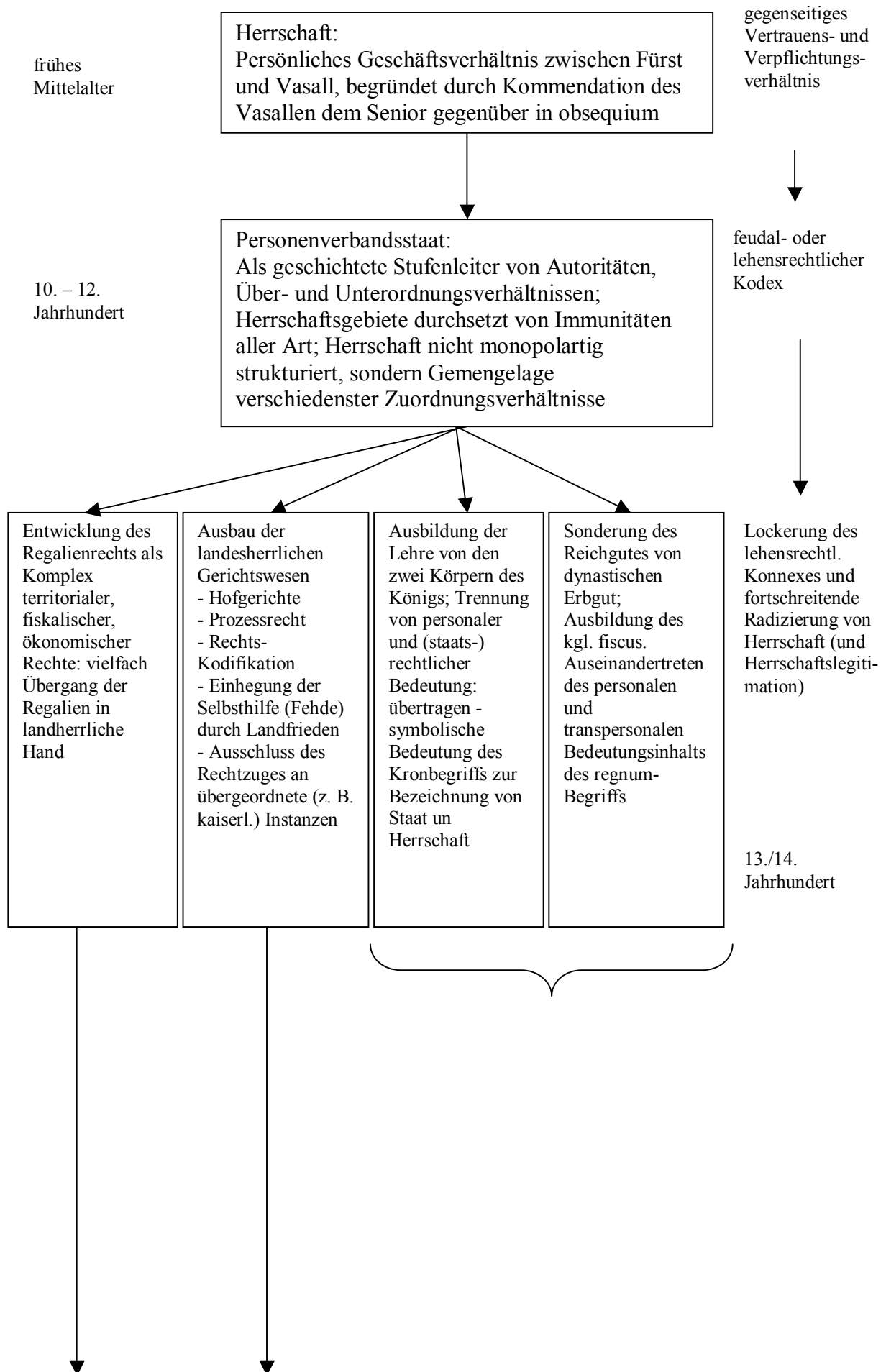
**System level**

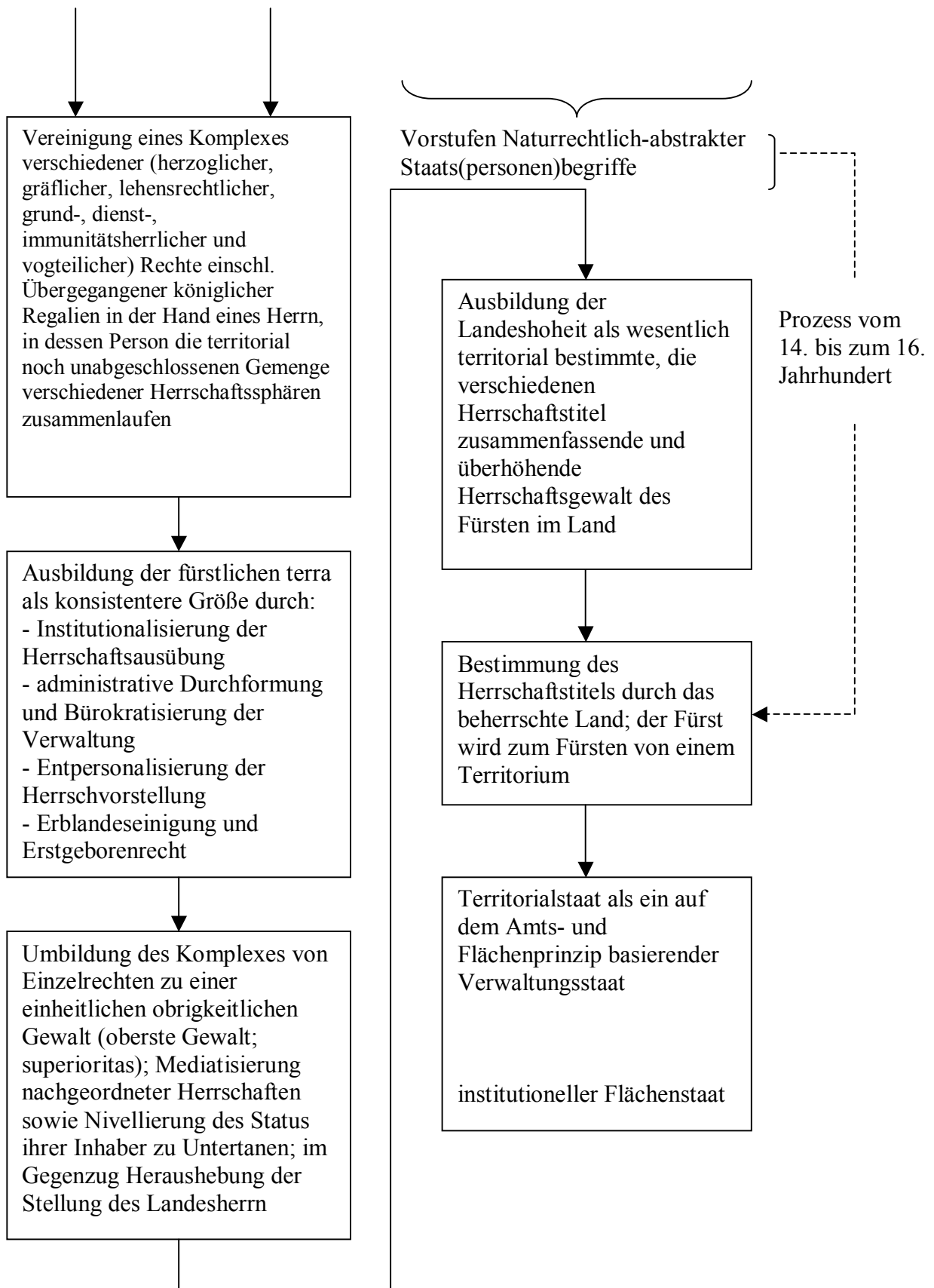
- an-archic structure
- security dilemma
- Balance-of-Power based on deterrence
- international relations as a zero-sum game of state actors for power, resources, influence

