

**THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES  
ST. AUGUSTINE  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**GOVT 2060  
International Relations:  
Theories and Approaches  
Fall 2017**

## **Topic 9 Constructivism**

In 1992, Alexander Wendt, considered the most influential constructivist scholar, launched a scathing attack on neo-realism in his seminal work “Anarchy is what States Make of It: the Social Construction of Power Politics”. Later, in 1999 in his book “Social Theory of International Politics”, he would emphasize that ideas, norms and culture rather than material factors are critical to analyzing world politics. Together with other constructivists like Peter Katzenstein, Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, he would challenge the core premises of Waltz’s structural realism. In this session, we explore this challenge noting also that language and rhetoric are salient elements of constructivism.

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# Course content

- The History and Evolution of the International System
- Levels of Analysis and Foreign Policy

## **POSITIVIST THEORIES**

### **MAINSTREAM APPROACHES**

- Liberalism
- Realism
- Neorealism
- Neoliberalism

### **STRUCTURALIST APPROACHES**

- Classical Marxism
- Dependency Theory
- Structural Imperialism
- Worlds System Theory

- International Society Theory (The English School)

## **POST-POSITIVIST THEORIES**

- **Constructivism**
- Postmodernism
- Critical Theory
- Feminism

- Readings:**
1. Wendt, Alexander. "Anarchy is What States Make of It." *International Organization*. Vol 46, no. 2. Spring 1992, p. 391-425. **34p.** – **JSTOR**
  2. Wendt, Alexander. 'Constructing international politics.' *Journal of International Security*. Vol 20 No 1 Summer 1995. **JSTOR**.
  3. Finnemore, Martha and Sikkink, Kathryn. "Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 2001. Vol 4, Issue 1. 26p **Ebsco Host**
  4. Baylis and Smith. Chapter 11 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)
  5. Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff. Pp162-163 (4<sup>th</sup> ed.)
  6. Jackson, Robert & Sorenson. Introduction to International Relations. Chapter 7
  7. Kegley & Wittkopf. Chapter 2
  8. Smith, Steve. "Reflectivist and Constructivist Approaches to International theory", in Baylis & Smith.
  9. Viotti & Kauppi. Chapter 3.

## At the Caspian Sea University:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B1\\_Z5ACd6MBPNGJDSUJLX2t4ZG8?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B1_Z5ACd6MBPNGJDSUJLX2t4ZG8?usp=sharing)

John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics: an Introduction to International Relations*. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2008 (4th edition)

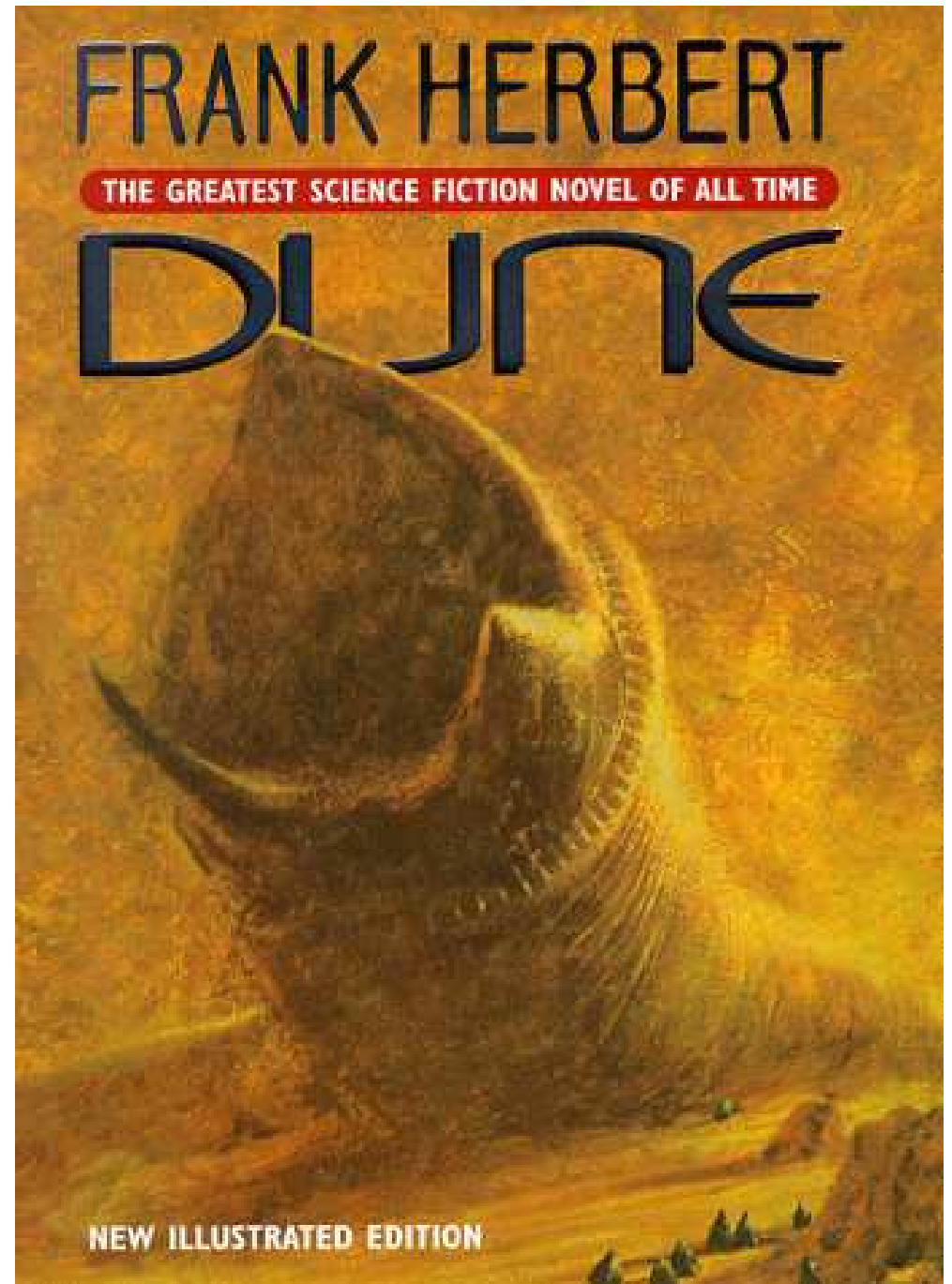
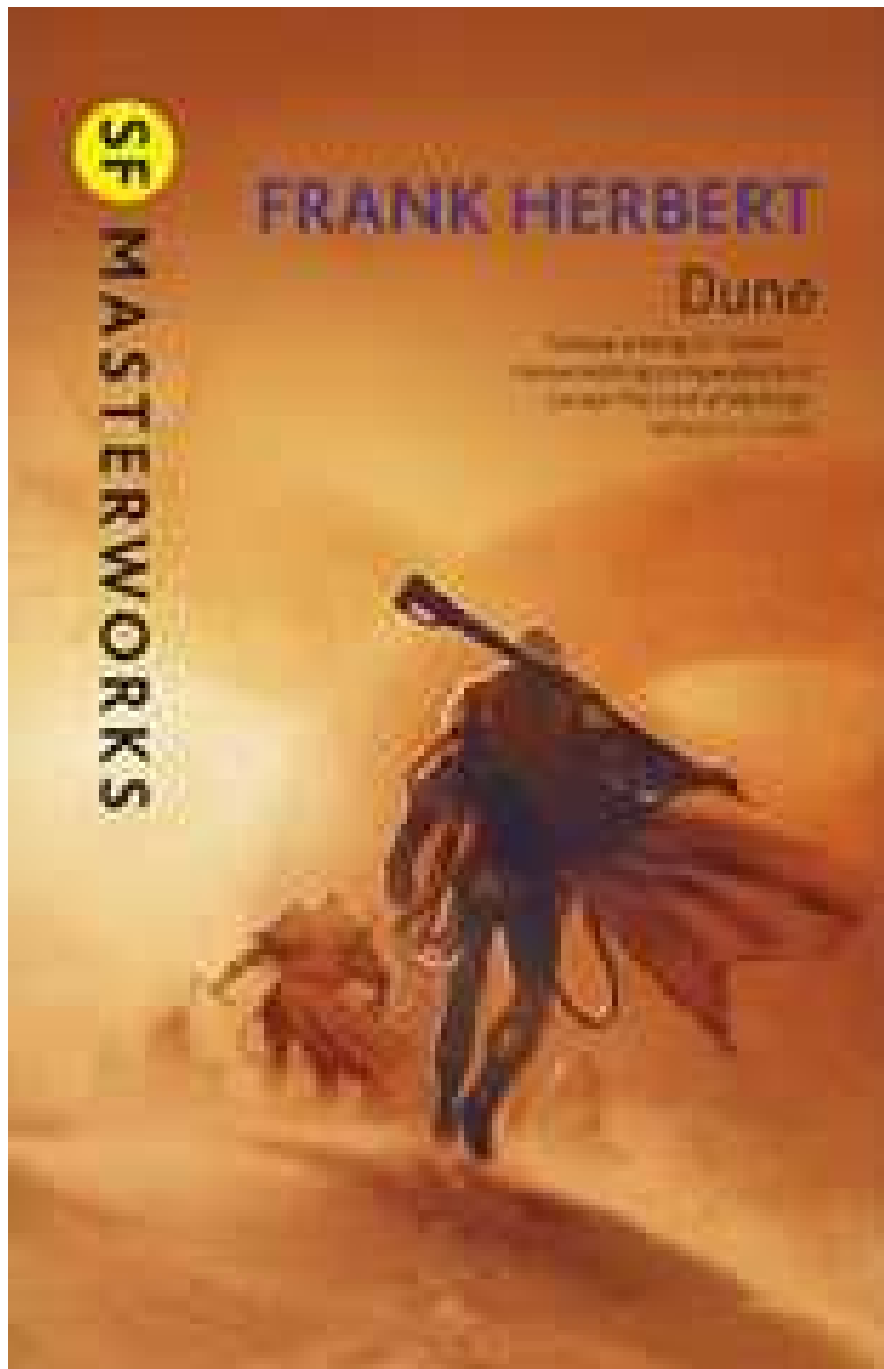
Ch.9 Social Constructivism; 'Explanatory/Constitutive Theories and Foundational/Anti-Foundational Theories' (beginning of Ch.10 Alternative Approaches to International Theory).

