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From International Relations to Global Society

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Abstract and Keywords

Historically speaking, the study of international relations has largely concerned the study of states and the effects of anarchy on their foreign policies, the patterns of their interactions, and the organization of world politics. However, over the last several decades, the discipline has begun moving away from the study of ‘international relations’ and toward the study of ‘global society’. This shift from ‘international relations’ to ‘global society’ is reflective of several important developments that are the focus of this article. The article begins with a discussion of the anarchy thematic and what John Agnew (1994) has called ‘the territorial trap’, and surveys some of the critical forces that compelled international relations scholars to free themselves from this trap. It then explores the shifts in the what, who, how, and why of the study of international relations. It considers the terminological shift from the study of international governance to the study of global governance, justified because the purposes of global governance no longer reflect solely the interests of states but now also include other actors, including international organizations, transnational corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and new kinds of networks.

Keywords: international relations, anarchy, global society, territorial trap, global governance

Historically speaking, the study of international relations has largely concerned the study of states and the effects of anarchy on their foreign policies, the patterns of their interactions, and the organization of world politics. Over the last several decades worldly developments and theoretical innovations have slowly but surely eroded the gravitational pull of both anarchy and statism in the study of international relations. Although scholars of international relations continue to recognize that the world is organized as a formal anarchy and that states retain considerable power and privileges, they increasingly

highlight an international realm where the international structure is defined by material and normative elements, where states share the stage with a multitude of other actors, and where trends in global politics are shaped not only by states but also by this variety of other actors and forces. Simply put, the discipline is moving away from the study of “international relations” and toward the study of the “global society.” We use this shift in the name to symbolize a series of transformations in the last twenty years in the discipline regarding what and whom we study, and how and why we study them.

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The cumulative effect of these transformations is that the overarching narrative of the field has changed from one of anarchy in a system of states to governance within a global society. Our notion of a global society parallels the arguments of the English School and its notion of world society, particularly the identification of an increasingly dense fabric of international law, norms, and rules that promote forms of association and solidarity, the growing role of an increasingly dense network of state and nonstate actors that are involved in the production and revision of multilayered governance structures, and the movement toward forms of dialogue that are designed to help identify shared values of “humankind” (Buzan 2004; Linklater and Suganami 2006). This shift from “international relations” to “global society” is reflective of several important developments that are the focus of this chapter.

We open with a discussion of the anarchy thematic and what John Agnew (1994) has called “the territorial trap” and survey some of the critical forces that compelled international relations scholars to free themselves from this trap. We then explore the shifts in the what, who, how, and why of the study of international relations. The assumption of anarchy and the territorial trap helped to define the discipline's agenda, fixating on how survival-seeking and self-interested states produce security and pursue wealth and how these states manage to produce cooperation under anarchy. Although these issues remain on the agenda, they increasingly share space with other topics, including “global” issues such as environmental politics and human rights, the sources of international change, the forces that define the identity, interests, and practices of states, and normative international relations and international ethics. A shift in what we study also has affected whom we study. The ecology of international politics is no longer dominated by states and increasingly includes nonstate actors such as nongovernmental organizations, transnational corporations, international organizations (IOs), and transnational networks of all kinds operating alongside states in a reconstituted “global public domain” (Ruggie 2004). Alterations in the ontology of the world polity have also shifted the epistemology of world politics— that is, *how* we study— encouraging scholars to move beyond a narrow conception of the “scientific” enterprise and adopt a diversity of epistemological positions. There has also been a reconsideration of *why* we study global—

and not international—politics, a development driven by various factors, including a growing dissatisfaction with theory- and methods-driven research to the exclusion of puzzle-driven research and practical engagement.

This emerging field of global politics is increasingly focused on the study of global governance. Governance can be generically understood as “the maintenance of collective order, the achievement of collective goals, and the collective processes of rule through which order and goals are sought” (Rosenau 2000, 175). The discipline of international relations has always been concerned with issues of governance, venturing from the early twentieth-century study of IOs to the post- Second World War study of integration, transnationalism, international regimes, (p. 64) international institutions, and “governance without government” (Rosenau and Czempiel 1992). Traditionally the study of international governance has focused on how states have established norms, laws, and institutions to help them engage in collective action and create order. Over the last two decades, though, there has been a terminological shift from the study of *international* governance to the study of global governance, justified because the purposes of global governance no longer reflect solely the interests of states but now also include other actors, including IOs, transnational corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and new kinds of networks. Global governance is produced through networked relations among different kinds of actors with different kinds of authority and power that are embedded in both formal and informal arrangements. We need to think in more conceptually creative and intellectually diverse ways to understand the production, maintenance, and transformation of the global rules that define the global ends and the means to achieve them. We conclude by considering how governance, rather than anarchy, might be a candidate for narrating the study of international relations.