**Actor level/unit level**

- exclusive competence of actors in the field of high politics
- Territoriality: protective function of the hard shell (cf.Fig.19)
- purposively-rational, profit-maximizing/ profit-optimizing behaviour of actors
- principle of (armed) self-help governing the assertion of interests on the international scene

**Fig. 18: Die Genese des Territorialstaats**

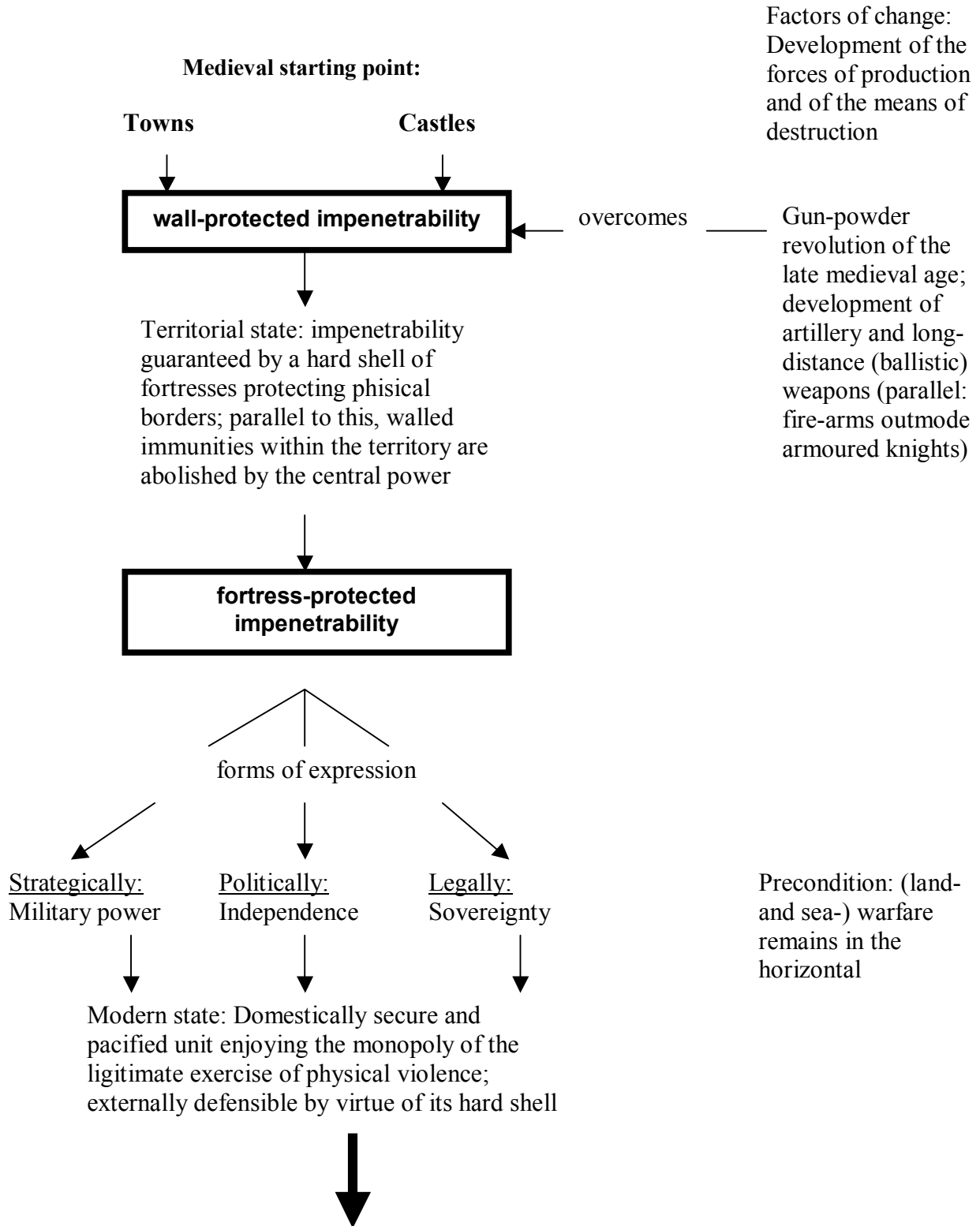


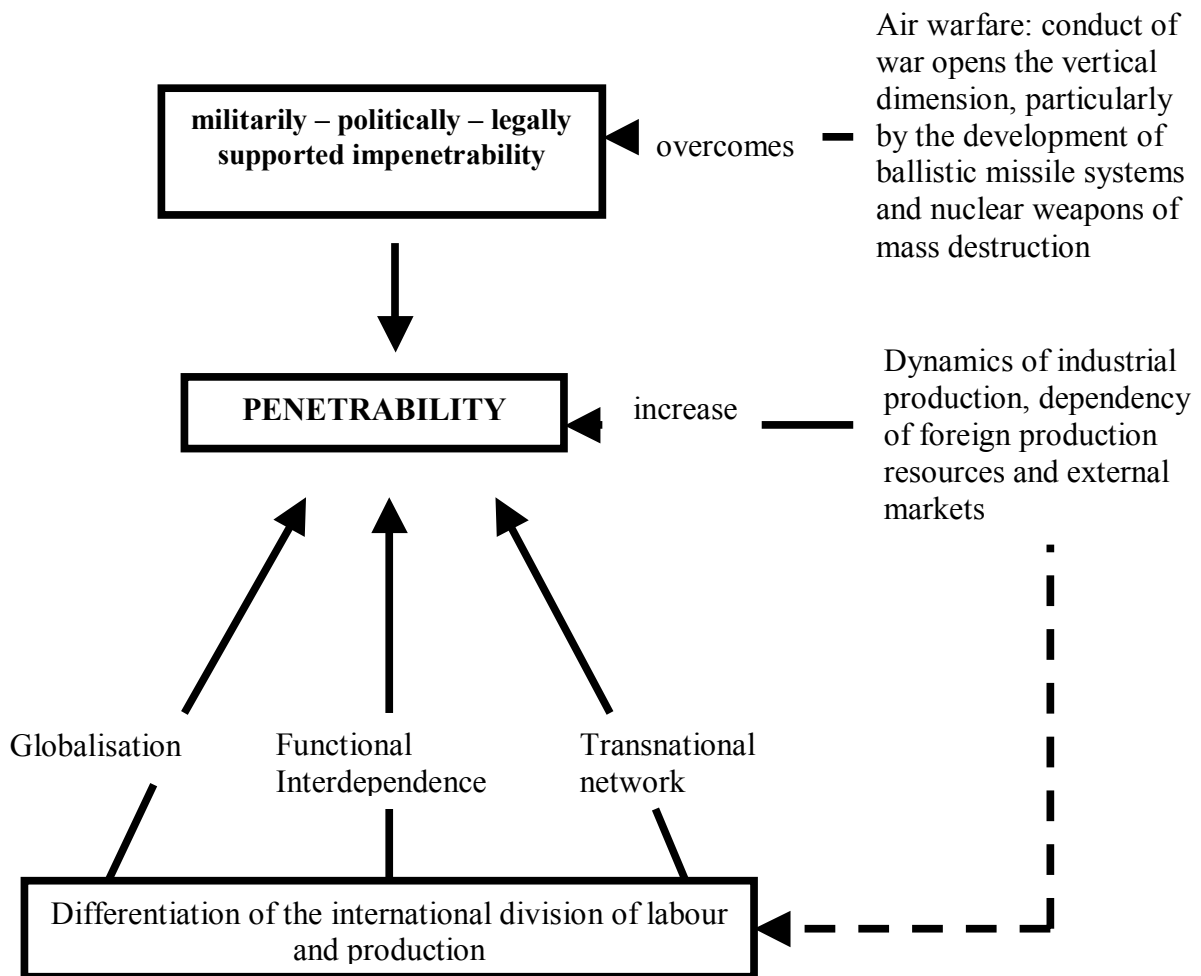




**Fig. 19: The Modern Territorial State**  
**Substrate of the Billiard-Ball-Model of international politics**

**Premiss: The existence of the state is legitimized by the fact that it guarantees security and the rule of law in domestic politics and provides protection against (armed) attack in its relations with other similarly constituted security communities**





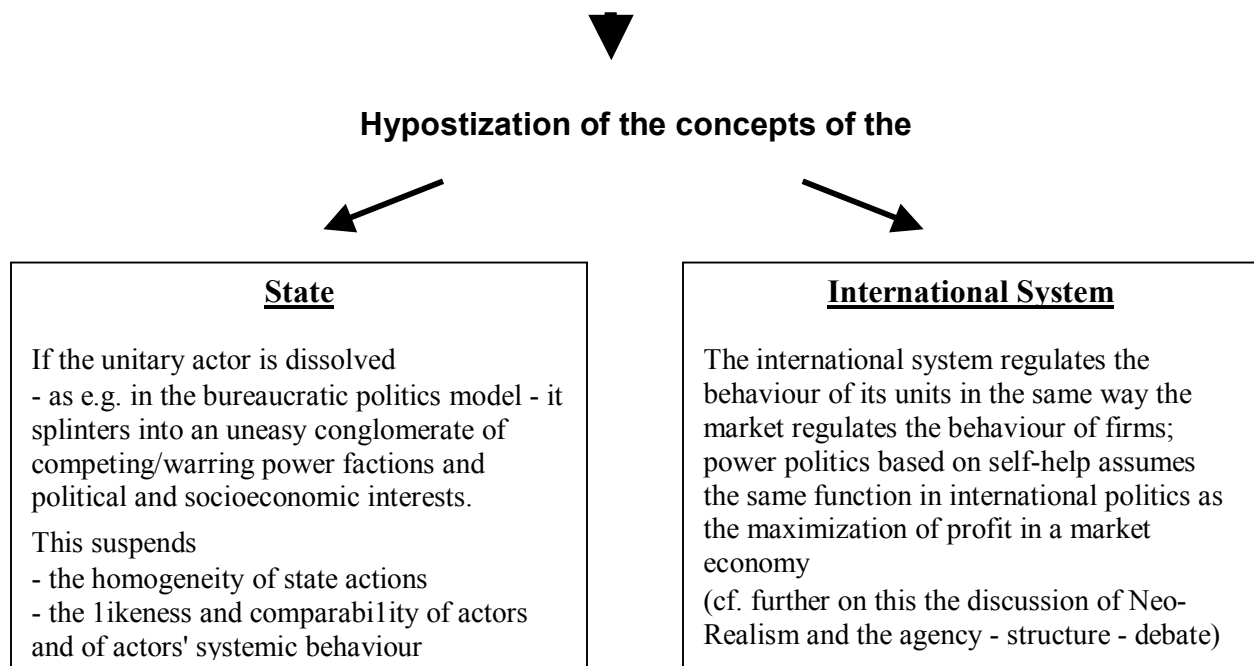
**Recommended Reading:**

- John H. Herz: International Politics in the Atomic Age. New York: Columbia UP 1959
- Edward L. Morse: Modernization and the Transformation of International Relations. New York: Free Press 1976
- Kenneth Dyson: The State Tradition in Western Europe. A Study of an Idea and Institution. Oxford: Martin Robertson 1980
- Anthony Giddens: The Nation-State and Violence. A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, Vol. II. Repr. Cambridge: Polity Press 1989
- Hagen Schulze: Staat und Nation in der Europäischen Geschichte. München: C.H.Beck 1994

## Realism: ontological and analytical problems

### Problematic premisses:

- a) Elevation of states to the status of rational, unitary actors which follow, within the context of the an-archic international system. the aim of guaranteeing their own survival by means of the game of power politics
- b) The political calculus of states is solely governed by the distribution of power within the system
- c) State action is primarily oriented towards the acquisition, conservation, augmentation, and demonstration of power; secondarily towards the conservation of the Balance of Power



The hypostatization of basic concepts and premisses becomes even more obvious in the neorealistic variant of Realism formulated by Kenneth Waltz in the late 1970s. Briefly, Neo - Realism may be interpreted as the consequence of the behavioral revolution in social science and the inroads of scientific epistemology in the field of I.R.. Neo-Realists claim to do away with the woolly foundation of Realism on mythological anthropocentric premisses. Rather, they found their theoretical edifice on a structural property of the international system - anarchy. Whereas they concede, at best, to the theory of Classical Realism an inductivist-empirical status (with a strong sprinkling of normative overtones), they claim for neo-realist theory the status of a deductivist-systemic enterprise. In their view, this status much more fulfills the traditional criteria for judging the value of a theory formulated by scientist epistemology: logical consistency, parsimony, elegance and formalization of formulation.