Robert Jackson and Georg Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013 (5th ed.), Ch.8 Social Constructivism.

P. Viotti and M. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism, and Beyond*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2012 (5th edition), Ch.6 Constructivist Understandings.

Paul D'Anieri, *International Politics: Power and Purpose in Global Affairs* (2nd edition 2012), pp. 94-101.

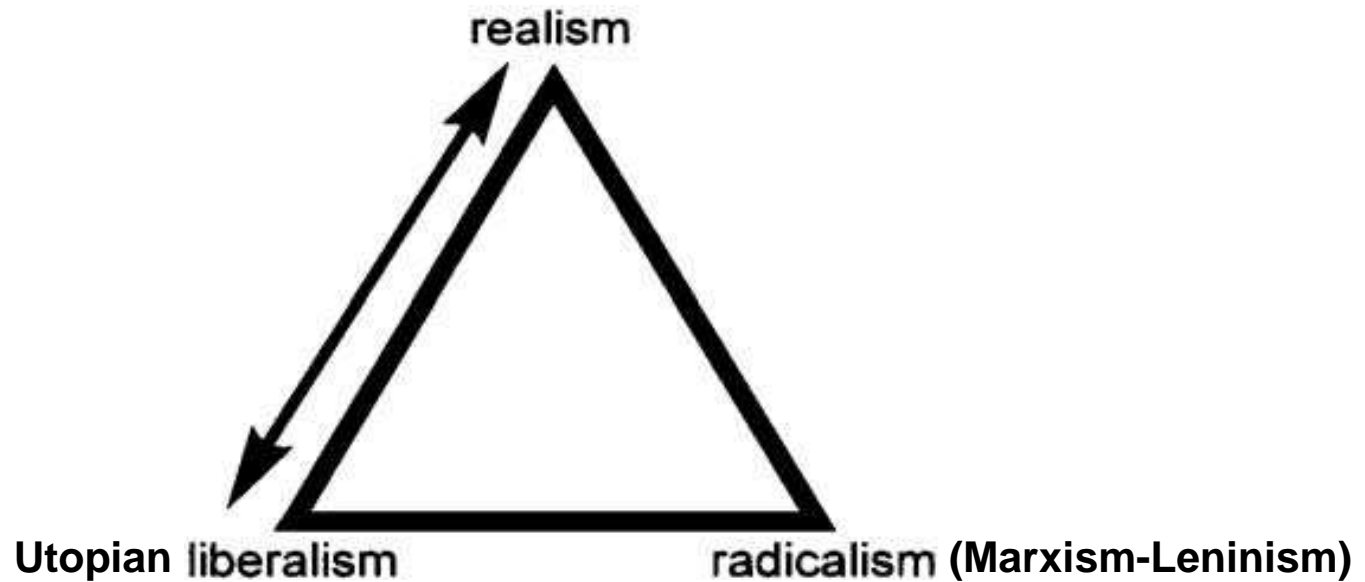
*Dune*, the 1965 science fiction novel by Frank Herbert



## The IR Great Debates

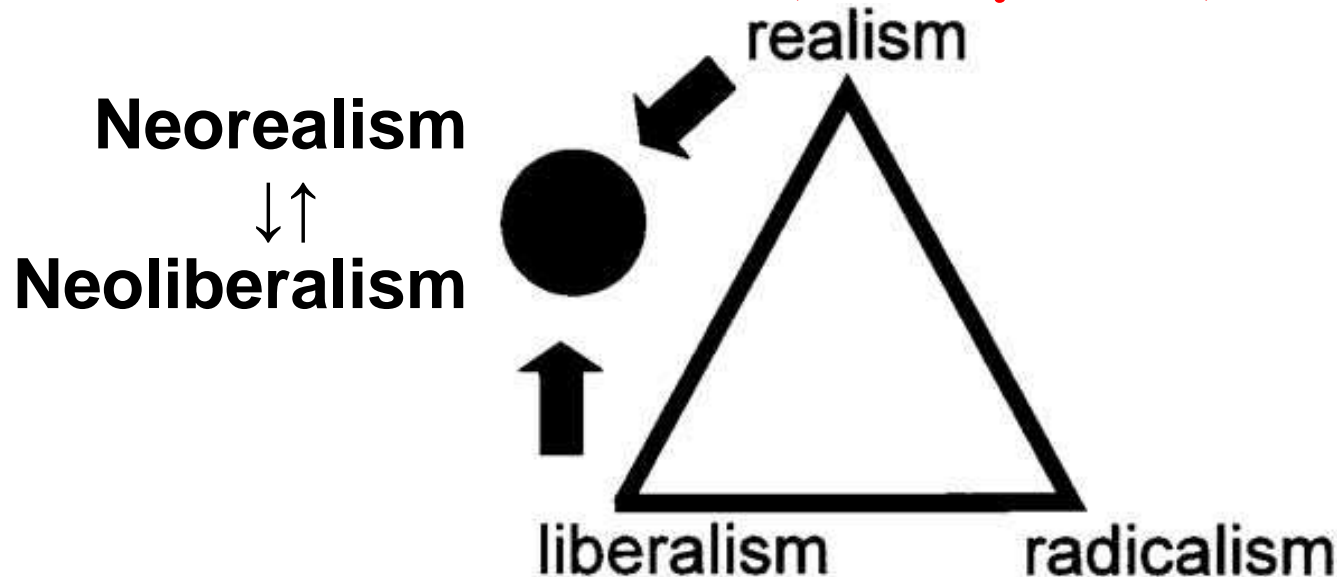
Alternative names	Contenders
First IR Great Debate	Realism - Utopian Liberalism
Second IR Great Debate	Traditionalism - Behaviouralism (=hard sciences-inspired)
<p>The <b>Intra</b>-Paradigm Debate (Therefore, <b>not</b> a <b>great</b> debate)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>or</b></p> <p>The <b>Inter</b>-Paradigm Debate = The <b>Third</b> IR <b>Great Debate</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>or</b></p> <p>The first stage of the Third Great Debate (a compromise)</p>	<p>Neorealism - Neoliberalism (share the <b>same</b> <b>paradigm</b>)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>or</b></p> <p>Neorealism - Neoliberalism - Radical Theories (=Neo-Marxism) (Neo-Marxism is based on a <b>different</b> <b>paradigm</b> than Neorealism and Neoliberalism)</p>
<p>The <b>Third</b> IR Great Debate (if neo-neo is not considered a great debate)</p> <p>The <b>Fourth</b> IR Great Debate (if neo-neo is considered a great debate)</p> <p>The <b>second stage of the Third</b> Great Debate (a compromise solution)</p>	<b>Positivism - Post-Positivism</b>

## 1. The First IR Great Debate: Realism - Liberalism



## 2. The Second IR Great Debate: Traditionalism - Behaviouralism

## 3. The Neorealism - Neoliberalism Debate (and/or Synthesis?)



# The Third or second stage of the Third or the Fourth Great Debate: Positivism - Post-Positivism

Is scientific knowledge objective?

**Epistemology** = the theory of knowledge

("how we can study the world")

the ways and means by which we come to know something about the world

The epistemology issue is raised by the following question: **in what way can we obtain knowledge about the world?**

- At **one extreme** is the notion of **scientifically explaining** the world. The task is to build a valid social science on a foundation of **verifiable empirical propositions**.
- At the **other extreme** is the notion of **understanding** the world, that is, to comprehend and interpret the substantive topic under study. According to this view, historical, legal, or moral problems of world politics **cannot be translated into terms of [hard] science** without misunderstanding them.

(Jackson and Sørensen)



"The social fact is a thing".

Émile Durkheim



Émile Durkheim (1858-1917)

## POSITIVISM:

There is no epistemological difference between a mountain and a war, or between IR and Chemistry.

