

## Imagining Russia in Western International Relations Theory

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In Western international relations theory, if not in the opinion of many of its inhabitants, Russia is a "normal" (i.e. a non-exceptional) country. The competing theoretical paradigms which currently dominate the narration of international relations, Neo-Realism, Neo-Liberalism, and Global Systems theory, are relied upon to explain and predict (imagine) Russian behavior in international relations in terms of variables which apply to a broad range of states. From the standpoint of these theoretical frameworks Russia's behavior is presented as comprehensible in terms of: the international power structure and a competitive power drive which Russia has in common with other states (Neo-Realism); its degree of political and economic modernization (Liberal Theory) and enmeshment in international institutions and regimes (neo-Liberal Theory); or, its degree of enmeshment in and dependence on the global capitalist system (World Systems Theory). The dominant paradigms offer plausible, albeit alternative and conflicting, explanations of Russian behavior without reference to any exceptionalist claims regarding the putative uniqueness of Russian history, culture, or political values. Not only do the dominant paradigms offer no validation for exceptionalist claims, the possibility for the validation of such claims as default explanations is obscured by the nature of the theories. Thus, for example, "democratic" Russia's failure to behave as some versions of liberal theory would predict is explained by factors and forces common to "illiberal" states or its susceptibility to chauvinistic pressures characteristic of states in early stages of democratization; its failure to conform fully to the global capitalist systems model, from its only partial integration into the international economy; its failure to comply with the predictions of Neo-Realism, from governmental division and disunity. Problematic aspects of the explanations generated by these paradigms, as well as by the "clash of civilization" theory advanced by Huntington will be taken up further below. Prior to problematizing these approaches to imagining Russia's relation to the larger world, however, it is useful to consider how earlier efforts by Western social scientists to construct comprehensive theories of international relations implicitly or explicitly reconstructed the Soviet Union as a normal or near normal state.

The tendency in Western international relations scholarship toward the marginalization of the particular history and culture of Russia/the Soviet Union and the construction of the Soviet Union/Russia as a near normal state in its behavior in international relations began in the 1940's with the ascendance first of "Realist" theory and, then, "International Systems" theory as modes of interpreting international relations. These approaches claimed that the behavior of states, particularly major powers, in

international relations could be largely understood in terms of a logic of competitive behavior aimed at maximizing a state's power and/or security. The most influential theory of international relations in the 1940's and 1950's, "Realism," suggested that Soviet behavior in international relations was, in important respects, non-exceptional and comparable to that of other great powers. In the seminal narration of Realism, Hans Morgenthau's Politics Among Nations (1960), references to the imperialistic behavior of the Soviet Union are imbedded in a dense litany of references to the imperialist practices and policies of the U.S., Britain, France, the Arab world, Germany, Japan and other states. References to the imperialist policies of the Soviet Union, when they occur, are invariably linked textually to examples of imperialist practices by other states. Thus, for example, Soviet imperialism in post 1945 Eastern Europe and the westward expansion of the American colonies are described as typical examples of a tendency of stronger states to extend their influence over weaker political units or into power vacuums. (Morgenthau, 55) For Morgenthau, Communist ideology functioned much as various other ideologies which had been wielded by expansionist powers to justify and legitimize policies of expansion. Conquering weak peoples, according to Morgenthau had been justified "as the white man's burden, the national mission, manifest destiny,...Arab expansion justified itself as the fulfillment of religious duty...Napoleonic imperialism swept over Europe under the banner of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. Russian imperialism has successively or simultaneously made use of the Orthodox faith, Pan Slavism, world revolution and defense from capitalist encirclement." (Morgenthau, 92). Morgenthau noted that Moscow's control and use of the international communist movement provided it with an effective instrument of cultural imperialism, but added that "the use of cultural sympathy and political affinities as weapons of imperialism were almost as old as imperialism itself" and noted as a comparable contemporary examples of such practice that *la mission civilisatrice* of France has been a potent weapon of French imperialism." (Morgenthau, 62) Morgenthau, took note of the "crusading mentality," messianic pretensions (nationalistic universalism), and ideological prejudices which affected the Soviet Union and the complications which these qualities posed for adjusting differences with other powers through normal diplomacy, but described the same qualities as characteristic of American policy.