**Fig. 20: Characteristics of Realism and Neo-Realism**

	Realism	Neo-Realism
Foundation of premisses	anthropological (man as a security- and powerseeking agent), <i>i.e.</i> unit-level	structural (anarchy of the international system), <i>i.e.</i> system-level
Epistemological status	inductivist - empirical, normative overtones	deductivist system-theoretic, devoid of any references to values or ethical norms

The main premisses of Waltzian Neo-Realism are:

- i) Over space and time, the behavior of states shows more similarities than differences. These similarities can be adduced to a unit external to the unit actors - *i.e.* to the international system. The behavior of the system dominates the behavior of its units.
- ii) Anarchy, defined as the absence of a central authority, is the structural principle of the international system.
- iii) The structural principle of anarchy generates and legitimizes the central maxim of state behavior: "Help yourself". States not heeding this maxim, *i.e.* states behaving in a non-conformist way, will be excluded from the international system and destroyed.
- iv) Contrary to national societies, the international system does not know and allow for functional differentiation of its individual units. All units are of the same character. Thus, the distribution of power between the units is the main (if not the only) variable explaining the processes of international politics.
- v) The regular state of the international system is that of a balance of power. Due to the self-help principle, states engage in a continuous process of power-balancing, the aim of which is to avoid the centralization of power in a particular unit of the system. Thus, states do not try to maximize their power, but rather they preserve their relative power position in the system.

**Recommended Reading:**

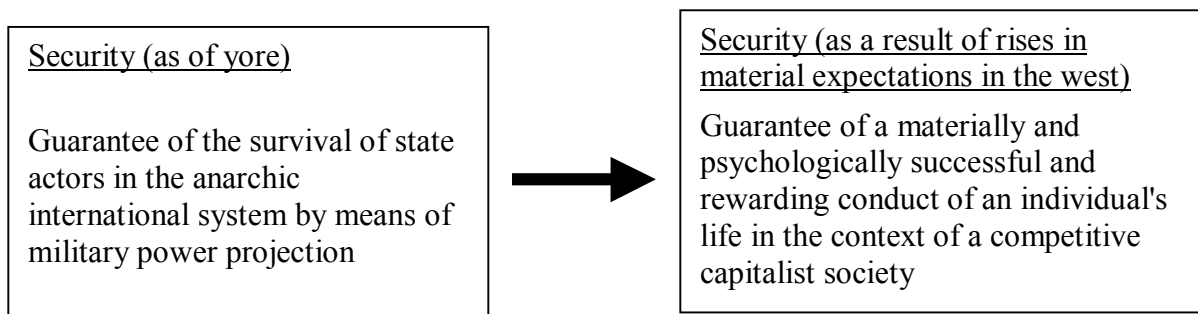
- Barry Buzan/Charles Jones/Richard Little: The Logic of Anarchy. Neorealism to Structural Realism. New York: Columbia UP 1993
- Barry Buzan/Richard Little: International Systems in World History. Remaking the Study of International Relations. Oxford: OUP 2000

## Realism: ontological and analytical problems (II)

In its classical, but even more so in its structural variety, Realism is a theory of international politics remaining and resting firmly on the system level - in other words on the level of the world of states. Thus, it cannot deal with developments manifesting themselves on the unit level or on the level of transnational society: the sub-systemic forces and conditions influencing shape and processes of international politics are not accounted for.

### Analytical deficits:

- all forces and developments increasing the penetrability of the state-as-actor (*cf.* Fig.19 bottom third)
- developments in the fields of transnational politics/transnational relations: states-as-actors are at times subverted, at times outplayed by societal international actors (e.g. multinational firms); at times they simply dissolve, as in situations of civil war, ethnic-nationalistic strife, etc. (try to explain the disappearance of Somalia from the scene of international actors by reference to the balance of powers in Subsaharan Africa - it doesn't work!)
- the number of opportunities for a successful projection of international (military) power seems to dwindle (the first Gulf war between Iraq and Iran, and Bosnia-Herzegovina may be blatant cases in question) - what other instruments does the Realist have in order to ascertain actors' national interests in an anarchic international system?
- in the course of the development of the social security state in the West the traditional connotation of security - military and territorial security - is considerably enlarged:



Military power projection, as a rule, proves to be counterproductive in the latter context.

## **Agency - structure debate:**

[All quotes from Steve Smith: Foreign Policy Theory and the New Europe, in: Walter Carlsnaes/Steve Smith (eds.): European Foreign Policy. The EC and Changing Perspectives in Europe. London: Sage 1995, pp 1 - 20, quotes pp 16 – 19]

“At its simplest, the agency-structure debate is about whether accounts of human social behaviour are to be grounded in terms of the actors' intentions and definitions of the situation, or whether they are to be based on a model of the natural sciences, in which no conscious agency is required. This dispute is very much alive in the social sciences, but has been virtually ignored in international relations generally and FPA specifically. However, the rise of neo- realism as an account of international relations, especially in its Waltzian form, has brought the issue of system-unit linkages to the fore. Yet, this problem is usually portrayed as one to do with the amount of explanatory power accruing to each level of the system-unit debate. That is to say, the issue is framed as if the two levels are different maps of the same world. This is exactly the metaphor used by Singer in his early and very influential discussion of the problem. Yet as Singer suggested, and although this was largely forgotten by those who referred to Singer's work, there are grounds for treating the two levels of analysis as incompatible in some fundamental way. This is because the social world is not like the natural world, and therefore any two views of it may be *qualitatively* more difficult to combine than is the case with the natural world. While there is no great mystery about two views of a mountain or a vase of flowers, the same cannot be said about social action. Whereas two maps of the world distort the shape of territories at the poles and the equator, this distortion is purely mathematical, and capable of resolution; hence Singer's injunction to use whichever map was most accurate for the area you were concerned with. This is not at all like the social world, where action can be seen in different ways without any such hope of resolving differences.

The implication of the agency-structure debate is that there may always be two accounts, and that there is no way of combining these accounts. ...

It is necessary to say a few words about why the debate might be unresolvable.

...

There are three main lines of argument. The first is methodological: to believe that there is a way of combining accounts that stress agency with accounts that stress structure implies that there is some way of knowing when which account is to the fore. Yet there is no position external to each account that gives the observer a secure place from which to assess the relative potencies of the accounts. It is simply not possible to say that empirical behaviour is in this instance 75 per cent agency and 25 per cent structure. To reiterate a point made above, there may be always two stories to tell, and each contains its own criteria for selecting evidence. Now, given that FPA is broadly positivistic, it is not surprising that this problem has not been widely discussed. But, once the core assumption of positivism, concerning the role of data and their neutrality, is called into question by seeing data as ineluctably theory-laden, then the secure vantage point disappears, and the possibility of devising a methodological procedure to combine the accounts vanishes.

A second line of argument is epistemological: there exists no common epistemology between the two accounts. Agency accounts have to proceed by treating the actor as a choosing individual, and therefore work from the intentions and definitions of the situation to behaviour. Above all the aim is to find out what behaviour meant for the actor, and what counts as knowledge is the rational reconceptualization of the actor's intentions.

Structure accounts, on the other hand, work from the model of knowledge found in the hard sciences, in which behaviour is analysed without dealing with the intentions of actors.