Previous theories → "**objective** laws"

The reality of IR can be known with means inspired by **hard sciences**

Future behaviour can be predicted

**Interests and identities = fixed**



**POSITIVIST** or **RATIONALIST** theories

**Objective knowledge. Absolute truth.** Uses the methods of natural sciences.

- *causal explanations*



**Positivism**

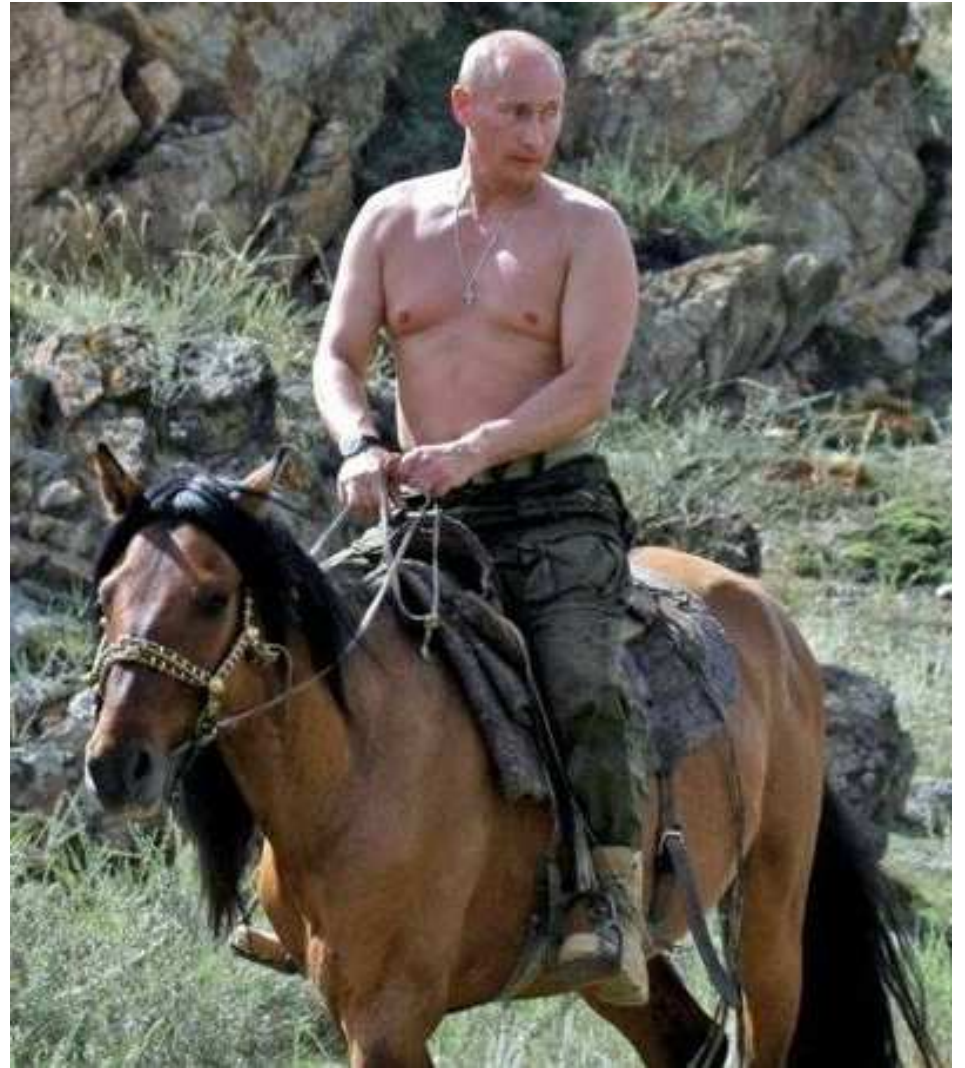
And yet...

# The 'axis of evil'...



**...or the 'axis of resistance'?**







**"One man's terrorist  
is another man's freedom fighter"**

**IR Theory vs. Political Ideology**

**Should you keep them apart?**

**"One man's terrorist  
is another man's freedom fighter"**

**IR Theory vs. Political Ideology**

**Can you keep them apart?**



**"One man's terrorist  
is another man's freedom fighter"**

**IR Theory vs. Political Ideology**

**Can you keep them apart?**



**Is scientific knowledge objective?**

Max Weber

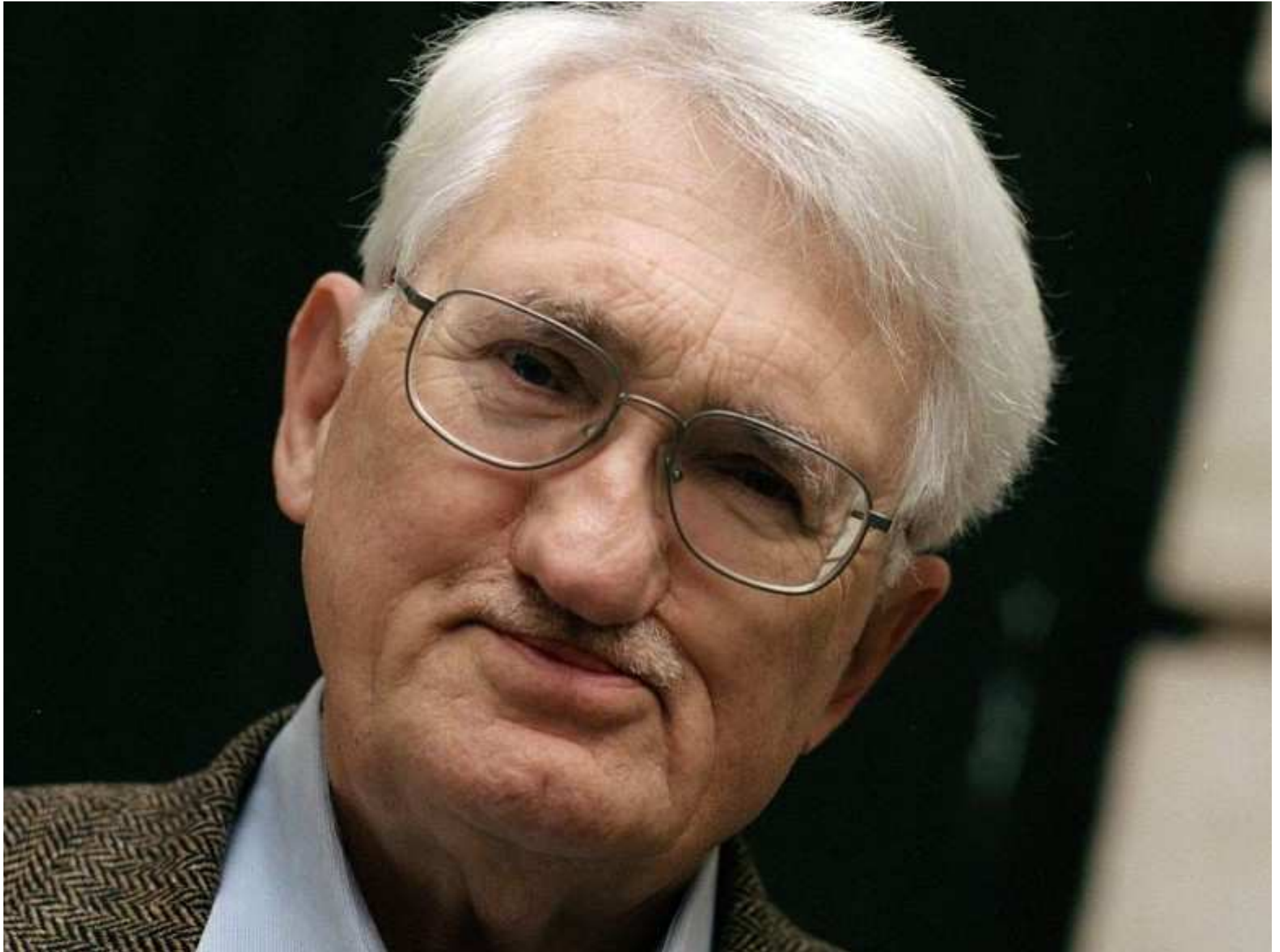
**‘verstehen’** (interpretive understanding)

Max Weber emphasized that the **social world is fundamentally different from the natural world** of physical phenomena. Human beings **rely on ‘understanding’** of each other’s actions and **assigning ‘meaning’** to them. In order to comprehend human interaction, we cannot merely describe it in the way we describe physical phenomena, such as a boulder falling off a cliff; we need a different kind of **interpretive understanding**, or **‘verstehen’**. **Is the pat of another person’s face a punishment or a caress?** We cannot know until **we assign meaning to the act**. Weber concluded that **‘subjective understanding is the specific characteristic of sociological knowledge’**.