Our own work draws on and has contributed to constructivist theories of international relations in part because they gave us greater leverage over the changing and fundamentally social character of global relations. Constructivist theory, though, is not a disciplinary panacea, and we are aware of its limitations, the strengths of alternative theories, and the need for theoretical developments and synthesis to address the ongoing challenges of studying global society. Still, our position is deeply influenced by social constructivism, and we believe that it provides some critical intellectual tools that provide insight into both the central changes that have occurred in global relations over the decades and possible futures.

1 Going global

It is widely accepted that the discipline of international relations has undergone something of a sea change. As Brian Schmidt (2002) has forcefully argued, it was organized around the concept of anarchy, shaping the conceptualization of international relations, the boundaries of the field, and its research agenda.¹ International relations became the study of states. In state-centrism's extreme form, the territorial trap (Agnew 1994), international relations carves up the world into mutually exclusive territorial states and the study of international relations becomes the study of relations between these units. States are assumed to have authority over their (p. 65) political space, radiating power from the center to the territorial border, where it comes to a dead halt. This authority over a geographically defined and (mainly) contiguous space is reinforced and underscored by the principle of sovereignty, wherein states recognize each other's authority over that space and deny any authoritative claims made by those outside the state. Such matters inform the classic differentiation in international relations theory between anarchy, lawlessness, coercion, and particularism on the outside, and hierarchy, legitimate authority, dialogue, and community on the inside. State, territory, and authority became tightly coupled in international relations theory.

The discipline's anarchy narrative shaped a post-Second World War research agenda focused on how self-interested states pursue their security and welfare under a condition of anarchy that makes cooperation desirable but difficult. Under the shadow of the cold war, international relations scholars focused on patterns of war, how states manage their security relations, the impact of the nuclear age, and crisis management. When the once-neglected study of international political economy finally got the attention it deserved, the anarchy narrative shaped the framework employed and questions addressed by international relations scholars: a defining theme was the tension between the logic of capital and the logic of anarchy, how the state was constantly trying to intervene in markets in order to protect the *national* economy and the *national* security, and how the rise of global corporations could undermine the state's autonomy and sovereignty (Gilpin 2003). In the 1980s scholars began to address the question of “cooperation under anarchy” and the conditions under which states might produce sustained forms of coordination and collaboration in various issue areas (Keohane 1984; Oye 1986).

While the anarchy narrative illuminated some problems and issues, it dismissed and obscured many others. There was little attention paid to domestic politics. Ian Clark (1999) calls this “the great divide” in international relations—the presumption that the domestic and the international are distinct spheres that are defined by distinct organizing principles. There was little appreciation of the increasingly rule-bound nature of the

decentralized global governance system and the interpenetration of rules in the domestic and international realm. There was little recognition of forms of authority outside the state—that is, disaggregated authority (Rosenau 2000). There was also little attention to important global trends, including the eye-opening development wherein certain regions were becoming more pacific in part because of developments in domestic politics and other regions were becoming undone from the ground up with horrific effects for civilian populations (however, see Buzan 1983).

Beginning in the 1980s, and picking up steam in the 1990s, various scholars from a range of disciplinary perspectives began to take aim at the territorial trap and those theories that were most closely associated with it, namely neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism. This is not the place to revisit the critiques of these theories or retell the rise of constructivism, but it is worth noting two critical dimensions of this (p. 66) development. One was the desire to find an exit option from the territorial trap, as scholars unpacked anarchy (Wendt 1992), sovereignty (Biersteker and Weber 1996), authority (Rosenau and Czempiel 1992), and the bundling of the state, territory, and authority (Ruggie 1992). The other was the failure of existing theories to explain much less predict important international change. Various global changes generated anomalies between existing theories and world developments—most famously and strikingly the remarkably peaceful end of the cold war and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As Peter Katzenstein (1996) argued, the failure of existing international relations theories to predict let alone contemplate the end of the cold war was to international relations theory what the sinking of the Titanic was to the profession of naval engineering. The next decade of cascading globalization raised further challenges and agitation for new theoretical creativity.

The combination of new kinds of theorizing and rapid global change called into question the accuracy of the very label of international relations. As is well known, international relations was never *international* but instead was *inter-state*, but few challenged this sleight of hand. However, events of the 1990s, including globalization, ethno-national conflict, and identity politics, made scholars more aware that the term international politics obscured more than it illuminated. Scholars became more cognizant of transnational networks, relations, and associations that were both affecting inter-state relations and helping to define the very constitution of global society. For many, the label of international relations was no longer a convenient shorthand but was now a contrivance that hindered analysis. Accordingly, many went in search of labels that were more accurate representations of the subject, including international studies and global studies. Although the label of international relations has had clear staying power, scholars of international relations have gone global as they have become more comfortable with operating outside the territorial trap.