For Morgenthau and other Realists, the efforts of states to expand and increase power in international relations was a ubiquitous and recurring phenomenon grounded in the realities of human nature. These ubiquitous inclinations assumed varying forms and manifestations in international relations. In Morgenthau's construction of international relations the particular nature of the Soviet regime and the influence of communist ideology were not wholly ignored, but they were accorded mostly passing mention. Significantly, in his extended discussion of the international politics and Soviet imperial policies in the post World War II world, Morgenthau saw little need to mention Stalin (he is referred to three times, in passing in Politics Among Nations) or dwell on particular characteristics of the Soviet regime. George Kennan, Arnold Wolfers and Raymond Aron, all of whom contributed to the Realist narrative of international relations, did devote more attention than Morgenthau to the nature of the Soviet regime. Among these theorists, however, only Kennan dwelled on the conditioning influence of particular features of Russian and Soviet history, and the Bolshevik mentality on the behavior of the

Soviet Union in international relations. Significantly, Kennan differed from the other Realists in at least two important respects. First he had had direct experience with the Soviet system, and perhaps of greater importance he was not primarily concerned, as Morgentau, Wolfers and Aron were, with the articulation of a general theory of international relations. Kennan saw distinctive and abnormal behavior in the international policies of Lenin and Stalin, but Kennan, much like Adam Ulam, concluded that the aberrant character of Soviet behavior lessened under the force of circumstance and moved increasingly toward the Great Power norm. Thus Kennan concluded in 1960, "the general trend [in Soviet diplomacy] has been in the direction of normalcy toward a preoccupation with internal and defensive interests of the Soviet state." At the height of the Cold War, Kennan offered a conclusion about Soviet behavior which both reflected his stance as a realist and appeared, in the context of the times, highly iconoclastic.

{T}he relationship we have with the Soviet Union has to be compared...with what we can call the normal level of recalcitrance, of sheer orneriness and unreasonableness which we encounter in the behavior of states anywhere and which I am sure we often manifest in our own. This, again, is largely the product of the long-term factors affecting a nation's life. Russian Governments have always been difficult to do business with, this is nothing new in kind-if anything is new about it, it is only a matter of degree. (Kennan,393.)

The reconstruction of the international relations and, implicitly, the Soviet Union, in Realist discourse was profoundly political in implication and effect. It encouraged movement away from one mode of ideological thinking about the Soviet Union and the reimagination of the Soviet Union as a Great Power involved in efforts to preserve and extend its power that were common historically in the behavior of states. A similar "normalization" of the Soviet Union was effected in the most intellectually influential international relations theory of the 1960's and 1970's--international systems theory. Applied to international relations, systems theory posited a tendency toward symmetry in the behavior of Superpowers in a "bipolar" world. Morton Kaplan's influential model of rational security seeking behavior on the part of Superpowers in a bipolar world postulated that each Superpower would tend to display a preoccupation with building and dominating blocs, competitive intervention to prevent alliance defections, and intense and costly efforts aimed at military balancing. (Kaplan, 1957) Given the structure of the international system, the elites in both Superpowers would tend to view international relations as a "zero-sum" game in which neither in the view of the other could make an innocent move. The structure of the international system would promote a situation in which both Superpowers would approach their relations with the other, in the words of the leading text on international relations of the period, from the standpoint of an "institutionalized paranoia".(Spanier 1966) In the terms of what became the dominant model of post-war international relations in Western theory, Soviet behavior toward the world, far from being exceptional, appeared normal for a Superpower under conditions of bipolarity.