(Jackson and Sørensen)



Max Weber (1864-1920)



**Jürgen Habermas (of the 'Frankfurt School')**

Jürgen Habermas:

If capitalism changes – as Marx himself wrote – according to ‘iron laws’ which have all the determinism of laws of natural science, where is there any room for the active interaction of human beings in their own fate? Why should anyone bother to become a Marxist at all? For if human behaviour is governed by ineluctable laws, there is nothing we can do to shape our own history by actively intervening in it. When understood as a science, Marxism ignores what Habermas calls the ‘self-reflection’, or ‘reflexivity’ of human agents. That is to say, it cannot cope with one of the defining features which make us human. This is the fact that we are capable of reflecting upon our own history, as individuals and as members of larger societies; and of using precisely that reflection to change the course of history.

Quentin Skinner (1985) *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences*

"Theory is always for someone  
and for some purpose."

Knowledge is not neutral.  
It reflects the interests of the observer.

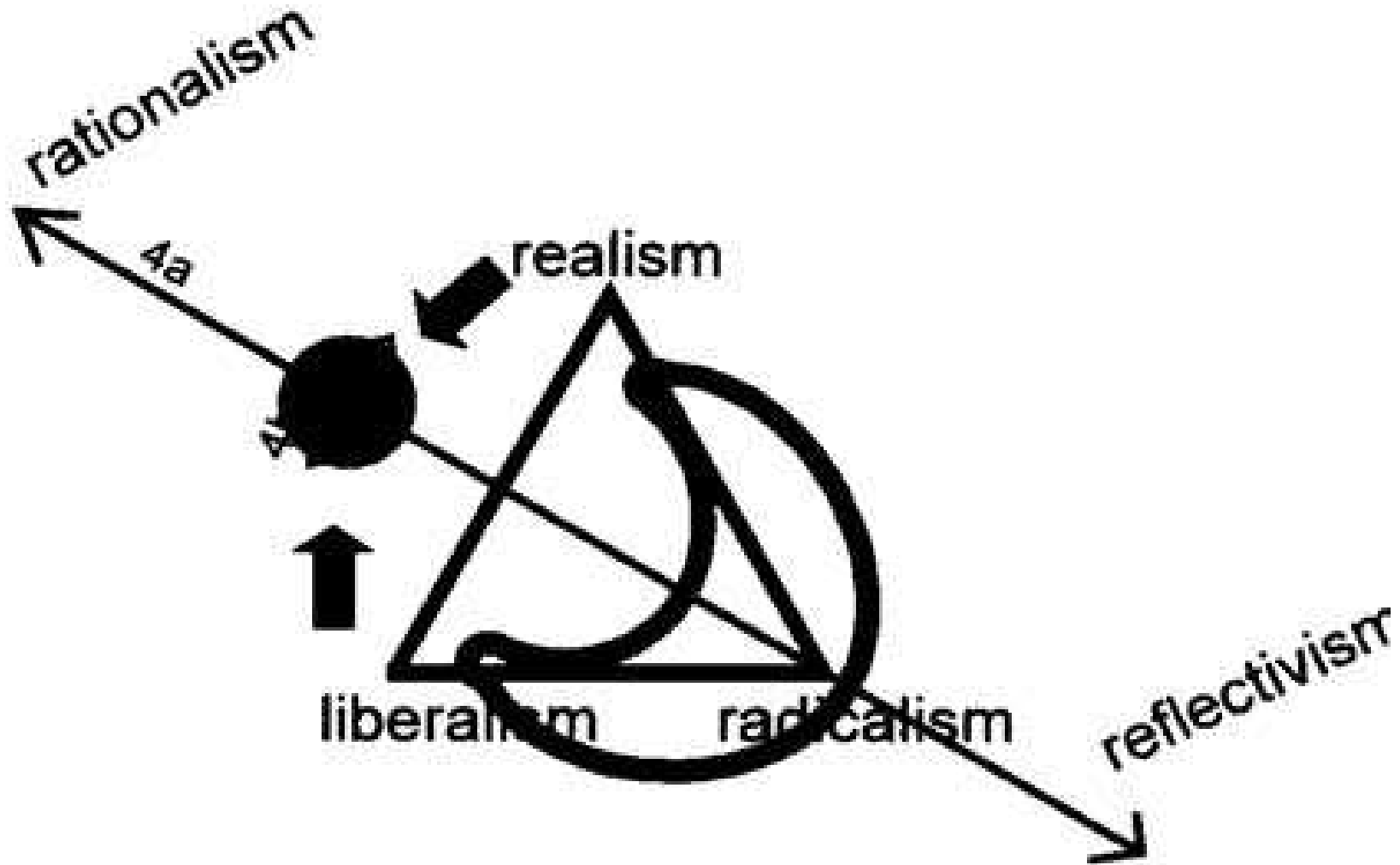


Robert Cox (founder of the Critical School of IR)

Positivism	Post-Positivism
<p>Previous theories → "objective laws"  The reality of IR can be known with means inspired by <b>hard sciences</b>  Future behaviour can be predicted  <b>Interests and identities = fixed</b>  ↓  <b>POSITIVIST</b> or <b>RATIONALIST</b> theories</p>	<p><b>POST-POSITIVIST, REFLECTIVIST or COGNITIVIST</b> theories → the importance of human reflexion for international politics</p> <p>Habermas / Frankfurt school:  we can reflect on our history and use this <b>to change</b> the course of history</p>
<p>There is no epistemological difference between a mountain and a war, or between IR and Chemistry.</p>	<p>Epistemologically, a mountain and a war are completely different. So are IR and Chemistry.</p>
<p><b>Objective knowledge. Absolute truth.</b>  Uses the methods of natural sciences.  - <i>causal explanations</i></p>	<p><b>No objective knowledge. No absolute truth.</b> The social world cannot be studied in an objective and value-free way.  - <i>constitutive questions</i></p>

First half of the 1990s:

## The Positivism - Post-positivism debate

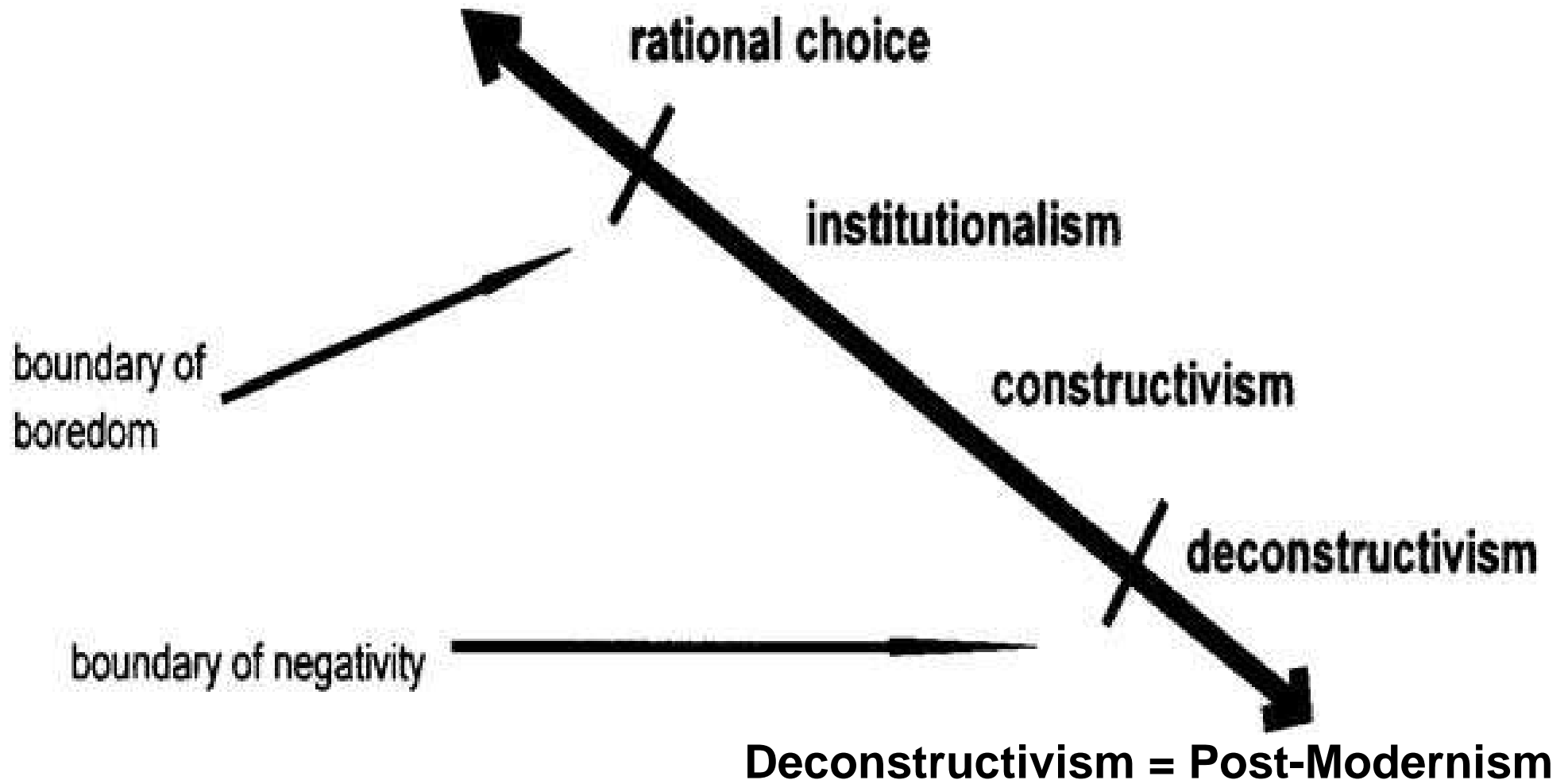


Ole Waever, 'Figures on international thought: introducing persons instead of paradigms,' in Iver B. Neumann and Ole Waever, *The Future of International Relations: Masters in the Making?* (Routledge, 1997).