One last point. The territorial trap did not have the same hold on students of the international relations of the Third World as it did on students of the global North because the attending analytical assumptions were so glaringly distant from empirical reality. Hierarchy and not anarchy seemed to be the defining organizing principle. Colonialism's end did not transform North—South relations from hierarchy to anarchy (and equality) as economic, security, and political structures continued to place Third World states in a subordinate position, to challenge their authority in various domains, and to create a major chasm between their formal sovereignty and their effective sovereignty. Relatedly, the state in the global North was an accomplishment, while in the global South it was a project, needing to solidify its territorial base, to monopolize the means of coercion, and to eliminate all other rivals to its authority. In order to capture this reality, scholars began to modify their understandings of Third World states, calling them shadow, alien, weak, artificial, and quasi. Scholars of the global South developed a range of theories—including dependency, postcolonial, world-systems, and empire; for (p. 67) them, international relations was always global. Perhaps because Third World scholars saw international hierarchy instead of anarchy, they remained more committed to strengthening and defending sovereignty as a political project and were less likely to celebrate transnational processes that threatened it. Thus, for example, the benefits of global civil society have often been received with more skepticism in the global South than among critical international relations scholars in the North.

2 The What, Who, How, and Why of Global Society

2.1 What Do We Study?

Once scholars began to relax the assumption of anarchy and move beyond state-centrism, a whole new world became visible. There were two defining developments (a third—whom we study—will be discussed below). The first was the rise of topics other than classical security and international political economy. Scholars began to study a range of other issues, including human rights, the environment, gender, culture, religion, democracy, and law. And, even when scholars remained focused on political economy and security, they tracked very different features. The study of political economy underwent a rapid transformation in response to the growing observation that globalization was producing a qualitative shift in the global organization of capitalism, the character of the state and state—society relations, and international economic relations.

Historically, scholars of security focused on the state and inter-state relations— following the assumption that the object of security was the state (which represented the national

community) and that the principal threat to the state's (and thus the "nation's") security was from another state. With the end of the cold war, however, there was a growing willingness by scholars to examine the meaning and practice of security (Katzenstein 1996). Whereas once security meant the security of the state, increasingly the object of security was the group or the individual, captured by the increasing circulation of the concept of human security. Shifting the object of security implied a re-examination of what constituted a threat. The state, once viewed as a unit of protection, was increasingly recognized as a principal source of insecurity in many parts of the world (Buzan 1983). In fact, in the twentieth century more individuals were killed by their own governments than in all international wars combined. The fact that states were failing in their responsibilities to protect their citizens implied that the study of human rights is related to security and not a marginal subfield that is irrelevant to the "real" issues of international relations. (p. 68) Individuals, however, were not only passive victims of their governments; they were also increasingly active participants in the creation of new human rights rules and institutions, including some institutions that allowed these individuals to bring claims against their own government. Scholars and policy-makers called attention to "nontraditional" security threats such as famines, environmental degradation, and health epidemics, in some regions. In other regions, international relations scholars pointed out that states had established pacific relations and, importantly, no longer expected or prepared for war (Adler and Barnett 1998).

Another theoretical and empirical breakthrough was a growing recognition of the presence and impact of international normative structures. The individualism and materialism of the dominant theories presented international life as absent of any sort of sociality. In reaction to these axioms and various global developments, many scholars argued that power and interest did not exhaust explanations for global outcomes and change, and developed conceptions of normative structures that imagined how they might shape the state's identity, interests, and what counts as legitimate action. Now that international relations scholars were recognizing that global politics has a sociality, it was possible to resurrect once-banished concepts that are inextricably bound up with all political orders. Two concepts, in particular, are critical for the study of global society: legitimacy and authority.

Both legitimacy and authority are notoriously slippery concepts, difficult to define and measure, and inextricably related to theories of social control and thus bound up with questions of power. For these reasons international relations scholars have resisted them, only to be forced to wrestle, once again, with their causal importance, especially in the areas of compliance, cooperation, and governance. States and nonstate actors agree to be bound by rules, not only because the powerful impose them or because of self-interest, but also because they believe those rules to be legitimate—that is, they deserve to be

obeyed (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986; Hurd 1999; 2007; Bukovansky 2002; Clark 2005). To the extent that actors confer legitimacy on rules and institutions, they gain authority—thus the oft-heard phrase “legitimate authority.” Scholars increasingly recognized that actors other than states have forms of legitimate authority in global society and that such authority derives from a variety of sources, including expertise. The existence of different kinds of authority conferred on different kinds of actors undermines the anarchy narrative and presumption that a distinguishing characteristic of the international sphere is that authority is monopolized by the sovereign state. IOs have become particularly important authorities in their own right, often working with states and nongovernmental actors in new hybridized forms of authority (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Conca 2005).