Neo-Realist theory which emerged to prominence in academic discourse on international relations in the 1980's with the publication of Kenneth Waltz' Theory of International Politics claimed to represent a theoretical improvement on traditional Realism. For neo-realists the behavior of states, particularly the behavior of major powers, could be comprehended as a function of the overall international power structure. The theory posited a *tendency* on the part of states, regardless of domestic ideology and particular political culture, to behave internationally in accordance with the logical dictates of preserving or enhancing their position relative to the overall distribution of power. Though Waltz explicitly claimed that neo-Realism predicts only general patterns and tendencies toward power balancing in international relations, and not the policies of individual states, the implication of neo-Realism was that the behavior of states, especially major power, would normally reflect a state's location in the international structure of power. Waltz did stress the socializing influence of particular international structures on the behavior of individual states, claiming, for example, that "as states compete with each other, they will imitate each other and become socialized to the system."(Waltz, 129)

The publication of Paul Kennedy's The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers, contributed further to the tendency in international relations scholarship and theory to comprehend the behavior of the Soviet Union toward the larger world as relatively normal in terms of the traditional experience of great powers. Kennedy's work was replete with comparisons between the motives and policy dilemmas characterizing Soviet imperial expansion and that of other Great Powers. Imperial overstretch, overmilitarization and what might be termed "swollen state-spent society syndrome" were seen as problems which had historically afflicted Great Powers. (To be told that in Western international relations theory, at least, they were living in a "normal country" was for some Soviet intellectuals during the Brezhnev era an occasion for bitter laughter.) Kennedy's work as well as the work of Robert Gilpin, who elaborated a version of Realist theory focused on the logic of power shifts and the rise, consolidation and collapse of hegemonic power structures (Gilpin, 1981), laid the intellectual groundwork for the construction of Gorbachev's radical and concessionary diplomacy as a policy of weakness driven by the imperative of responding to looming economic and political crisis at home as an act of near normal behavior for Great Powers suffering from imperial overstretch.

From the standpoint of neo-Realism, the conciliatory and accommodationist nature of Gorbachev's policy also has been understood as caused by growing Soviet economic and political weakness at home which made ending the Cold War, limiting the costly arms race and opening the closed Soviet economy an imperative. Thus, for example, Wholforth (1995), drawing on Gilpin's "power transition" theory, has argued that Gorbachev's highly concessionary and accommodationist diplomacy with regard to arms control, democratic change in Eastern Europe and German reunification represented a form of retrenchment characteristic for major powers experiencing economic crisis as a result of imperial overburden. Soviet diplomacy in the period 1985-1991 was consistent with Realist theory, Wholforth and other defenders of Realism have claimed. The Realist contention that Gorbachev's diplomacy was non-exceptional and comprehensible in terms of the Realist paradigm has been widely challenged on a variety of grounds, however.

Lebow (1994), for example, has claimed that the scope and nature of Soviet concessions particularly with regard to democratization in Eastern Europe, the unification of Germany, and dismantling of the Warsaw Pact cannot be understood in terms of Realist Theory. Even though major powers experiencing economic crisis can be expected to retrench, Lebow contended, the retrenchment should occur at the periphery of its security interests, rather than at the core. To Lebow and other critics of Realist theory, the nature of Soviet diplomacy in the period 1985-1991 appears so anomalous in terms of Realist theory as to constitute an indictment of the Realist paradigm.

While the adequacy of Realist explanations of Gorbachev's diplomacy has been widely questioned, there has been no consensus on a particular alternative explanation. Rather a variety of alternative explanations have been suggested. "New Thinking" and Gorbachev's associated policies have been described *inter alia*: as a response to changes in the international system which greatly increased the domestic costs for the Soviet Government of maintaining the Cold War and at the same time offered increased incentives for a Soviet policy of accommodation and integration with Europe and the West (Deudney and Ikenberry, 1992); as a product of unique features in Soviet political culture of the 1980's, (Levesque, 1998); expressive of a fundamental shift in Soviet perceptions of international relations (e.g., Kubalkova and Cruickshank, 1989, Jackson, 1999); as a reflection of the early stages of Soviet democratization and generational change in the Soviet elite (e.g., Garthoff, 1992); as a function of a reconstruction in Soviet identity vis a vis Europe and the West. (Koslowski and Kratochwil, 1994). Cumulatively, the critiques of the Neo-Realist explanation of the end of the Cold War suggested, at least, that the dominant Realist paradigm was overly reductionist.