First half of the 1990s:

## The Positivism - Post-positivism debate

### Neo-Realism + Neo-Liberalism



Ole Waever, 'Figures on international thought: introducing persons instead of paradigms,' in Iver B. Neumann and Ole Waever, *The Future of International Relations: Masters in the Making?* (Routledge, 1997).



## EPISTEMOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES:

<b>Positivism</b>	<b>Post-positivism</b>
<p><b>Foundationalism</b> all truth claims can be judged <b>true or false</b>; usually <b>against empirical facts</b></p>	<p><b>Anti-foundationalism</b> each theory poses different questions; hence what counts as <b>'facts' and 'truths' differs from theory to theory</b></p>
<p><b>Explanatory theory</b> makes <b>causal statement</b> about relations between dependent and independent variables</p> <p>e.g. Waltz: <b>Anarchy → State behaviour</b></p>	<p><b>Constitutive theory</b> theorizes the relationship between <b>'variables' as mutually constituting</b> each other; hence 'variables' cannot be said to stand in causal relationship to one another</p> <p>e.g. Wendt: <b>Anarchy ↔ State behaviour</b></p>

**Ontology** = how we see or understand the world ("what is in the world")

ex.: Marxist ontology → exploitation

subjective - objective

The ontology issue is raised by the following question: **is there an objective reality 'out there'** or is the world one of **experience only, i.e., a subjective creation of people**? The extreme objectivist position is purely naturalist and materialist: i.e., international relations are basically a thing, an object, out there. The extreme subjectivist position is purely idealist: i.e., international relations are basically an idea or concept that people share about how they should organize themselves and relate to each other politically; it is constituted exclusively by language, ideas, and concepts.

(Jackson and Sørensen)

**ONTOLOGY:  
OBJECTIVIST**

Behavioralism

Positivism

Critical  
theory

**EPISTEMOLOGY:  
EXPLAINING**

Construc-  
tivism

Classical theory  
Normative theory

**UNDERSTANDING**

Postmodernism?

**SUBJECTIVIST**

(Jackson and Sorensen)

# Constructivism

## ("Social Constructivism")

- The **main post-positivist** theory.
- The **most 'moderate'** post-positivist theory.

### AN EXAMPLE OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIZATION:

#### Effects of **International Socialization** under the influence of the European Union in Central and Eastern Europe, 1992-1998:

**Perception of threats** from ethnic groups and minorities and perception of threats from neighboring countries (1992-1998)

	1992	1996	1998
Perception of threats from ethnic groups and minorities			
Romania	60%	32%	32%
Slovakia	53%	48%	43%
Bulgaria	46%	37%	29%
Perception of threats from neighboring countries			
Romania	67%	35%	27%
Slovakia	46%	36%	30%
Bulgaria	61%	31%	19%

Results of Slovak **nationalist parties** in parliamentary elections, 1992-2002

1992	1994	1998	2002	2006
45.19%	40.37%	36.07%	19.5%	20.5%

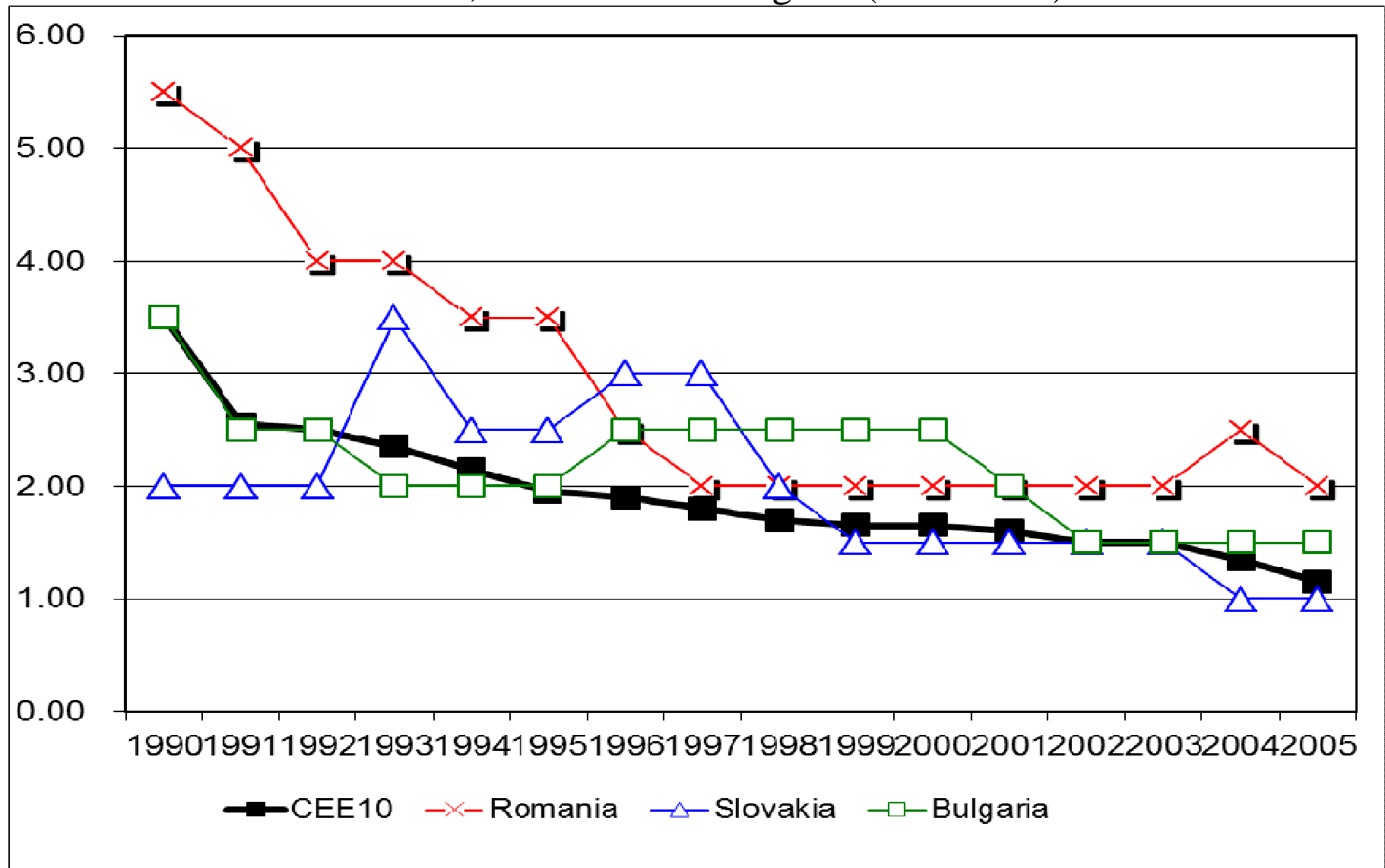
Romania - Vote for **neo-communist parties** in legislative elections (Chamber of Deputies),  
1992-1996

1990	1992	1996
66.31%	30.75%	21.52%

Bulgaria - **Preference** for an **authoritarian** leader, 1992-96

1992	1994	1996
66%	45%	22%

## Freedom House Political Rights and Civil Liberties average scores for ten CEE states, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria (1990-2007)



The **change due to international socialization** of the **systems of values** shared by the three countries allowed them to join the EU in 2004 (Slovakia) and 2007 (Romania and Bulgaria).



The identities and interests of states  
change due to **international socialization**:

- states are changed by the international environment
- and
- states change the international environment



**IR = based on ideas, knowledge**

= the main idea of Constructivism

## CONSTRUCTIVISM - DEFINITIONS:

Video: Constructivism - International Relations Theory (2min35)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1c0TQ5PcIbQ>

Constructivism is about **human consciousness** and its role in international life (John Ruggie).

Constructivism is the view that the manner in which the **material world shapes and is shaped by human** action and interaction depends on **dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations** of the material world (Emanuel Adler).

A theoretical approach which sees **selfinterested states** as the key actors in world politics; their actions are determined not by anarchy but **by the ways states socially “construct” accepted images of reality** and then respond to the meanings they give to power politics, so as their definitions change, cooperative practices can evolve.