A related and somewhat belated development is a growing interest in international normative theory and international ethics. The “scientific” study of international relations and normative international relations went their separate ways (p. 69) decades ago, lived parallel lives, and found little opportunity or incentive to crossfertilize (Price 2008; Reus-Smit 2008). However, this segregation is beginning to break down for various reasons. Norms are defined as standards of appropriate behavior and thus, to study norms empirically, constructivists had to grapple with how and why actors come to believe certain behavior is appropriate or legitimate (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). This led to a small and growing empirical investigation of international ethics, including studies of the changing ethical metrics that actors use to judge what counts as legitimate action and of the causes and consequences of the institutionalization of ethics in international arrangements. Constructivist investigations of state policies and of international society argue that they are shaped by deep beliefs, including ethical or moral beliefs about the purpose of the state, humanitarianism, and justice (Lumsdaine 1993; Reus-Smit 1997).

Although some of the constructivist research on norms demonstrated the importance of norms and the possibilities for moral change in world politics, most constructivists did not initially articulate their own normative or prescriptive position of those changes to be advocated (Price 2008). With the exception of a handful of scholars interested in questions of international political theory, including forms of global cosmopolitanism, communitarianism, and responsibility (Held 1995; Linklater 1998), scholars were often more committed to critiquing implicit notions of progress in many processes in global society than in articulating their own ethical or normative visions.

The study of global governance reflects these changes in the study of world politics. Whereas this was once limited to how states with pre-existing interests create norms, rules, laws, and institutions to regulate their relations, there have been a number of critical additions in the recent past. First, there is a greater interest in the social construction of what is to be governed—that is, how a problem becomes defined and gets

placed on the agenda. Moreover, there is a growing consideration of how international and domestic structures, working through conceptions of self and logics of appropriateness, shape governance structures. The study of multilateralism, for instance, now includes a consideration of how national identity shapes the emergence of the multilateral form and then how the multilateral form came to be viewed as legitimate (Ruggie 1993). In addition to a rational design of institutions, there can also be a “sociological” design that incorporates logics of legitimation (Wendt 2001). There is also a growing desire to bring classical normative questions such as fairness, justice, accountability, and representation to bear on the study of governance and the sources of legitimacy (Kapstein 2005; 2006). Although political theorists have long worried about democracy in an age of internationalization (Held 1995), they are now joined by many international relations theorists who are focusing attention on questions of accountability, power, and legitimacy (Slaughter 2004; Grant and Keohane 2005; Hurd 2007).

(p. 70) **2.2 Whom Do We Study?**

What we study obviously relates to whom we study. International relations scholars justify the state-centric focus of the discipline on the grounds that nonstate actors either are captured by states or are causally irrelevant. This position, in our view, is now an embattled orthodoxy because states alone cannot account for important international outcomes or the very fabric of global politics.

Two developments deserve mention. The first is growing attention to domestic politics, and in particular to domestic regime type, as a significant factor for explaining global outcomes. Building on microeconomic analytics, one version of liberal theory examined how individuals form groups to shape the state's foreign policies (Slaughter 1995; Moravcsik 1997). Two-level game models demonstrated the importance of analyzing the interaction between domestic and international politics in order to understand inter-state negotiations, treaties, and policy collaboration. Having established the empirical regularity that democracies do not wage war with other democracies, scholars began to focus on the characteristics of democracies that might generate this unexpected outcome. Neoliberal institutionalists also increasingly turned their attention to domestic politics, both for models of how to study the global and for interactive models that helped incorporate domestic politics in efforts to understand global outcomes (Milner 1991). Constructivists, too, contributed to the growing interest in the relationship between domestic and international structures (Risse-Kappen 1995). We are now far beyond worrying about committing the sin of reductionism and are prepared to pick up the challenge of examining the relationship between these different “levels” (Gourevitch

2002). As scholars answer the challenge, though, they should be wary of falling back into the territorial trap—that is, treating the “domestic” and the “international” as necessarily ontologically distinct realms—and should consider their interrelationship and co-constitution.

Another important development is the growing awareness of the wider range of actors that are shaping global relations. Two kinds of actors are receiving increased attention precisely because of their causal importance and their perceived centrality to global governance—IOs and transnational actors. Although the study of IOs is almost as old as the discipline of international relations, it has fallen in and out of theoretical favor over the decades (this section draws heavily from Barnett and Finnemore 2007). The post-First World War emergence of the discipline of international relations included considerable attention to IOs; after the Second World War there was continuing interest in IOs because of the experiments in regional integration in Europe and postwar IO-building. Although international relations scholars lost interest in IOs during the 1970s and 1980s, a very powerful line of argument emerged concerning the conditions under which states will establish international institutions and the functions that they assign to them (Keohane 1984). Briefly, states create and delegate critical tasks to international institutions because they can (p. 71) provide essential functions such as providing public goods, collecting information, establishing credible commitments, monitoring agreements, and generally helping states overcome problems associated with collective action and enhancing collective welfare.