The third line of argument is ontological: agency accounts see individuals as ontologically prior, and systems or societies as the unintended or consequential by-products of interactions between individuals. Structure accounts start with ontologically prior structures and see individuals in terms of the roles they occupy within these structures. FPA has clear examples of each of these. ontological positions, with the belief systems literature a good example of the former and the bureaucratic politics literature a paradigm example of the latter. Yet clearly both agents and structure cannot be ontologically prior, and attempts to treat them as coexisting merely reduce the problem to a further level of analysis, in this case to a debate about psychology. I do not need to offer straw-person forms of either type of account, since in our view the problem occurs at whatever level of sophistication applies. In other words the argument against transcending the debate holds that there are always two stories to tell, and that these two stories can apply at any level at which international relations is analysed. Be it a debate about relations between system and the unit (state), between the state (as system) and bureaucracies, or between bureaucracies (as system) and the individual, the debate is the same. And, as just noted, reducing it to the individual does not remove the problem: the two accounts, at whatever level, simply see a different individual in social life. Again, note that there are two dimensions to this debate, and they must not be confused. The first is the ontological issue of individual or structural primacy, and compromise on this issue is less problematic than it is on the second dimension, which concerns the question of whether the social world is to be understood or explained.”

## ***II. 2) The Debate between Globalism, Neo-Realism and other Structural Theories***

If Realism - in its original Classical or refined Waltzian form - was an analytical attitude and a frame of mind befitting the duopolistic structure of Cold War conflicts, Globalism very much represented a scientific world view adequate to the 1970s - in other words, adequate to a period of detente, to the growing economization of world politics, to the factual phenomena of globalization ranging from the internationalization of industrial production and the distribution of goods via the internationalization of particularly financial services to a hefty increase in world-wide communication furthered by tourism, (satellite) television and other media, growing importance of international nongovernmental organizations and an increase in conference diplomacy for which the CSCE process and its results may be a striking example. According to some social scientists, the world stood on the verge of turning into a Global Village - characterized by an assimilation of life styles, consumer attitudes, value orientations, leisure activities and hedonistic expectations. At least in the OECD world, these developments could be summed up in the apt cliché of **McDonaldization** of societies - meaning the domination of societal development by the commercial rationality, the fast turn-over and the profit-maximizing attitude typical for the fast-food restaurant. The central characteristics of rationalized systems - efficiency, predictability, calculability,

substitution of nonhuman for human technology and aspired-to control over uncertainty - found widespread expression in a broad range of human activities. Was this all Max Weber with a vengeance - or the surreptitious work of that driving force of 19th century Liberal internationalism - Reason with a capital "R" showing its familiar bodily features in a new garb - slacks and jeans rather than frock-coat and top-hat?

Be this as it may - International Relations as a scientific discipline experienced, in the 1970s, a veritable shift of thought: from the state and its power as the unit of analysis to the identity group to which the individual owes allegiance. More than that - contrary to the suspicious looks by which old-style 1960s scientism greeted any reference to values, human needs, and psychological dimensions of behavior, the 1970s saw the concept of human needs, and especially the need for identity lead to a different explanation of events in world society. The notion of power as the controlling element of international relations was not discarded, but its location was changed. Effective power was seen not to reside in the state as such, but in identity groups. In an ideal situation, these might still be co-terminous with a nation-state; more often, however, international state actors turned out to represent multi-ethnic communities. As community groups are the units with which individuals identify and to which they give their loyalty, they may well be more powerful than the state in its classic, unitary form. Conflicts in Cyprus, the Lebanon, and Africa attested to this supposition - quite apart from other conflicts which are more recent in origin and unfortunately much nearer to the place I speak from today.

The downward shift of perspective, so to speak, had another, not unintended consequence. The traditional separation of domestic and international politics formerly a characteristic feature of I.R. studies came to be regarded as misleading - whether foreign policy was indeed foreign policy and not either a spillover from domestic politics or, even more pertinent, the outward projection of the particular interests of a domestically dominant socio-economic ruling class was a question with which revisionist historians and younger social scientists stooped in the culture of the student protest movement grappled for quite some time after 1968.

Against this background, **Globalism** formulated its premisses. Again at issue were the two basic questions of the discipline:

Who are the international actors ? And in what milieu do they act ?



The main premisses were as follows:

i) States are not the only actors of international politics (though one cannot reasonably expect that they disappear from the international arena completely). A large number of international transactions and their results can only be explained in terms of actors which the traditional state-centric Realist view deemed rather unimportant - i.e.

- international governmental and/or nongovernmental organisations and bureaucracies

- ad hoc constituted or medium- or long-term transnational coalitions of decision-makers and civil servants

- business international non-governmental organisations (BINGOs) or multi-national concerns

- transnational societal associations like pressure groups, citizen committees, trade unions, churches, political parties and the like. In short, Globalism replaces the universe of state actors with a pluriverse of state and non-state, i.e. societal actors.

ii) International relations are regarded as the result of transactions and interactions of any of the international actors just mentioned. Their aim is the conservation or improvement of their welfare, defined in the categories of per-capita-income, employment and quality of life. The importance attributed to these aims by national governments, and the domestic advantages or disadvantages contingent upon the realization or non-realization of these aims catapult them into the "High Politics" bracket - i.e. put them on a par, at least, with the more traditional aims of conserving territorial dominion and military security.

iii) International relations are regarded as a positive sum-game. Actors' gains are paid out of a continuously growing quantity of social resources produced by an equally continuous improvement of technical progress, a rationalization of the modes of production, and an ever wider and ever finer differentiation of the international division of labour (Ruigrok/Tulder 1995). Cooperation is the name of the game. All game results assume the form of a distribution of incentives amongst the cooperating players; these are interested in absolute gains rather than in relative, merely positional ones.

What the Globalist did not see was the simultaneousness of the non-simultaneous (as post-modern diction has it). Their world society was very much the society of the OECD world, barely taking cognisance of the development of underdevelopment of the Third or even more so the Fourth World, the growth of interdependence in the west at the cost of also a growth - that of dependency in the North-South context. Furthermore, the rationalization of the modes of production, paired with the improvement and refinement of

technical progress, implied a firm subjugation of the resources and forces of nature to the industrial moloch - so that one wonders whether the extra gains distributed amongst the players of the positive sum - game in reality were not paid for by future generations rather than by a substantial increase in production and distribution profit margins.

**Recommended Reading:**

- Winfried Ruigrok/Rob van Tulder: The Logic of International Restructuring. London: Routledge 1995
- Peter Dicken: Global Shift. Reshaping the Global Economic Map in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. London:Sage 2003
- Jan Aart Scholte: Globalization. A critical introduction. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave 2005
- David Held/Anthony McGrew/David Goldblatt/Jonathan Perraton: Global Transformations. Politics, Economics, and Culture. Cambridge: Polity Press 1999
- David Held/Anthony McGrew (eds.): The Global Transformations Reader. An Introduction to the Globalization Debate. Cambridge: Polity Press 2000

These latter questions are addressed by **structuralist theories** proper - dependency theory and world system theory. For the sake of brevity, I enumerate their main characteristics in (yet) another table.