**FOUR FEATURES** (Carlsnaes, Risse and Simmons, *Handbook of International Relations*, 2002, pp.57-8)

1. centrally concerned with the **role of ideas** in constructing social life
2. concerned with showing the **socially constructed nature of agents** or subjects
3. based on a research strategy of **methodological holism** rather than methodological individualism  
(holism = use the **system level of analysis**; system/structure are decisive factors;  
individualism = use the state level of analysis)
4. concerned with **constitutive** as opposed to just causal **explanations**

Episode 43: IR Constructivism (5min01)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1drzYXfWaA>



Social world ≠ a material object  
outside human consciousness



focus on

- **ideas and beliefs** that inform the actors
- **shared understandings** between them



**Intersubjectivity**

common understanding:  
intersubjective **beliefs** (widely  
**shared** among people

According to constructivist philosophy, the **social world is not a given**: it is not something ‘out there’ that exists independent of the thoughts and ideas of the people involved in it. It is **not an external reality** whose **laws can be discovered by scientific research** and explained by scientific theory as positivists and behaviouralists argue. The social and political world is not part of nature. There are **no natural laws of society or economics or politics**. History is not an evolving external process that is independent of human thought and ideas. That means that sociology or economics or political science or the study of history **cannot be objective ‘sciences’** in the strict positivist sense of the word.

- **social facts** (e.g. sovereignty and human rights) exist **because of human agreement**
- **brute facts** (e.g. mountains) are independent of such agreements

Video: Theory in Action: Constructivism (5min19)

Professor Caleb Gallemore tells us about Constructivism and why it's like Neo in The Matrix.

[https://youtu.be/kYU9UfkV\\_XI?list=PLWsNEo6X1UO4liBvJmOmJ\\_xMQ8ydVdxBh](https://youtu.be/kYU9UfkV_XI?list=PLWsNEo6X1UO4liBvJmOmJ_xMQ8ydVdxBh)

Constructivism = emphasizes the **social construction of reality**  
**International system = constituted by ideas**, not by material forces

Ideas = mental constructs held by individuals, sets of distinctive **beliefs, principles and attitudes** that provide **broad orientations** for behaviour and policy

Four major types of ideas:

- ideologies or shared belief systems,
- normative beliefs,
- cause-effect beliefs,
- policy prescriptions

## **FORERUNNERS**

**Giambattista Vico** (18<sup>th</sup>-century Italian philosopher)

History ≠ unfolding or evolving process external to human affairs.

Men and women **make**

- **their own history**
- **states** = historical constructs = artificial creations

The state system = artificial = made by men and women who can **change** it and **develop** it

**Immanuel Kant**

Knowledge about the world = **subjective** = filtered through human consciousness

## Max Weber

‘**verstehen**’ (interpretive understanding) <see above>

Max Weber emphasized that the social world is fundamentally different from the natural world of physical phenomena. Human beings rely on ‘**understanding**’ of each other’s actions and assigning ‘meaning’ to them. In order to comprehend human interaction, we cannot merely describe it in the way we describe physical phenomena, such as a boulder falling off a cliff; we need a different kind of **interpretive understanding**, or ‘**verstehen**’. **Is the pat of another person’s face a punishment or a caress? We cannot know until we assign meaning to the act.** Weber concluded that ‘subjective understanding is the specific characteristic of sociological knowledge’.

(Jackson and Sørensen)

## Anthony Giddens

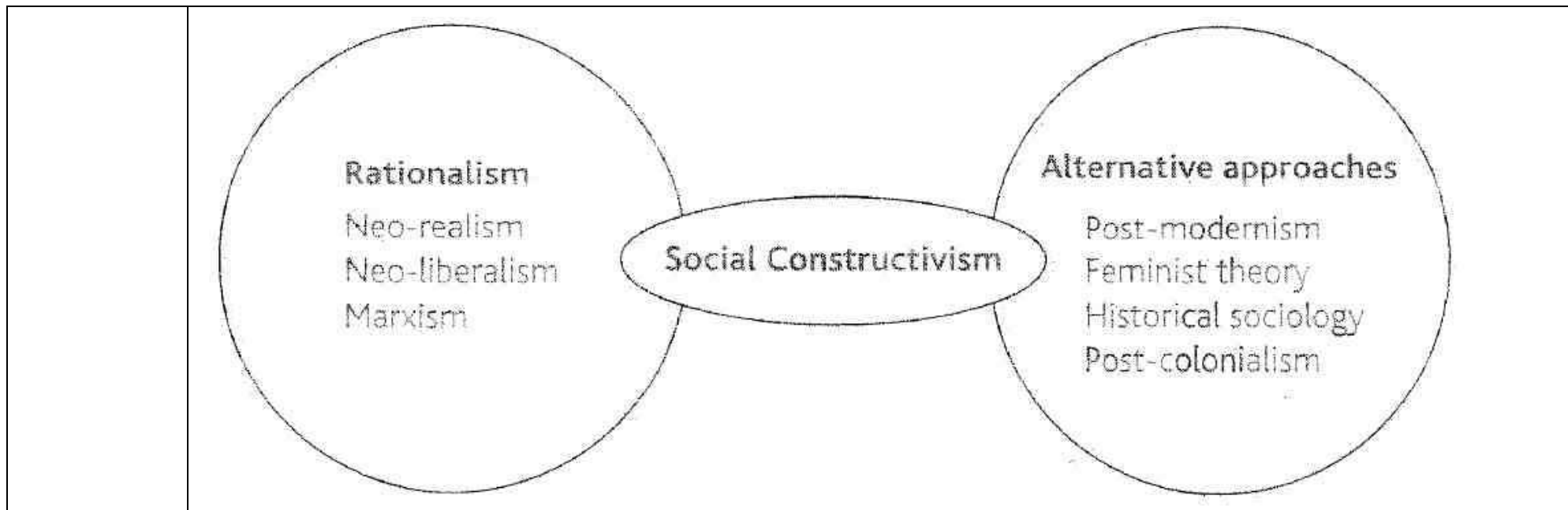
"structuration"

Structures (rules and conditions that guide social action) do **not** determine what actors do in any **mechanical way**

The relationship between structures and actors involves **intersubjective** understanding and meaning:

- **structures constrain actors**
- **actors can transform structures** by thinking about them and acting on them in new ways.

Main authors	Nicholas Onuf Friedrich Kratochwil John Ruggie Martha Finnemore Alexander Wendt
Main element	The <b>social character</b> of IR. "Homo sociologicus" (instead of neorealists' and neoliberals' homo economicus)
Premises	<p>There are several constructivist branches. Most try to find a <i>via media</i> (middle way) between radical post-positivists (e.g. postmodernists) and positivists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>knowledge</b> of the social world = possible (see below)</li> <li>- <b>ideas, knowledge</b> = important role in IR</li> <li>- <b>interest and identity</b> = evolve, <b>not fixed</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Norms</b> = major role in the evolution of the international system          States <b>interact</b> and learn → <b>change their identity</b>          This <b>changes</b> the international <b>environment</b></p>



All post-positivists	social sciences = <b>no objective truth</b> , true across time and place
Constructivists	no objective truth, true across time and place <i>but</i> they do make " <b>truth claims</b> " that are always <b>contingent and partial</b> interpretations of a complex world ( <i>e.g. all wars cannot be considered similar across time and place and studied as such; but a specific war can be studied as positivists do</i> )
Other post-positivist ("critical") schools	<b>even "truth claims" are not possible</b> truth is always connected to dominant ways of thinking <b>truth and power cannot be separated</b> main task = unmask the core relationship between truth and power, criticize dominant versions of thinking that claim to be true

## Agent / Structure ("Individualism / Holism")

the structure of the international system is important = holist or structuralist approach  
but

**socialization** → states interact → learn → **change their identity** → **modify** the international environment

= agent and structure **influence each other**

## Idealism / Materialism

<p><b>ideas</b> define <b>identities</b> which impart meaning to <b>material capabilities</b> and <b>behaviour of actors</b></p>	<p>however,</p>
<p><b>material conditions</b> acquire meaning for human action only through the <b>shared knowledge that ideas</b> ascribe to them</p>	<p>constructivists believe in the <b>existence of the material world</b></p>

Materialists: power and national interest are the driving forces in international politics.