While this institutionalist perspective generates important insights into issues of international governance, its statism and functionalism obscure important features. First, the functionalist treatment of international institutions and IOs reduced them to technical accomplishments, slighting their political character and the political work they do. It also presumes that the only interesting or important functions that IOs might perform are those that facilitate cooperation and resolve problems of interdependent choice. Secondly, the statism of many contemporary treatments of IOs reduced them to mere tools of states, akin to how pluralists treated the state. IOs are mechanisms or arenas through which others (usually states) act. The regimes literature is particularly clear on this point. Regimes are not purposive actors. IOs are thus passive structures; states are the agents who exercise power in this view.

New studies of IOs argued that they have authority, autonomy, and agency, and are political creatures that have effects similar to the effects of other authority-bearing actors, including states. The impact of IOs is not limited to the functions assigned to them by states and the regulation of already existing state interests. IOs also construct the social world in which cooperation and choice take place. They help to define the issues that need to be governed and propose the means by which governance should occur

(Barnett and Finnemore 2004). They help define the interests that states and other actors have, not only as a forum where persuasion takes place, but also as an actor that is engaged in processes of socialization (Checkel 2005). In fact, the growing recognition that IOs might have authority and power has encouraged scholars to worry that runaway IOs might become modern-day Frankensteins, where the inventors are no longer able to control their creation. Consequently, there is now a growing interest in what happens when decisional authority is scaled up to IOs that have more autonomy and more power than ever before; the issue is not only effectiveness but also legitimacy and accountability (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Grant and Keohane 2005).

There has also been a burgeoning study of transnational relations. Similar to the study of IOs, the study of transnationalism had an earlier moment in the sun, faded in the shadow of state-centrism, and has now returned with a burst of energy. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1972) introduced the study of transnational politics in the early 1970s, but that particular research agenda did not prosper in the short term, with the exception of some increased attention to transnational corporations in world politics. Ernst Haas and John Ruggie explored the role of various kinds of knowledge communities and transnational networks for understanding forms of international change and cooperation (Ruggie et al. 2005). These literatures proved to be ahead of their time.

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By the early 1990s, though, international relations scholars began to rediscover transnationalism and transnational actors. One of the first important formulations was the work on epistemic communities, which focused on how transnationally connected experts with shared technical knowledge could influence state policy in situations of high complexity and uncertainty (Adler and Haas 1992; Haas 1992). A new literature on transnational advocacy networks, global civil society, and transnational social movements identified these actors as participants in global politics and documented their ability to create norms and contribute to regime formation and implementation (Sikkink 1993; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Price 1998; 2003; Thomas 2000; Tarrow 2005). In contrast to epistemic communities that were formed around scientific knowledge and expertise, these groups formed primarily around shared principled ideas. In either case, transnational communities could create new issue areas, project these issues into the international arena, prod states to “discover” their interests, identify new policy options, and help to constitute an independent global public sphere or public domain apart from the system of states (Wapner 1995; Ruggie 2004).

There was generally a “liberal” bias in much of the post-1990s research on transnationalism—that is, the assumption that these developments are desirable and help to pluralize power and advance basic human freedoms. A second wave of literatures

looked at the “dark side” of transnationalism and pointed to the problematic nature of global civil society, its lack of autonomy from the world-views and funding sources of dominant states in the North, and its problems of accountability and representation. Another strand examines so-called dark networks including terrorist groups and criminal networks around drugs and trafficking (Kahler 2007). Regardless of whether one considers transnationalism, on balance, a good or a problematic development, there is general agreement that transnational actors can influence the course of global affairs.

A distinguishing characteristic of many of these transnational actors is that they are organized in network forms.² That is, while states and IOs are organized around hierarchies and have bureaucratic properties, networks are characterized by voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Organizational theorist Walter Powell calls them a third mode of organization, distinctly different from markets and hierarchy. “Networks are ‘lighter on their feet’ than hierarchy,” and are “particularly apt for circumstances in which there is a need for efficient, reliable information” (Powell 1990, 303–4). International relations theorists are only now beginning to “see” network as an alternative form of organization, assess its presence, prominence, and causal importance in world affairs, and consider its normative implications. The dominant forms of communication in global politics (email and the World Wide Web) have (p. 73) networked forms that are increasingly beyond the complete control of states. Terrorist organizations are viewed as being organized around networks, making them more difficult for states to monitor, locate, and incarcerate. Global corporations are discovering and adopting network forms of organization.