**Fig. 21: Comparison between premisses of Globalism and characteristic properties of Structural theories**

	<b>GLOBALISM</b>	<b>NEO- REALISM</b>	<b>DEPENDENCY THEORY</b>	<b>WORLD SYSTEM THEORY</b>
Perspective	Metropolitan, pluralistic, actor-centric	Metropolitan, state- centric	Peripheral	Overall systemic
Units of analysis	international and transnational actors	National States, National Economies	Nations in the world economic system	The (capitalist economic) world system

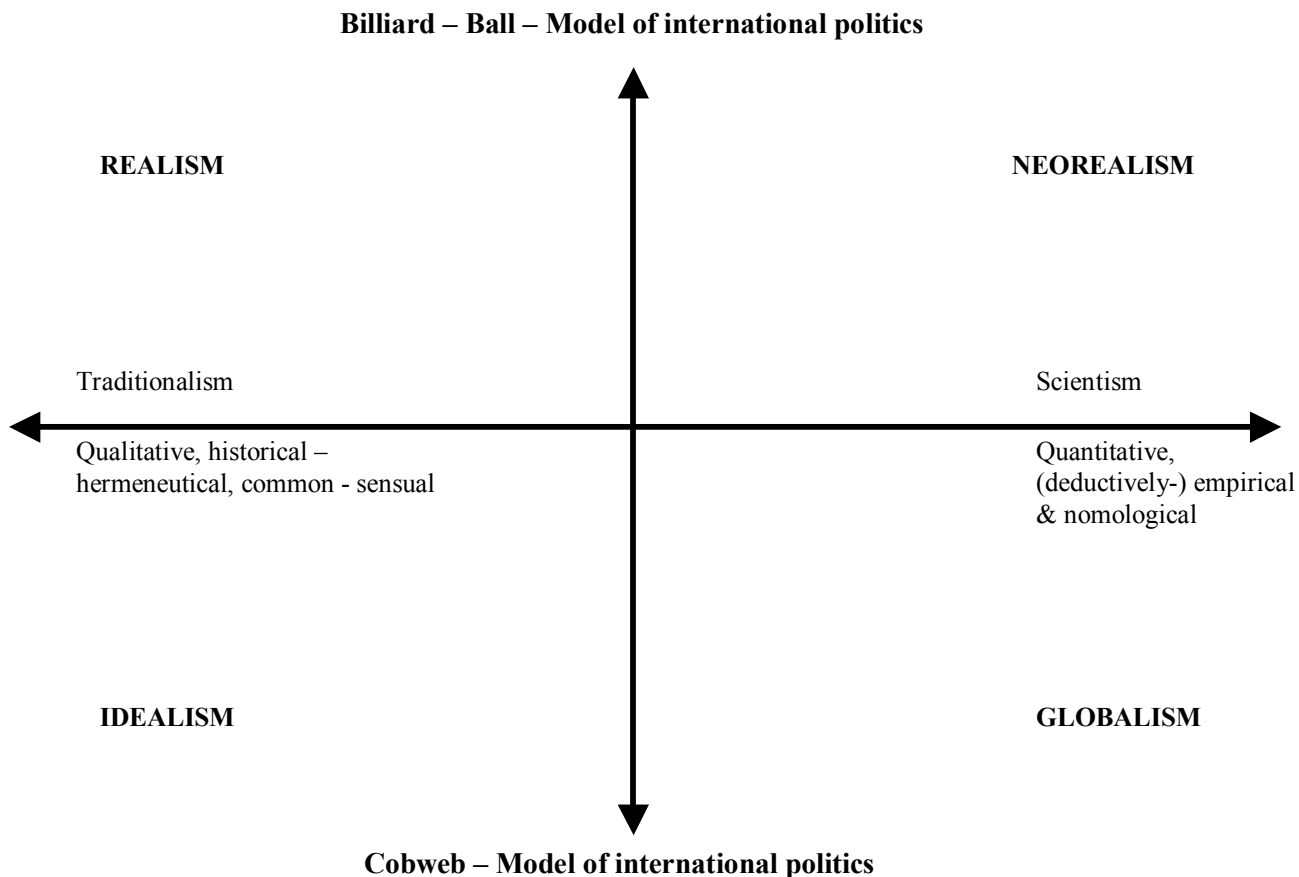
<p>Problema- tique</p>	<p>Which are the conditions of economic growth and welfare in an interdependent world economy?</p>	<p>Which are the structural principles of an industrial world economy characterized by competition, formation of economic blocks and economic (distributional) conflict?</p>	<p>What mechanisms produce and continue socioeconomic (and thus also political) dependency in the international economic system?</p>	<p>What are the characteristics of the historical genesis and the future development of the (capitalist) world system?</p>
<p>Premiss</p>	<p>International relations as positive sum-game. Increasing economic interdependence of actors &amp; progress in transport &amp; communication turn the national state into an anachronism. Economic progress on a world scale results from increased efficiency of international division of labour and progressive development of the fortes of production.</p>	<p>International relations as a zero-sum game. Subjugation of economic interests under political interests of state actors defined on a continuum ranging from domestic stability to international security. Economic and social security gain the same importance in actors' inventory of aims and precepts for action as military</p>	<p>Metropolitan nations have historically created structures of relations and patterns of exchange which systematically disadvantage the nations in the periphery. They continually strive for the conservation of the dependency of peripheral nations. International economic and peripheral domestic socioeconomic development is characterised by structural</p>	<p>Specific events in the world system can be understood only as results of overall systemic developments. The capitalist world system dominates its unit actors. Development primarily signifies development of the world system. Its structural relations are system-dominant.</p>

		security.	heterogeneity. The perspective underdeveloped nations have comprises the development of underdevelopment.	
General aims	Peace: Cooperation and mutual compensation of interests within the network of inter- and transnational actors/organisations	Security: Survival of the state and conservation of the freedom of economic and social self-development	Justice: Correction of negative (distributional) consequences of Imperialism, exploitation, and underdevelopment	Development of the capitalist world system
Economic doctrine	Liberalism: Efficient allocation of resources and use of comparative advantages of cost within a free- market, free- trade world economic system maximizes welfare on a world scale.	(Neo)- Mercantilism World market competitiveness of national (economic) actors to be enhanced by government intervention, protectionism and economic block formation	Compensatory redistribution: Exploitation of the periphery is an immanent feature of the capitalist system. Compensatory politics in order to reduce/ overcome inequality and dependency is a legitimate demand; the likeliness of its being granted by metropolitan countries is dubious.	Pessimism: Actors' limited room for manoeuvre allows at best a combination of dissociation from the world economy, autocentric development strategies, and Socialism (sic !) as a way out of the dependency situation

### Block III: Epistemological Superstructures - the debate between Understanding and Explanation

It is my contention that much of the theoretical confusion and conceptual wooliness under which I.R. theory had more than occasionally to suffer can be reduced to an unwise mixing, if not illegitimate intermingling of ontological and epistemological categories in the analysis of theory development. This has led to a situation in which different epistemological approaches in the field are credited with the creation of ontologically different scientific world views. This is utter nonsense! A closer look at the ontological universe of I.R. world views shows quite well that a particular epistemological stance - e.g. scientism - can go hand in glove with different world views - e.g. Neo-Realism and Globalism. In other words, the metatheoretical-epistemological plane of argument lies at right angles to the ontological - and there is no possibility whatsoever to draw inferences from epistemological properties of a theory to its ontological properties or vice versa.