Constructivism = **idealism** + "**some form of structuralism**"

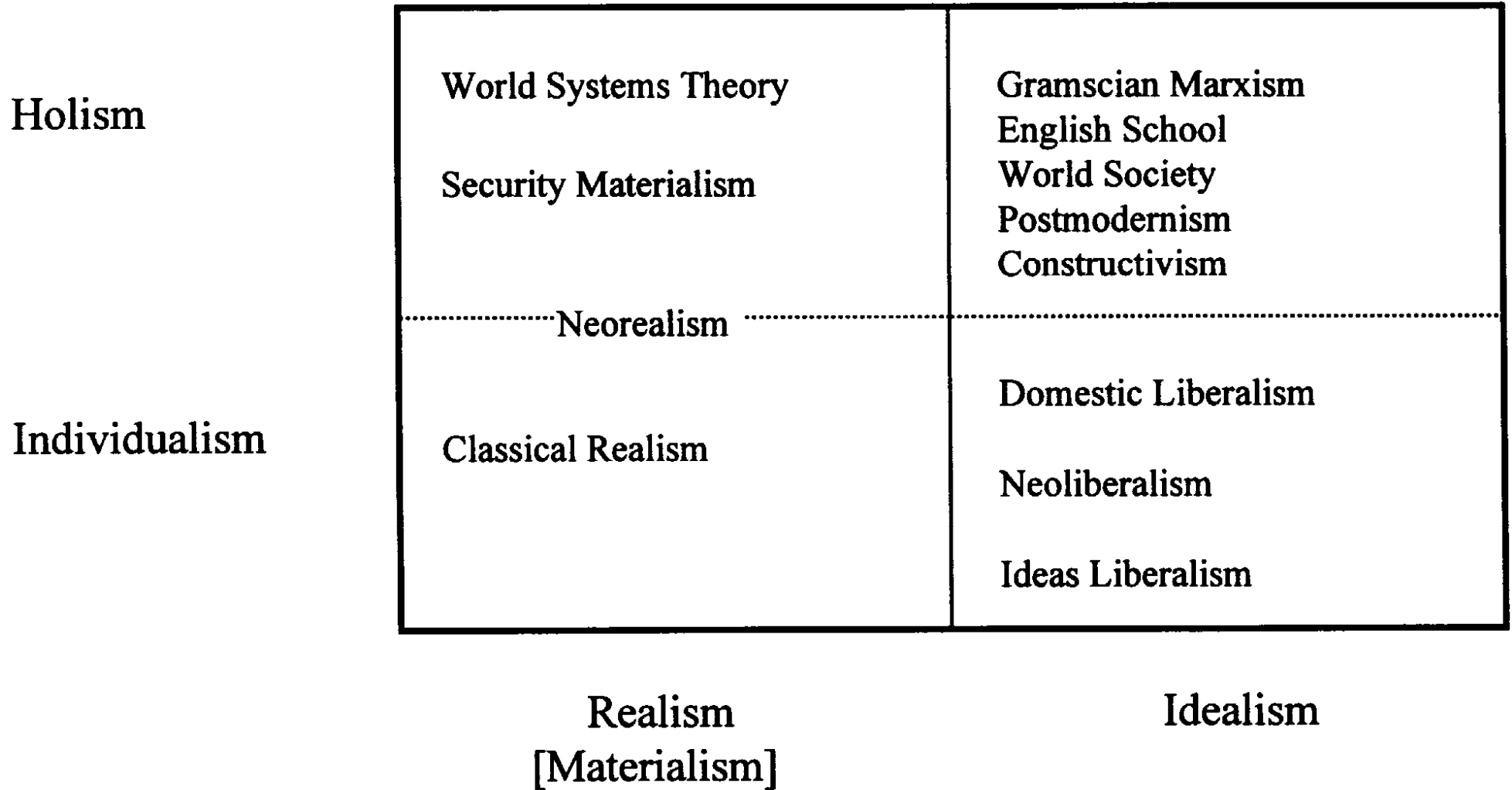
but

**close to the borders** of materialism and individualism

# The Ontological Position of Constructivism

(Adler, Emanuel (1997). "Seizing the middle ground: Constructivism in world politics." European Journal of International Relations 3(3): 319-363.)

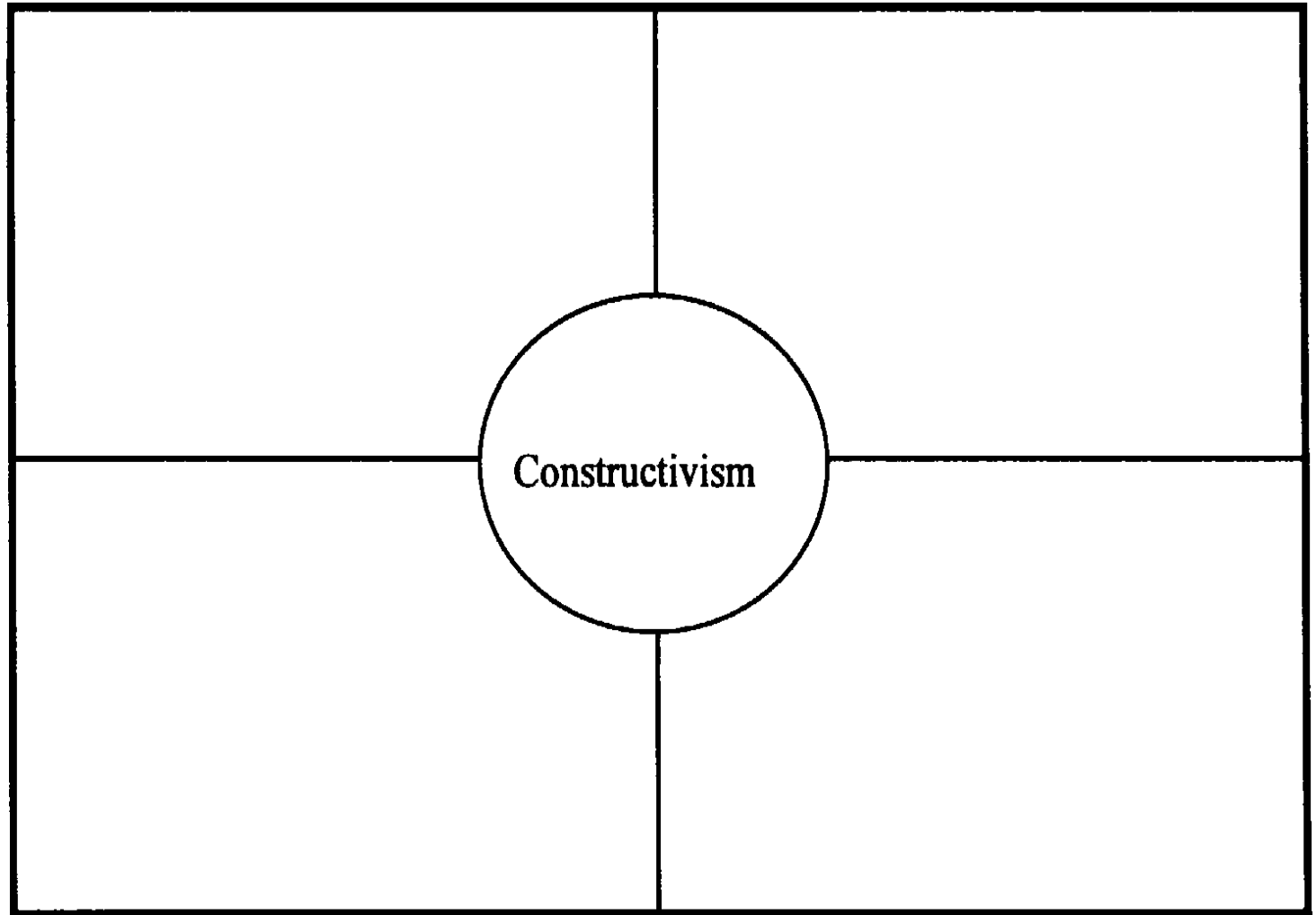
## Alexander Wendt's Map of International Theory



# Constructivism's Middle Ground

Structuralism

Individualism



Materialism

Idealism





## Alexander Wendt

- 'Anarchy Is What States Make of It: the Social Construction of Power Politics' (article, 1992)
- *Social Theory of International Politics* (book, 1999)

- Alexander Wendt laid the theoretical groundwork for **challenging** what he considered to be a flaw shared by both neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists, namely, a commitment to **a (crude) form of materialism**.
- By attempting to show that even such a core realist concept as **"power politics" is socially constructed** - that is, not given by nature and hence, capable of being transformed by human practice - Wendt opened the way for a generation of international relations scholars to pursue work in a wide range of issues from a constructivist perspective.

"ideas and norms might not only constrain but also **construct** how states define their **national interests**"

states are important	"state-society complex": state + <b>society</b> are IR relevant	"states are people too" states <b>learn</b> from their interaction ( <b>socialization</b> )
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<p>Social structures = 3 elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>shared knowledge</b></li> <li>• <b>material resources</b></li> <li>• <b>practices</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Shared understandings</b>, expectations, or knowledge</p> <p>↓</p> <p>define (in part*) <b>social structures</b></p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>CONSTITUTE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>the actors</b> in a situation</li> <li>• the nature of their <b>relationships</b> (cooperative or conflictual)</li> </ul>
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\* in part because material resources also contribute

‘500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons because the British **are friends** and the North Koreans are not’

**Power and interest** have the effects they do **in virtue of the ideas** that make them up.

Actors influence the structure:

The three **cultures of anarchy** ("anarchy is what states make of it"):

Degrees of cultural interiorization:				
3rd - legitimacy			EU; the Western defence community	
2nd - price		EEC; US-Russia		
1st - force	WWII; US-USSR		Within the EU, Germany compels Greece to adopt austerity	
	<b>Hobbes</b>	<b>Locke</b>	<b>Kant</b>	← <b>international culture</b>
	enemy	rival	friend	← degree of cooperation

The frequency of wars depends on the type of culture.

Groups of states can **evolve toward a Kantian community**



the Western security community

Security can be improved if ways of thinking change.

# The Importance of International Norms

Martha Finnemore:

**international norms** promoted by **international organizations** can decisively influence national guidelines by pushing states to adopt these norms in their national policies.