#### -Imagining the New Russia in International Relations Theory-

The end of the Cold War coincided with, and to a degree, promoted, a period of ferment in Western international relations theory. Continuing ferment and debate in the field has resulted in both the adaptation of existing international relations theories as well as the articulation of new theories and approaches aimed at explaining the dynamics of world politics influenced by intensifying processes of globalization. Five contending theoretical paradigms (Liberal/Neo-Liberal, Realist/Neo/Realist, World Capitalist Systems, Clash of Civilizations and Constructivist) and the imagining of post-Soviet Russia which they entail will be taken up briefly here.

From the standpoint of the Liberal/Neo-Liberal paradigm, both the democratic and economic character of a state as well as the ideological, institutional and economic order predominant in the international system are imagined to influence the external behavior of a state. Though Doyle (1986) has chronicled a variety of traditions of imagining the impact of democratic and free market structure on the behavior of states, the constraints of this essay necessitate a focus on only one central strand in the liberal imagining of post-Cold War international relations. Beginning with Kant the dominant Liberal construction of international relations reflected three central themes: democratic, representative government acted as a check on the aggressive and imperial impulses of state leaders; an international economy which promoted free trade increased the

incentives for and likelihood of international cooperation and peace; and, relations between and among democratic governments were likely to be cooperative and peaceful. Embedded in the dominant liberal construction of international relations was the belief that authoritarian regimes were most likely to pose the greatest danger to international peace and stability. From the perspective of Liberal theory, a totalitarian Soviet Union was expected to continue to be inclined toward aggressive, and imperialistic behavior until such time as the regime underwent a democratic transformation. Following a democratic transformation and capitalist marketization, the Soviet Union (Russia) could be expected to assume the behavioral profile expected of democratic states integrated into the international economy. Neo-Liberal Institutionalists stressed the importance of international institutions in enhancing and solidifying the benefits of international economic and security cooperation. Free market and democratic states would be likely to be under increasing pressure to participate in an increasingly dense international set of institutions and regimes which yielded significant economic and political benefits and utilities to participating states.

Generally speaking, the Liberal construction of post-1989 international relations created a framework for comprehending international relations in terms of a tripartite categorization of states: non-democratic states which, in Fukuyama's terms, remained for the present "stuck in history," democratizing states or states in transition, (or alternatively, unstable or "illiberal" democracies displaying tenuous or partial democratic characteristics and subject to reversion to non-democracy); stable democracies. Neo-liberal institutionalists further stressed the importance of engagement of states-in-transition in international institutional arrangements, and economic, security, and human rights regimes as a mechanism of supporting and encouraging the consolidation of democratic government and market economies, internalization of international human rights standards, and the accomplishment of effective military reforms. (e.g., Dawisha, 1997, Hopf, 1992) The first wave of liberal imaginings of post-Soviet Russia's expected international relations tended to reflect expectations that the liberal, democratic orientation of the Yeltsin government, combined with an increased enmeshment of Russia in liberal international regimes would lead to the progressive socialization of Russia to forms of international conduct similar to those of European states. (e.g., Fukuyama, 1991).

Recently, however, the predominant tendency in the Liberal/Neo-Liberal construction of international relations has been to imagine Russia as an "unstable/illiberal democracy" and to project into Russia the qualities posited as characterizing states in this category. Particularly influential in this regard has been the work of Mansfield and Snyder. Drawing on data on warfare in the period 1816-1960, Mansfield and Snyder claimed that statistical evidence showed that in the transition phase from authoritarian government toward democratization countries become more war prone not less. More specifically, they concluded that the statistical evidence indicated that "states that make the biggest leap from total autocracy to extensive mass democracy *like contemporary Russia*, are about twice as likely to fight wars in the decade after democratization as are states that remain autocracies." Moving beyond the statistical evidence, Mansfield and Snyder identified a series of quite plausible reasons which would lead states undergoing

early phases of democratization to engage in aggressive or imperialistic policies and offer examples in support of their analysis drawn from, *inter alia*, Wilhelmine Germany, Japan in the 1920's, Russia at the turn of the century, "Wilhelmine Argentina" in the 1980's and "Wilhelmine Serbia" in the 1990's. In support of the applicability to Russia of the general tendency of democratizing states to be more war prone Mansfield and Snyder identified a number of intuitively plausible linkages between the political circumstances accompanying democratization in Russia and tendencies toward aggressive, chauvinistic policies. Thus, they contended,