Networks have various positive and negative attributes. They have flexibility, speed, informality, a greater chance for increasing multiple views, and perhaps even enhanced implementation capacities (Slaughter 2004; Weber 2004). Yet they lack “a legitimate organizational authority to arbitrate and resolve disputes” (Podolny and Page 1998); in short, they cannot provide the legitimate authority necessary for full-fledged global governance. Nevertheless, increasingly hybrid network forms of governance are emerging that may combine state and nonstate actors to carry out key governance tasks.

Finally, there is perhaps no more persuasive evidence of the rise of global society than the ability of nonstate actors and even individuals to participate directly in global politics without being mediated by the state. This ability finds formal recognition in human rights regimes, where increasingly individuals can bring claims against their own state to international human rights institutions, and where individuals can now be held accountable for acts (crimes against humanity or genocide) that previously were attributed to states. The rise of individual criminal accountability in the global system, as evidenced in the increase in human rights trials, can thus be seen as a broader metaphor for the emergence of individuals as direct participants in global society. Three decades

ago Hedley Bull (1977, 152) recognized as much when he wrote that “if the rights of each man can be asserted on the world political stage over and against the claims of the state, and his duties proclaimed irrespective of his position as a servant or citizen of that state ... The way is left open for a subversion of the society of sovereign states on behalf of the alternative organizing principle of cosmopolitan community.” Contrary to some scholars of global civil society, we do not argue that a cosmopolitan community has emerged, but we would echo Bull's assertions that such changes imply that we have moved well beyond a global society composed only of sovereign states.

2.3 How Do We Study?

What and whom we study necessarily leads to a consideration of how we study. There is now greater epistemological eclecticism and methodological diversity than ever before. While there are various reasons for growing epistemological diversity, arguably most important was the recognition of the underlying social character of international relations. An important early contribution to this awareness was Friedrich Kratochwil and Ruggie's observation (1986) regarding the disconnect between epistemology and the study of international regimes. They argued that, while the very definition of regimes involves inherently intersubjective norms and (p. 74) principles, the prevailing positivist epistemology of international relations made it impossible to explain, assess, or capture the social aspect of life.

A genuinely *social* science cannot model itself only after the natural sciences; international relations scholars of a global society must embrace epistemologies that are appropriate to the task. There is no single path. Some have gravitated toward interpretative social science, frequently drawing from Max Weber and other classical sociological theorists, to understand how actors give significance and meaning to their actions and the intersubjective understandings that frequently constitute social action. Others have gravitated toward forms of scientific realism and theories of discourse, hoping to identify broad patterns of action and inaction. In this regard, there is an interest in “conditions of possibility,” what makes possible certain action, what alternatives are seen as simply correct without any reflection or discussion, and which alternatives are seen as unthinkable (Wight 2006). In this important sense, post-positivist scholars operate with a much broader understanding of causality than do positivist scholars; underlying, unobservable structures that make some action possible, difficult, or unimaginable do important explanatory work.

Alongside an increasing diversity of epistemological positions is an increasing array of methodologies. The use of alternative methodologies to address the same questions has deepened our theoretical understanding and enhanced our empirical analysis. Consider

two prominent areas in the study of global governance. The first is compliance. Behavioral approaches to the study of norms typically attempt to measure behavioral conformity with norms that are written in formal treaties and agreements (Simmons 2000; Raustalia and Slaughter 2002). Instances of compliance or noncompliance, in other words, are defined by the scholar as deviations from some measure developed by the analyst of what constitute behavior consistent with expectations codified in the agreement. Interpretative approaches go beyond behavior. They aspire to recover how actors interpret what counts as compliance and defection; whether there is an intersubjective understanding of what compliance demands in particular social situations; the kinds of justifications that are used for acts of noncompliance; and the motivations and reasons that actors give for compliance and noncompliance (Kratowil and Ruggie 1986; Koh 1997; Kingsbury 1998).

Another area is the study of legitimacy. Certainly any international order that has a modicum of legitimacy will be reflected in behavior that is consistent with the international norms that define that order. Consequently, there should be behavioral effects, effects that can be observed and captured through comparative statics. In this regard, claims about the increasing or decreasing legitimacy of an IO, treaty, or agreement should be evident not only in rates of compliance but also with changes in the willingness of states to rally to its defense, to punish those who violate its norms, and to provide various kinds of resources (Clark 2005; Clark and Reus-Smit 2007). Yet we should also want to understand why legitimacy is conferred, what are (p. 75) the contests over what constitutes a legitimate international order, and what sorts of practices are considered to be appropriate as a consequence.