Importance of

- norms
- international organizations



- **diffusion**
- **internationalization**
- **institutionalization**

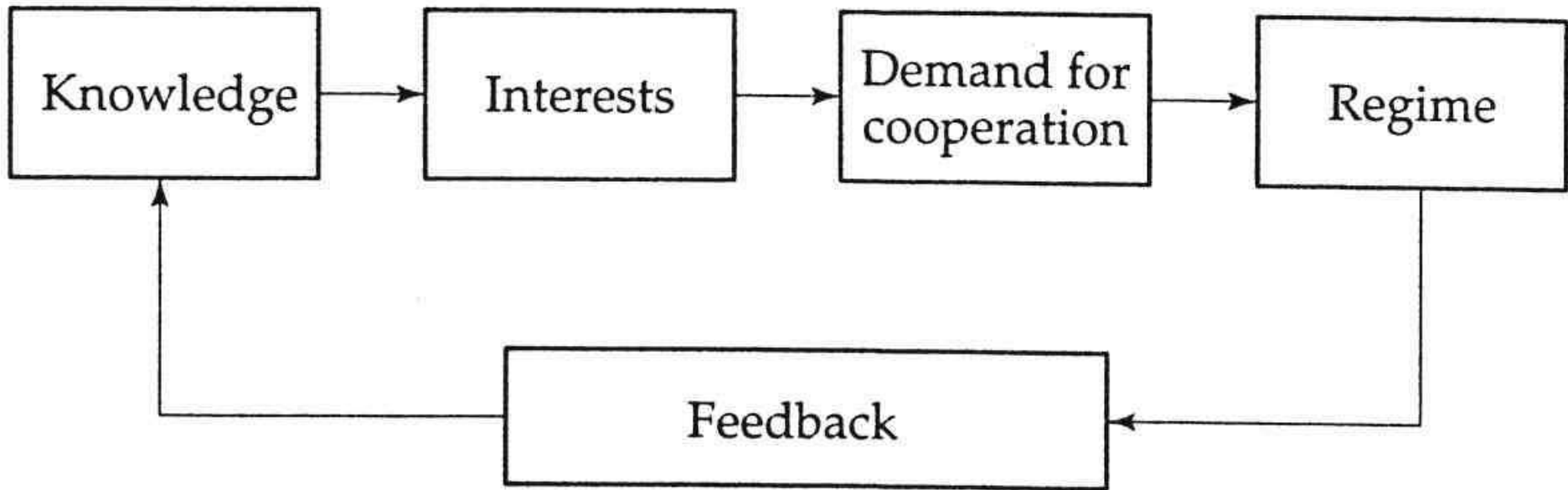
of norms



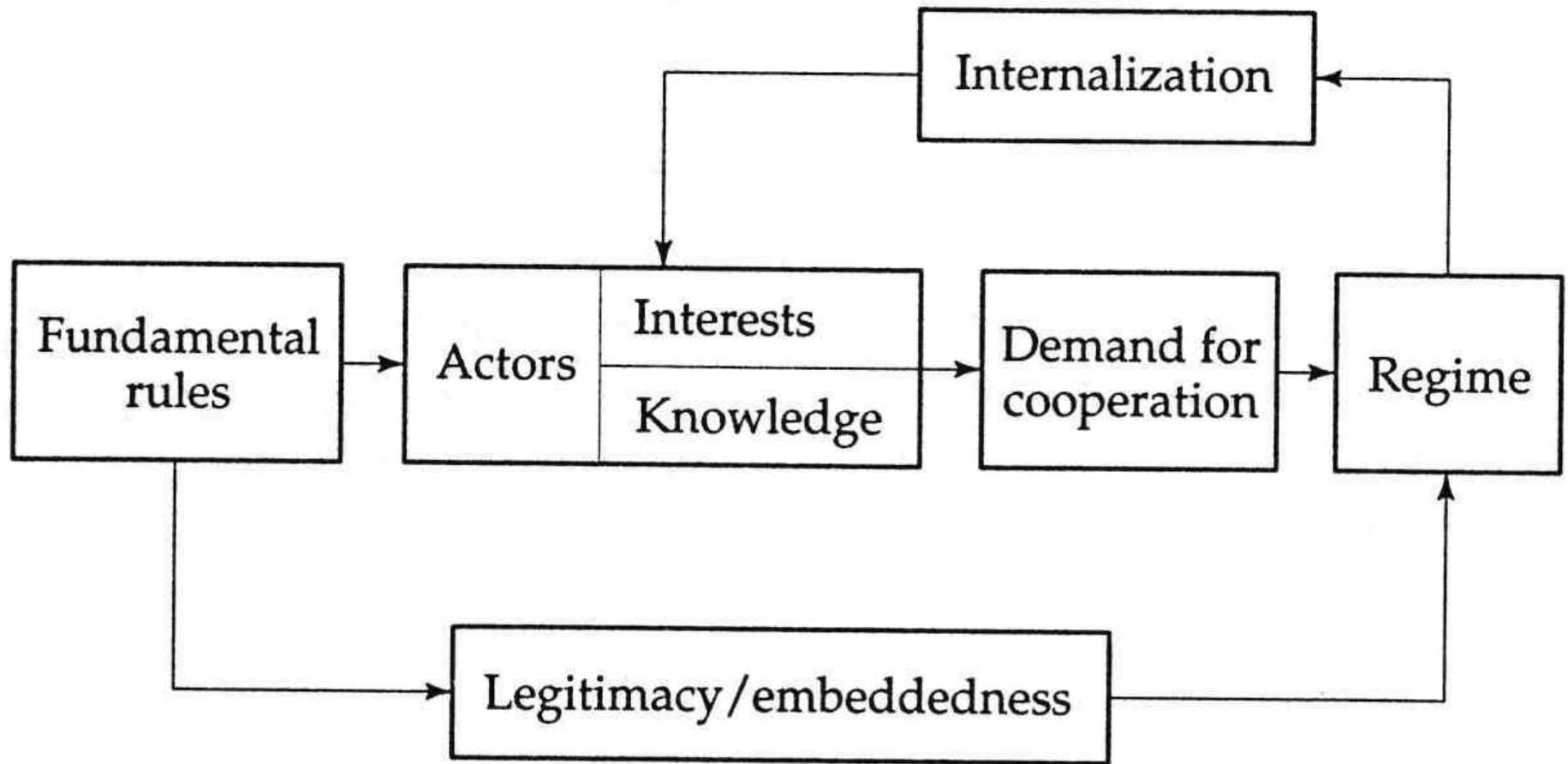
**socialization** of states

## International Regime Theory - Neoliberal vs. Constructivist views

The hegemon creates the regime	→ cooperation within the international regime (under hegemony); states realize the <b>mutual benefits of cooperation</b>	→ the regime survives even when the hegemon ceases to exist
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**Weak cognitivist regimes theory = based on **interest****  
**(including Neoliberalism)**



**Strong cognitivist regimes theory** = based on **legitimacy and internalization**

**(including Constructivism)**

Examples:

**The importance of international norms:**

- the progressive international **rejection of apartheid** = creation, diffusion, internationalization, institutionalization and respect of a new international norm;

**International socialization:**

- the transformation of the interests and identity of **former communist states** that democratized and became 'normal' actors of the international system:

Feature	Realism	Liberalism	Constructivism
Core concern	War and security How vulnerable, self-interested states survive in an environment where they are uncertain about the intentions and capabilities of others	Institutionalized peace How self-serving actors learn to see benefits to coordinating behavior through rules and organizations in order to achieve collective gains	Social groups' shared meanings and images How ideas, images and identities develop, change, and shape world politics
Key actors	States	States, international institutions, global corporations	Individuals, nongovernmental organizations, transnational networks
Central concepts	Anarchy, self-help, national interest, relative gains, balance of power	Collective security, reciprocity, international regimes, complex interdependence, transnational relations	Ideas, images, shared knowledge, identities, discourses, and persuasion leading to new understandings and normative change
Approach to peace	Protect sovereign autonomy and deter rivals through military preparedness and alliances	Institutional reform through democratization, open markets, and international law and organization	Activists who promote progressive ideas and encourage states to adhere to norms for appropriate behavior
Global outlook	Pessimistic: great powers locked in relentless security competition	Optimistic: cooperative view of human nature and a belief in progress	Agnostic: global prospect hinges on the content of prevailing ideas and values

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

- A return to a more **sociological, historical and practice-oriented** form of IR scholarship
- The awareness of the influence of socially constructed sets of collective images of world affairs, their inherent subjectivity and their inability to fully capture global realities contributes to appreciation of **the limits of valid theoretical interpretation** and accurate representation of the subject matter
- Constructivism cautions us to be **sceptical about all claims of truth**



## CRITIQUES OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

- difficulty in establishing a general theory of IR

### Neorealists:

- **sceptical** about the importance of **international norms** = routinely disregarded by powerful states
- not ready to accept that states can **easily become friends** due to their social interaction
- importance of **deception** (constructivists = that social interaction between states is **always sincere**)

**World System Theory** = the **material** structure of global **capitalism** = little room for constructivist social interaction