Democratization typically creates a syndrome of weak central authority, unstable domestic coalitions and high energy mass politics...Both the newly ambitious elites and the embattled old ruling groups often use appeals to nationalism to stay astride their unmanageable political coalitions. Needing public support they rouse the masses with nationalist propaganda, but find that their mass allies, once mobilized by passionate appeals are difficult to control. So are the powerful remnants of the old order-the military for example which promote militarism because it strengthens them institutionally. (Mansfield and Snyder, 1995/88).

Mansfield and Snyder, in deference to Neo-Liberal Institutional theory, did note that the contemporary international setting provided important institutional incentives and support for a democratization in Russia which could avoid or minimize the chauvinistic tendencies which frequently have been associated with such transitions. (They urged, moreover, Western policy makers to utilize these international resources to constrain the dangers they identified as present in the Russian case.) Overall, the image of Russia that is produced in the Mansfield/Snyder analysis flows from treating Russia as a non-exceptional instance of a category of states undergoing abrupt transition from authoritarian government to democratization. Little consideration is given to the case that contemporary Russia is unique or exceptional with regard to the nature and strength of nationalism, or the valuation its policy-makers attach to participation in existing international regimes. Yet both the weakness of Russian nationalism and the relatively high valuation Russian policy-makers attach to the benefits of participating in international regimes, particularly arms control, trade regimes, and capital assistance regimes would appear to differentiate post-Soviet Russia from, for example, "Wilhelmine Serbia" under Milosevic. While some observers have taken the view that Russia's involvement and behavior in the wars in Chechnya affirms the validity of a comparison to "Wilhelmine Serbia" under Milosevic and Putin has been labeled by some as "Russia's Milosevic," marginalizing enquiry into differences and focusing only on similarities is problematic from a theoretical and methodological point of view.

Attempts to explain and predict the international relations of post-Soviet Russia in terms of Neo-Realist theory typically stress Russia's location in a global unipolar power structure dominated by the U.S. and NATO. While Russia is in a position of marked disadvantage in the international power structure, it is in a position of preeminence in terms of the distribution of power prevailing in its relations with the other former Soviet

republics.(MacFarland, 1999, Menon, 1998) In terms of Neo-Realist theory the logic of Russia's positioning in the global power structure has been variously constructed as: favoring a policy of bandwagoning with or otherwise accommodating a preeminent West; seeking to encourage the emergence of a countervailing coalition of the "Rest v the West" or the transformation of the unipolar structure into a multi-polar power structure; pursuing the former strategy in the short term and the latter strategy in the long-term. At the same time, the logic of Neo-Realist theory has been invoked to explain and/or predict assertive Russian efforts to dominate the states of the "near abroad" and consolidate an effective Russian sphere of influence in the region. The logic of this regional balance, some analysts have noted, will tend to undermine the viability of a Russian bandwagoning policy option at the global level. (MacFarland, 1999). Other analyses invoking Neo-Realist Theory have concluded that although the logic of power relations within the former Soviet Union favors Russian policies aimed at domination and coercion of the other republics, a failure by Russia to pursue such policies may be explained by the constraints imposed by Russia's position in the global power structure. The variability of Russian behavior which can be imagined and explained by Neo-Realist theory, has caused some analysts to question whether there is any Russian international behavior which cannot be explained by Neo-Realism. (e.g., MacFarland, 1999)