Not only are particular substantive areas benefiting from the application of diverse methodological approaches, but individual scholars are demonstrating greater agility as they are using multimethod approaches. Increasingly, some scholars who use quantitative methods are asked to supplement their large-n studies with well-selected cases, while qualitative scholars are also turning to some quantitative approaches or formal models. The reason for this development is the desire to balance the strengths and weaknesses of each approach: Large-n studies are very good at helping to determine broad patterns across space and time, but well-designed case studies can be essential for identifying and exploring the causal mechanisms that account for the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

2.4 Why Do We Study?

The what, who, and how raise fundamental issues regarding the why we study global politics. Or, more precisely, why *should* we study world politics? A vibrant discipline of international relations depends on the presence of a community of scholars who are collectively engaged in providing creative explanations and innovative insights into concerns of global importance that have potential relevance beyond that scholarly community. Theory development and methodological innovation is central to this task, but sometimes international relations theorists have become enamored with theory and method for their own sake, turning means into ends. This can lead to sterile paradigm wars and disengagement from the problems and practices of global relations. As Katzenstein and Rudra Sil (this volume) argue, we should judge progress in international relations by both the “quality and scope of dialogue among social scientists and the proximity of this dialogue to socially important normative and policy issues.”

Most of us got into this business to explore and explain particular puzzles. We are motivated by the need to understand and explain developments and changes in global politics and to keep up with the world that often surprises and shocks us. In particular, we are motivated by the need to understand and explain change in global society. As early as 1983, Ruggie (1983) pointed to realism's inability to explain change as its greatest weakness. He argued that realism was unable to explain key changes in the international system because it was missing both a dimension of change and a determinant of change. Other authors have claimed that realism has likewise been unable to explain the most important changes in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, in particular, the consolidation of the European Union, the end of the cold war, the emergence of the war of terror, and the explosion of IOs, international law, and networks. New theories have made some important contributions to understanding specific changes in global society, but have not yet (p. 76) provided a comprehensive theory of change. An increasingly common position is to reject the possibility of a grand theoretical synthesis. In this respect, we concur with Katzenstein and Sil (this volume) that a much more promising avenue is to develop eclectic theorizing that can be used to explain worldly problems with an eye toward how such eclecticism might or might not contribute to broader theoretical arguments.

Secondly, many of us decided on a career in international relations not only because we wanted to observe and explain from a cool distance but also because we hoped our knowledge might improve the conduct and character of global politics. The social sciences were founded with the expectation that they could solve societal problems and define the “public good.” The field of international relations emerged from this tradition and with the desire to develop a scientific and rigorous study of war in order to help

pacify a violent world. There is a long story about how, why, and when the social sciences largely abandoned the idea of practical engagement, a story that revolves around the quest for objectivity and the belief that practical engagement would pollute a pure science, the obsession with theory-building and methods, the desire to train graduate students for life in the academy and to forgo the idea of educating young professionals who might have a career in the public and nonprofit sectors (Anderson 2005). The consequence is that scholars are no longer actively engaged in practical politics. To be sure, there are moments when scholars attempt to comment on the controversies of the day in various forums, but the overall incentive structure is to orient scholars toward the community of scholars rather than toward policy-relevant research.

International relations scholars need to think through how to connect their theories and knowledge to practical action, and one possibility concerns a more substantial interest in marrying international ethics to empirical analysis. Because of its roots in critical theory and critical social science, critical international relations theory has always been attentive to the relationship between theory and praxis, particularly regarding how theory can lead to emancipation. For many, Robert Cox's (1981) distinction between a critical theory that unmasks relations of power with the hopes of changing them and problem-solving theory that takes the world as it is, has been a touchpoint. We are very sympathetic to the importance of attempting to uncover the structures that produce forms of oppression and hinder the ability of individuals to control their fates. However, this formulation has encouraged many who associate themselves with critical international relations theory to dismiss out-of-hand political interventions that are deemed insufficiently radical. But what, precisely, is ethically problematic with an engagement that aspires to make small but consequential changes in the lives of others? Is a practical politics that both makes small improvements and works toward more thoroughgoing change impossible? Where is the evidence that radical change has led to radical emancipation?³

(p. 77)

The empirical engagement with ethics underscores that moral judgment requires evaluation not just of principles but also of consequences. To answer the question “what to do,” we need to ask not just “what is right” but also “what may work” to bring about outcomes consistent with our principles.⁴ We study the world in part because we believe that our research does yield information about the consequences of human action that may be important for ethical judgment and for action in the world. Resolving empirical questions about consequences is important for making normative judgments about desirable policies. It is not only a question of determining which policies are good and bad, but rather specifying the conditions under which different policies can lead to better or worse outcomes.