Fig. 22: The methodological-epistemological/ontological field of I.R.theory



Traditionally, the methodological-epistemological debate in the discipline has been between the adherents of the (natural) scientific tradition of **explanation**:

*premiss*: to explain an event or state of affairs is to find another which caused it; science explains particular events by generalizing and making them cases of laws at work

and adherents of the hermeneutic humanities tradition of **understanding**, opposed to an approach which places instances of human activity in a network of scientific regularities:

*premiss*: to understand human activities or a human expression is a matter of knowing what, in a similar situation, would gain expression in oneself that way; a person understanding somebody "re-lives" by a process of empathy the mental life of the person to be understood.

The at times rather acrimonious debate flared up in the late 1960s as a consequence of the intrusion of behaviorism into the social sciences - and has stayed with us at least until the reception of Critical Theory in the field. To some extent, one might also argue that post-modern approaches are also anti-scientistic or anti-positivistic approaches in the social sciences; we will, however, reserve judgment on that question until having dealt with the relevant texts.

The basic features of the explanation - understanding dichotomy, as far as they influenced I.R. methodology and epistemology, can be demonstrated in the context of the traditionalism- scientism controversy being the bone of contention in the discipline in the late 1960s. Basic characteristics are given in Fig. 23

Recommended reading:

- Klaus Knorr/James N. Rosenau (eds.): Contending Approaches to International Politics. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP 1969
- Martin Hollis/Steve Smith: Explaining and Understanding International Relations. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1990
- Yale H. Ferguson/Richard W. Mansbach: The Elusive Quest: Theory and International Politics. Columbia, South Carolina: U.of Carolina Press 1988

**Fig. 23: Basic positions of the debate between Traditionalism and Scientism**

	<b>TRADITIONALISM</b>	<b>SCIENTISM</b>
governing disciplinary interest	<p>Learned counselling of government decision makers and political education of the citizens; norm-based opinions and recommendations for imminent decisions on the basis of respective research results</p> <p>Self-image: learned advisors to princes</p>	<p>Explanation, domination and control of political processes in a methodically exact manner akin to the processes of natural science; demonstration of rationally calculable, empirically corroborated solutions for problems of foreign and international policy - aim: to enable political decision-makers to control their environment more effectively. The choice of a particular decisional option out of the set of all decisional options is strictly a matter for politicians.</p> <p>Self-image: social technicians</p>
Problematique	<p>Understanding of politics on the basis of insight into and knowledge of the genesis of social developments and processes</p>	<p>Systematic definition and structural ordering of political phenomena on the basis of observation and classification; empirically evident demonstration of repeatable relationships between individual political phenomena</p>
object of study a) politics	<p>Politics is a specific form of social, value- based and aim-orientated action - an art, the practice of which can be</p>	<p>Politics is a specific form of individuals' behaviour in definable situations; it can be quantified and analysed in a rigorous</p>

	<p>learned by familiarization with historical precedents. Historical and social processes can clearly be distinguished from phenomena and processes of Nature; they are not susceptible to scientific explanation-patterns assuming the form of causal, if x - then y - statements</p>	<p>scientific manner. Social reality follows its own laws in the same way as natural reality; the observer can subject it to an objective analysis in which he assumes the role of the subject and social reality the role of an object</p>
b )international politics	<p>Competitive zero-sum game for power and influence in an an-archic world of states, characterized by the security dilemma and the role of states as (nearly) exclusive actors</p>	<p>Patterned behavior process of international actors in the international system. The international system is the sum total of actors and their describable structural and functional relations</p>
Methods of analysis	<p>ideographic, hermeneutic, descriptive and normative methods characteristic for the humanities</p>	<p>analytic-quantifying, nomothetic, at times mathematical -statistical methods. Inductive search for empirical regularities; statements must be logically consistent and formally closed</p>
Criterion of validity of statements	<p>Common Sense - based on re-enactable everyday or more specific historiographically trained human experience</p>	<p>Corroboration of all the theoretical propositions by means of verification or falsification based on observation, description, and empirical testing of hypotheses</p>
Relation to values	Statements	Separation of statements



	<p>characterized by explicit reliance on value judgments</p>	<p>concerning facts and value judgments; only empirically tested statements about facts enjoy the status of scientific statements, while value-laden statements must be expurged from the canon of scientific statements by a process of critique and counter-critique</p>
<p>Concepts of theory</p>	<p>a) Formulation of ideal types on the basis of historical comparisons which assist in the understanding and classification of concrete historical phenomena ("Historical Sociology of I.R.")</p> <p>b) Formulation of a general theory of international political action which, on the basis of the regular occurrence of phenomenal forms of international politics over time, allows to formulate instructions to political decision-makers regarding future action in comparable historic constellations</p>	<p>General, all-inclusive, empirically testable, unitary and logically consistent theory of international relations which allows to describe and explain contemporary and past configurations and processes of the international system and to predict future configurations and processes</p>

## Block IV: Recent Theory Development in International Relations - Theory and the Recasting of the Enlightenment project

Realism, liberalism, and Marxism/Structuralism together comprised the **inter-paradigm debate** of the 1980s, with realism dominant amongst the three theories. Despite promising intellectual openness, however, the inter-paradigm debate ended up naturalizing the dominance of realism by *pretending* that there was real contestation. What characterized scientific reality rather was a situation of theoretical and/or paradigmatic coexistence: not so much the continuation of the armed struggle between the various theoretical systems by other means, but rather a dialogue of the deaf and dumb, an attitude of benign ignorance of each other. The more ethnic hatreds, religious and fundamentalist passions, and the all-pervasive struggles of race, culture, and gender called into question, in the 1990s, the given, axiomatic, and taken-for-granted realities of orthodox theory and analytical practice, the more they overturned narrowly conceived images of global reality, the more the traditional doctrines and protocols of International Relations, the inadequacies of universalist schemes and grand theories of order and control came under widespread critical challenge (George 1994).

In recent years, the old-time intellectual dominance of realism has been undermined by three developments:

- first, neo-liberal institutionalism has become increasingly important as an analytical perspective, particularly so in conjunction with concepts of multi-level governance increasingly used in the explanation of EU politics;
- second, globalization has brought a host of other features of world politics not belonging to the universe of the system of states to centre-stage;
- third, positivism, the underlying methodological assumption of realism, has been significantly undermined by developments in the social sciences and in philosophy.

In this context, it is worth your while to recall that the main non-marxist theories comprising the **inter-paradigm debate** were based on a set of positivist assumptions, namely the idea

- that social science theories can use the same methodologies as theories of the natural sciences,
- that facts and values can be distinguished,
- that neutral facts can act as arbiters between rival truth claims,
- and that the social world has regularities which theories can 'discover'.