With its emphasis on the importance of the "civilizational identity" of states, the theoretical framework for explaining and predicting patterns of conflict in post-Cold War international relations advanced by Huntington (1994) appears to allow space for exceptionalist explanations of state behavior in terms of the distinct historically and culturally contingent worldviews of particular civilizations. The particulars of differing historically and culturally contingent orientations to international relations of states are of less concern to Huntington, however, than the existence of differing identities. In important respects, Huntington's theory represents a modified form of Realism. Realism is less concerned with the details of the inevitable conflicts of interest assumed to occur among states, than with the recurring struggles for power to protect and promote differing interests. Similarly, Huntington is less concerned with the particulars of the historically contingent civilizational identities of states, than with the larger implications of the power struggles and alignment patterns such differences imply. Russia's location in a murkily defined "orthodox civilization"-an analytical categorization itself subject to question-is assumed to imply propensities for alliance and conflicts in international relations. Just as Realism concedes that states can follow differing policies (balancing or bandwagoning) with regard to dominant powers, Huntington concedes the same for states involved in power struggles among civilizational groups. As is the case with Realism, Huntington's theory can explain both a Russian policy of bandwagoning with the West and balancing against the West. Huntington's placement of Russia in the category "torn country", i.e. a country defined by Huntington as "possessing a predominant culture which locates it in one civilization, and leaders which desire to place it in another" is accompanied by generalized discussion of political patterns associated with countries in the category, rather than an examination of the particular implications of competing forms of Russian identity for Russian behavior as a state actor in international relations. In this regard, both Huntington's theoretical framework and that of the Realists, which it resembles in certain

respects, appear inferior to the Constructivist theoretical framework, discussed below, which endeavors to integrate particular and empirically-based understandings of state identity into a general theory of international relations.

The emergence, after 1991, of a new Russian state undergoing simultaneously a transition to a capitalist economy which privileged a select elite in the privatization process and a significant collapse of the industrial sector has encouraged a reimagining of Russia in terms of World (capitalist) Systems Theory and related versions of "globalization theory". In terms of World System Theory the new capitalist Russia is positioned as a dependent state in the periphery of an increasingly stratified global capitalist economy. A peripheral and dependent Russia is exploited both by a Center composed of a capitalist elite based in the industrialized West, and a local (Russian) comprador elite which connives with the Center in exploiting the Russian economy to enrich itself. (e.g., Webber, *passim*, 1996) The corrupt nature of the privatization process in Russia, the ascendance of a nomenklatura economic caste, widespread corruption and illegal capital flight from Russia on a massive scale since 1991, growing international indebtedness and dependence on the IMF, the precipitous decline of living standards of the majority of the population toward third world levels, and the accumulation of huge wealth in the hands of a small elite, have added credibility to the reimagining of Russia in terms of World Systems Theory. Most versions of globalization theory implicitly imagine Russia as increasingly vulnerable to, if not entirely exploited by, the operation of a global capitalist economy. Globalization theories generally imagine Russia and other non-Western states as subject to powerful transformation by the spread of a Western commercial culture which undermines and erodes traditional culture and values and tends toward the production of a homogenized culture heavily skewed toward Western cultural forms and values. Globalization theories also stress the erosive and transformational effects of globalization on state sovereignty and national identity, as well as the capacity of the state to behave as a unified actor in international relations. (Clarke, 1999) Some versions of World Systems Theory and globalization theory imagine the possibility, or in some cases the probability, of successful resistance or revolution which reasserts form of national, cultural, political and economic integrity, or alternatively class sovereignty. World Systems Theory, and globalization theory imagine Russia's position, or more to the point perhaps, "plight", as similar to those of other "peripheral" economies and cultures in an age of globalizing capitalism. As is the case with respect to the other currently dominant modes or paradigms of imagining international relations, these modes also exclude, or marginalize investigation of exceptionalist theories regarding Russia's relation to the larger world.