Because the theorizing about consequences is an inherently comparative and empirical enterprise, empirically oriented scholars can make an important contribution (Nye 1986; Sikkink 2008). Thus ethical judgment requires the best empirical research we can do, using all the research tools at our disposal. The research will often involve difficult counterfactuals, complex research designs, and demanding evidence. Well-intentioned researchers will disagree about results. But we can improve our discussions by being more explicit about our processes of ethical reasoning and by relating our research findings more explicitly to their normative implications.

A paradigm-driven or methods-mad discipline is an intellectual and professional dead end because it allows scholars to feel satisfied with the resulting intellectual fragmentation and detachment from the world. There are many possible paths for reattaching these severed ties, and several of the chapters in this volume suggest different possibilities for greater dialogue among scholars and engagement with practical politics. Not every scholar needs to be equally engaged in dialogue or practical politics, and there are reasons to foster an intellectual division of labor. But such a division needs to be situated in the context of a general agreement that part of the responsibility that members of the community have to each other (and to the pursuit of greater understanding about the world) is to listen carefully and openly to alternative arguments and perspectives and then to consider how such perspectives might foster theoretical development, empirical analysis, and practical action.

3 Conclusion: From Anarchy to Global Governance?

All disciplines, if they are to have any coherence whatsoever, must have an overarching narrative. The anarchy thematic has helped to generate coherence for the (p. 78) discipline of international relations. It provided a common narrative that focused on states as actors that were struggling to maintain their security and generate wealth in an inhospitable environment. It helped to define the boundaries of the field and distinguish the study of international relations from the study of comparative politics. It focused scholarly attention on a manageable set of issues that could be subjected to theoretical emendation and empirical analysis. It provided a coherent account of the discipline that could be passed down from one generation to the next. The anarchy thematic served various useful functions.

Yet this singular narrative also bred theoretical, intellectual, and empirical myopia. Theories that escaped the territorial trap were marginalized or ostracized on various grounds, including the view that they were not contributing to the core debates in the field. Students were advised against certain dissertation topics (for example, human

rights, gender) because it would marginalize them in the field. At issue were not only diversity for diversity's sake but also the ability to construct alternative theories that had the capacity to provide new insights into the existing research agendas and identify new topics for research. The pluralization of the discipline did not occur because the mainstream digested the ethos of deliberative democracy, but rather because of theoretical shortcomings, empirical anomalies, and new items on the global agenda that demanded new approaches. Consequently, many scholars who once believed that they were on the outside of the discipline looking in rejoiced at the decline of the anarchy thematic and the demise of the territorial trap.

This growing diversity, however welcome, also risks generating disciplinary fragmentation, because there no longer exists a single, overarching story. We hesitate to propose an alternative narrative precisely because there is no magical formulation that can avoid prematurely foreclosing diverse perspectives and voices. However, the concept of governance has been emerging as a worthy alternative to anarchy because of its ability to interrogate enduring, heretofore neglected, and emerging issues in the theory and practice of international relations. Governance is about how actors work together to maintain order and achieve collective goals. Accordingly, the study of global governance is ultimately concerned with how rules are created, produced, sustained, and refined, how these rules help define the purpose of collective action, and how these rules control the activities of international, transnational, and increasingly domestic action.

A narrative of global governance, then, would have to consider both centralized and decentralized forms of governance. International relations scholars have tended to focus on centralized rules, particularly those that exist in inter-state agreements, treaties, and conventions. But we must become more aware of the different kinds of organizational forms and architectures through which global governance occurs. In particular, we must be attentive to the possibility of governance through decentralized rule, including governance through networks that link the public and private realms (Chimni 2004; Ruggie 2004). This suggests that we focus attention less on (p. 79) specific actors, such as specific IOs, and more on "rule systems" (Rosenau 2000) and often on multilayered structures where governance actually occurs (Conca 2005; Khagram 2005).

Global governance has evolved from a state-dominated affair to include a panoply of actors (even as states retain considerable privileges and prerogatives). Global rule-making is increasingly produced by private authorities such as global corporations and bond-rating agencies, transnational actors such as citizens' movements and indigenous groups, IOs such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and nongovernmental organizations such as Doctors without Borders. In general, states do not exhaust the mechanisms of reproduction or transformation, and by stalking states we overlook other suspects that are the source and governor of international change.

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Notes:

(1) However, William Wohlforth (this volume) argues that realism can live without the anarchy assumption.

(2) Not all transnational actors are organized in networks (the Vatican is hierarchical, for example) and not all networks are made up of nonstate actors. As Ann-Marie Slaughter (2004) observes, intergovernmental relations also frequently use network forms of interaction.

(3) We recognize that there are potential links to pragmatism, especially pragmatism's interest in engagement with practical problems and in marrying forms of critical theory with social science methods, but we will leave it to others more conversant with pragmatism to draw the connections.

(4) We are indebted to Richard Price for this particular formulation.

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