We refer again, for the reason of brevity, to a formal representation of the bones of positivistic contention

Fig. 24: Positivist Orthodoxy in IR Theory: Basic Characteristics

- Axioms:**
- correspondence theory of truth
  - methodological unity of science
  - value-free scientific knowledge
- Premisses:**
- Division of Subject and Object
  - Naturalism – deduction of all phenomena from natural facts
  - Division of statements of facts and statements of values
- Consequences:**
- Postulated existence of a „real“ world (Object) independent from the theory-loaded grasp of the scientist (Subject); identification of facts in an intersubjectively valid observation language independent from theories; methodological exclusion of idiosyncratic characteristics and/or individual (subject) identities assures objective knowledge of an intersubjectively transferable character
  - Postulate of like regularities in the natural as well as the social world, independent of time, place, and observer, enables the transfer of analytic approaches and deductive-nomological processes of theory formulation from the field of the natural to the field of the social sciences & to the analysis of social/societal problems
  - Knowledge generated on the basis of positivist research approaches and methodologies is limited to the objective (i.e. empirical) world. Statements and decisions on values are outside the sphere of competence of science.
- Further Consequences:**
- *Concept of Reason* predicated on the purposeful rationality/rationality of purpose of instrumental action aiding the actor to technically master her/his environment
  - *Rationalisation* of societal (inter-)action by its predication on planned/plannable means-end-relationships, technical (or engineering) knowledge, depersonalisation of relationships of power and dominance, and extension of control over natural and social objects (“rationalisation of the world we live in”)
  - *Theory* regards itself as problem-solving theory, which accepts the institutions and power/dominance relationships of a pre-given reality as analytical and reference frameworks, and strives for the explanation of causal relationships between societal phenomena; its aim is the elimination of disturbances and/or their sources in order to insure friction-less action/functioning of social actors
  - *International politics* is regarded as the interaction of exogeneously constituted actors under anarchy, the behaviour of which is as a rule explained by recourse to the characteristics or parameters of the international system (top-down explanation)

Since the late 1980s there has been a **rejection of positivism**, mainly due to the insight that its stringent methodological criteria do not fit the Social Sciences. The current theoretical situation is one in which there are three main positions:

- first, **rationalist theories** that are essentially the latest versions of the **realist** and **liberal** theories;
- second, **alternative** theories that are **post-positivist**;
- and thirdly **social constructivist** theories that try to bridge the gap.

All these alternative approaches at once differ considerably from one another, and at the same time overlap in some important ways. One thing that they do share is a rejection of the core assumptions of **rationalist** theories. We name but a few:

**Historical sociology** has a long history, having been a subject of study for several centuries. Its central focus is with how societies develop the forms that they do. Contemporary historical sociology is concerned above all with how the state has developed since the Middle Ages. It is basically a study of the interactions between states, classes, capitalism, and war. Not unlike Realism, historical sociology is very much interested in **war**. But it undercuts neo-realism because it shows that the state is not one formal, functionally similar organization, but instead an organism that has altered over time.

- *Locus classicus*: Raymond Aron: Paix et guerre entre les nations (1962)
- Overview : Stephen Hobden/John M.Hobson (eds.) : Historical Sociology of International Relations. Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2002

**Normative theory** was out of fashion for decades because of the dominance of positivism, which portrayed it as 'value-laden' and 'unscientific'. In the last fifteen years or so there has been a resurgence of interest in normative theory. It is now more widely accepted that all theories have normative assumptions either explicitly or implicitly. The key distinction in normative theory is between **cosmopolitanism** and **communitarianism**. The former sees the bearers of rights and obligations as individuals; the latter sees them as being the community (usually the state). Main areas of debate in contemporary normative theory include the autonomy of the state, the ethics of the use of force, and international justice. In the last two decades, normative issues have become more relevant to debates about foreign policy, for example in discussions of how to respond to calls for humanitarian intervention and whether war should be framed in terms of a battle between good and evil. Established publications are e.g.

- F.H.Hinsley: Power and the Pursuit of Peace. Theory and Practice in the History of Relations between States (1967)
- Geoffrey Best: Humanity on Warfare. The Modern History of the International Law of Armed Conflict (1980).

A large array of theories – from approaches based on the social philosophy of the Frankfurt school (Neufeld 1995) via Critical Theory (Linklater 1990) to linguistic deconstructivism on the one hand, and Lakatosian philosophy of science on the other (Elman & Elman 2003) – are subsumed under **postmodern** approaches to international relations. What most of them have in common is that they question the validity of modern, i.e. rationalist, science and the notion of objective knowledge: they discard history and they reject humanism as a lode star for political action, and they resist any truth claims – often in rather incomprehensible jargon (brilliant exposition in Rosenau 1992). For example,

- **Lyotard** defines post-modernism as incredulity towards metanarratives, meaning that it denies the possibility of foundations for establishing the truth of statements existing outside of discourse.
- **Foucault**, on the other hand, focuses on the power-knowledge relationship and sees the two as mutually constituted. It implies that there can be no truth outside of regimes of truth. How can history have a truth if truth has a history? In consequence, he proposes a genealogical approach to look at history, and this approach uncovers how certain regimes of truth have dominated others.
- **Derrida**, finally, argues that the world is like a text in that it cannot simply be grasped, but has to be interpreted. He looks at how texts are constructed, and proposes two main tools to enable us to see how arbitrary are the seemingly ‘natural’ oppositions of language. These are **deconstruction** and **double reading**.

Post-modern approaches have been accused of being ‘too theoretical’ and not concerned with the ‘real world’. They reply, however, that in the social world there is no such thing as the ‘real’ world in the sense of a reality that is not interpreted by us.

Recommended Reading:

- Pauline Marie Rosenau: Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences. Insights, Inroads, and Intrusions. Princeton, N.J. Princeton UP 1992
- Jim George: Discourses of Global Politics. A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner 1994
- Cynthia Weber: International Relations Theory. A critical introduction. London: Routledge 2001
- Colin Elman & Miriam Fendus Elman (eds.): Progress in International Relations Theory. Appraising the Field. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 2003

That contention, finally, leads us to **Constructivism** – a more recent phenomenon of I.R. theory formulation. The end of the Cold War meant that there was a new intellectual space for scholars to challenge existing theories of international politics. Constructivists drew from established sociological theory in order to demonstrate how social science could help international relations scholars understand the importance of identity and norms in world politics. By attention to norms and states' identities they hoped to uncover important issues neglected by neorealism and neoliberalism.

In general, Constructivists

- are concerned with human **consciousness**,
- treat **ideas** as structural factors in international behavior,
- consider the dynamic relationship between ideas and material forces as a consequence of actors' interpretation of their material reality,
- and are interested in how agents produce structures and how structures produce agents.
- Furthermore, in their view knowledge shapes how actors interpret and construct their social reality – and: normative structures shape the identity and interests of actors such as states.
- Social facts such as sovereignty and human rights exist because of human agreement while brute facts such as mountains are independent of such agreements.
- Social rules are regulative, regulating already existing activities, and constitutive, making possible and defining those very activities.
- Social construction, so to speak, denaturalizes what is taken for granted, asks questions about the origins of what is now accepted as a fact of life and considers the alternative pathways that might have and can produce alternative worlds. In that context, **Power** can be understood not only as the ability of one actor to get another actor to do what she/he would not do otherwise but also as the product of identities and interests that limit the ability to control their fate. And: although the meanings that actors bring to their activities are shaped by the underlying culture, meanings are not always fixed but are a central feature of politics.

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- Scott Burchill/Andrew Linklater (eds.): *Theories of International Relations*. Basingstoke: 3rd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave/Macmillan 2005
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