#### -Making Space in I.R. Theory for Russia in its Own Terms-

Beginning in the 1950's approaches to formulating *general* theories of international relations which emphasized the central importance of "unit level" characteristics such as political culture, the worldview and perceptions of decision-makers etc. were increasingly marginalized and consigned to a sub-species of theorizing, foreign policy analysis, as a result of a combination of methodological challenges and

trends within the professional sub-field of international relations in the U.S. Within the international relations field a discourse aimed at producing highly parsimonious theories of international relations was privileged. At the same time, boundaries between the study of international politics and domestic politics tended to become more clearly delineated. Increasing dissatisfaction with the results of these moves in the direction of theorizing international relations has produced considerable ferment in international relations theory. The resulting range and variety of theoretical reimagining of international relations which has appeared over the last decade has been substantial. At the same time a tendency has been evident within the more established theoretical traditions toward less reductionist theories and models, and to formulations that bring unit level characteristics back into general theory. Thus, for example, some Realists have sought to place a new emphasis on empirical assessment of decision-makers' perceptions and assessments of power relations, acknowledging that at least in a limited respect, inquiry into the imagined worlds of decision-makers in world politics is important. (e.g., Wholforth, 1994). In a somewhat similar manner, neo-liberal institutionalists have acknowledged the importance of enquiry into perceptions regarding the costs and benefits of participation in international cooperative regimes. Globalization theories have problematized the "state-centric" character of international relations as well the future of national identities and dismantled analytical boundaries between international and domestic politics. The reintroduction of previously marginalized worlds reflective of "unit level" characteristics-both state and individual- into *general* theories of international relations has been effected in a more sweeping fashion in the elaboration of what is broadly characterized as the Constructivist Paradigm or Constructivist international relations theory.

As an alternative approach to understanding international relations, Constructivism offers the promise of reintroducing a focus on the particular and unique social, cultural and political practices of states to I.R.theory. The analysis of the interplay and development of historically contingent identities, worldviews and intersubjective understandings of international relations is central to the Constructivist approach to analyzing world politics. In contrast to Realism and Neo-Realism which assume that states act in terms of an unvarying and universal self-interest understood as enhancing their power and security in the context of an anarchic political setting, constructivism assumes that the "self" or identity of a state is a dependent variable determined by historical, cultural, social and political context. (Hopf, 1998, Wendt, 1999). State action flows from a *particular* "state actor" identity shared by a policy elite and an understanding of international context both of which are viewed as socially constructed and historically contingent. A state's behavior is viewed as an intention to reproduce its identity as a state actor conditioned by shared, intersubjective constitutive norms, e.g., if a state identifies itself as a "Great Power," it will act to reproduce that identity in terms of prevailing norms regarding Great Power behavior. In reproducing a "Great Power" identity the state affirms existing constitutive norms regarding behavior appropriate to major powers. Constructivist international relations theory focuses not only on policy elites' construction of the identity of the state as actor and the construction of national interests, but the construction of national identities by elites, as well as the self-construction of individual political identities. (Hopf, 1998, Wendt, 1999).

From the viewpoint of Constructivist theory, Russia's state actor identity is not produced in isolation from a larger world. It is constructed and reproduced in interaction with other identities, and in accordance with international intersubjective norms which define or signify, for example, what constitutes a "nation" what constitutes a "Great Power" or a "European" or "Western" state, as well as native and historically contingent intersubjective understandings of Russia which are themselves formed in reaction to a larger world. The Russian identity is understood as an historically contingent social and political construction which is subject to reconstruction and change. While Realists assume that the anarchic character of the international system is an objective reality which profoundly shapes the behavior of states, constructivists assume that "anarchy is what states make of it". The same may be said with regard to a states identity of self and other, its national interest, etc. In its concern with the construction and reproduction of identities Constructivism has been both influenced by and remains open to a Feminist scholarly agenda aimed at exploring the gendered character of political worlds at the unit and international level, that is the degree to which the world is a "world of our (i.e. male) making." As an approach to understanding international relations Constructivism has other virtues, not least, the emphasis it places on the role of human agency in constructing, and reconstructing the political world. From a Constructivist viewpoint, for example, Gorbachev's decision to repeal--not to attempt to reproduce through practice- the Brezhnev Doctrine, was an act that subverted one of the constitutive rules on which the Cold War system of international relations was constructed. Refusing to engage in practice which reproduced a key constitutive rule, was an act which contributed to the remaking of the larger political world. (Koslowski, 1994)

Theoretically imagining Russia in international relations in terms of a Constructivist approach entails investigating the Russian sense of state actor identity and the social and political practices through which the identity is reproduced, as well as the Russian understanding of the international context and the identity and interests of other states. It also entails investigating the intersubjective norms and expectations which shape state conduct in international relations in a particular period. Each of these subjects, must be regarded as historically contingent and subject to change. In theory the contemporary Russian political elite could embrace and act to sustain a variety of Russian international political actor identities, for example, Russia as Great Power, Russia as regional hegemon, Russia as modern, European style social democracy, Russia as separate slavic, orthodox civilization, Russia as center of Eurasian civilization etc. The question of the dominant form of identity is properly viewed as an empirical one. Russia's behavior in international relations is assumed from the standpoint of Constructivism to represent an effort to reproduce an international identity in a form that will be recognized by other in terms of intersubjective, constitutive norms.(Thus in emphasizing forceful diplomacy in dealing with political conflicts in the post-Cold War era, the U.S., acts to reproduce constitutive norms regarding "Great Power" behavior which serve to define the meaning of Great Power in the post-Cold War era for Russian policy makers.) Russian behavior is also constrained by its political elites understanding of the identities and interests of others. Whether Russia succeeds in reproducing the actor identity favored by its political elite depends on the opportunities and constraints afforded by the international context, and the actions of other states, but also on the congruence, or non-congruence of elite

identity with popular identities. Generally, elites are severely constrained in reproducing Great Power identities, when mass identities are such that military or other forms of service to state interests are devalued. Viewed from a Constructivist perspective, for example, the wide spread failure of young to report when conscripted into military service, massive illegal capital flight, massive tax evasion, and the dismal morale and esprit exhibited by Russian troops in Chechnya may be viewed as social practices which undermine and constrain efforts by the Russian elite to reproduce an international identity as a Great Power or Regional Hegemon.

#### -Conclusion-

Traditional international relations theories both "normalized" Russia and, in quest of parsimony, narrowed the theoretical imagination with regard to Russia's behavior in and orientation to the larger world. The narrowing of the Western theoretical imaginization of the Russia/Soviet relation to the world was driven largely by the overly reductionist character of the dominant general theories of international relations and the tendency of the leading paradigms to marginalize enquiry into particular unit level characteristics. To dwell on these tendencies of the main theoretical paradigms in the study of international relations is not to suggest that traditional Western theories have not made a significant and positive contribution to understanding the dynamics of international relations in general as well as an understanding of Soviet/Russian behavior toward the larger world, in particular. A full accounting of the positive contributions of the major theoretical paradigms is beyond the scope of this essay. (In passing, however, it should be noted that the role which Realist and General Systems theory played in reimagining the Soviet Union as a rational actor seeking to enhance both its power and security was of considerable intellectual and political significance in laying the ground for productive diplomacy and the achievement of progress in arms control and disarmament.) This essay has also suggested that the emergent Constructivist theoretical paradigm entails a positive broadening of the theoretical imagination regarding world politics which allows Russia's dynamic interrelation with the larger political world to be examined in terms of Russia's culturally and historically contingent and politically constructed identities. Among the subjects for investigation regarding Russia's political interrelationship with the larger world from a Constructivist perspective are: the nature and extent of shared understandings within Russia's political elite regarding Russia's identity as an international actor; the impact of wider understandings of international norms and expectations regarding state behavior on the conceptualization and implementation of Russian foreign and defense policy; the elite's apprehension/construction of the behavior of relevant Others; the impact of globalization processes on conceptions of Russian national identity and international actor identity within the Russian public and elite; the congruence and incongruence of elite and mass conceptions of national and international actor identity; changing conceptions and memories of Russia's international history among elites and publics; elite and mass construction of the contemporary international context. Whether the promise that the Constructivist paradigm will offer a richer and less reductionist understanding of Russia's relation to, and, more importantly, *interrelationship* with the larger world will be fulfilled remains to be seen. One important prerequisite for the fulfillment of the promise,

however, is a generation of scholars well-grounded in the fields of international relations, Russian studies, and comparative politics-a formidable challenge which must be met by graduate educational institutions in Russia, the West and beyond.

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