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International Structure and International Transformation: Space, Time, and Method

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The chapters in this book seek to enhance our collective understanding of the phenomenon of international transformation. My concern in this essay is less with the question of whether or not international transformation is occurring, than with the methodological issue of how to ask that question, of how to frame it so that it yields analytically interesting research and empirically telling insights.

By definition, the study of transformation is the study of structure. This is so because structure imparts organization, disposing and constraining effects, on domains of social discourse and action. A change of structure makes possible, and is indicated by, a fundamental rupture in previous patterns and the emergence of new patterns—a transformation, in short. Structure has a specific reality, its own characteristics; it is not merely the sum total of unit-level attributes and behaviors. The study of structures therefore imposes upon the analyst a specific research program, one designed to give expression to phenomena deeper than everyday reality and to capture movement of a slower tempo. That much is agreed to by most students of international politics. However, the implications of this research program by and large are either little understood or ignored in the literature, especially on the part of those who are most persuaded by the idea that there has been relatively little change in the history of international politics and that there is little in the offing (see Waltz 1979). An obvious question that arises immediately is to what extent the perceived continuity is an artifact of the intellectual apparatus with which it is studied. I raised that query in passing in an earlier article (Ruggie 1983). My task here will be to spell out some of the neglected dimensions in the study of international structure and its transformation, and to indicate what kind of research is demanded if we take them seriously.

I proceed as follows. In the first section, I briefly examine the core concept in the study of international transformation: international structure. In the second

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section, I illustrate by means of concrete example why the prevailing approach to structural theory won't get us very far in understanding the possibility of international transformation. In the third section I generalize from the stylized case to theoretical argument, and suggest that in the standard usage the concept of international structure shares a peculiar attribute with and is subject to the same limits as Newtonian physics. What is needed in the study of international transformation, I contend, is a conception of structure that is more space/time-contingent. In the final section I briefly indicate how we might profitably apply such a conception of international structure in the empirical study of one area of possible international transformation: the effects of globalization on several domains of international activity.

Structural Theory

It stands to reason that in a system characterized by the absence of central authority, issues pertaining to the power of units loom very large indeed. If no one can be counted on to take care of anyone else, the capacity of each to fend for itself assumes a special significance. Therefore, as an attribute of international structure no factor has been considered more crucial than the configuration of power among states—whether it is concentrated or diffuse, stable or changing rapidly, relying directly on force or institutionalized through other means. Despite its centrality, however, the concept of international power remains a highly "contestable concept" (Conally 1983), and its cognate, the balance of power, remains deeply mired in ambiguity.[1] Clear specification of usage, it goes without saying, must precede any analysis that employs these concepts (see Baldwin 1985).

But my purpose here differs from restating this all-too-familiar obiter dictum. My purpose is to draw attention to an underlying epistemological dimension of the configuration of power as a "structural variable." When configurations of power are conceived in this manner, ultimately they are anchored in the possession of material capabilities: the means of force, the means of production, the resource base fueling both. Depending on the preferences of the theorist, one, or another, or some combination of these factors is employed to depict such positional arrangements as polarity, hegemony, center, and periphery. These positional arrangements, in turn, are presumed to structure patterns of outcomes, including the incidence of system-wide wars, the extent to which international economic orders are open or closed, and the more prosaic question of who gets what, when, and how. Structure, in short, is defined as the configuration of power, and the configuration of power in turn serves as the "independent variable" of structural theory.

Consider Waltz's formulation (1979) as an exemplar of this genre—though mutatis mutandis everything said about it applies equally well to its chief systemic competitor, the "world system" perspective of Wallerstein (1974, 1979).[2] As is well known, political structure in Waltz's formulation actually consists of three

component parts: the organizing principle of a system, the functional differentiation of its units, and the configuration of power among them. International political structure is defined by the configuration of power only because the organizing principle—anarchy, or self-help—is assumed not to vary, and functional differentiation of units apart from that imposed by their capabilities is said not to exist. The rest is easy. As Waltz describes the nature of the enterprise (1979, 99): "In defining international political structures we take states with whatever traditions, habits, objectives, desires, and forms of government they may have. . . . We abstract from every attribute of states except their capabilities. . . . What emerges is a positional picture, a general description of the ordered overall arrangement of a society written in terms of the placement of units rather than in terms of their qualities." The only task that remains is to count: "Market structure is defined by counting firms; international-political structure, by counting states. In the counting, distinctions are made only according to capabilities."

How far does this approach take us in understanding the possibility of international transformation? The answer is, as we will see, not very far. But rather than arguing it in the abstract, let us first explore that question in a concrete case and then draw some general theoretical implications from it. The case I have in mind is the governance of the world's oceans, and specifically the transformational significance of the recent invention and incorporation into state practice of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

The Governance of the Oceans

Why raise the issue of the oceans? I do so because it is analytically interesting given the purposes at hand. From the beginning, the governance of the oceans has posed a puzzle to statecraft. Consider the situation in the seventeenth century. The newly emerged territorial states defined their essence, their very being, by the *possession* of territory and the *exclusion* of others. But how does one possess some thing one doesn't own? And, still more problematical, how does one exclude others from it? Contiguous waterways could be shared, administered jointly, or, more than likely, split down the middle. But the oceans were another matter. It was not for lack of trying that states were unable to extend their dominion over the oceans; claims to that effect abounded until well into the seventeenth century. Spain and Portugal tried a bilateral deal, whereby Spain claimed a monopoly of ocean trade routes with "the West" and Portugal with "the East". All such unilateral and bilateral attempts failed, however. In the end, a multilateral solution was instituted. Beyond the territorial sea, initially set at three miles—the range of land-based cannons at the time—the oceans were declared a *public* waterway.

Individual solutions failed for the simple reason that it is not possible in the long run to vindicate *any* property right that is not recognized as being valid by the relevant others in a community. Attempts to do so lead to constant challenge

and recurrent conflict. Once a property right is socially recognized, however, the institutional context of the exercise of power is transformed. Those who transgress the property right then are put in the position of having to defend their transgression while others can attack them with impunity because they do so in behalf of the collectivity of states. By this means—a process that Ashley (1984) has described as "social empowerment"—the collectivity adds to or diminishes from the material capabilities of individual actors.

Now let's turn to the 1980s, to the institution of the Exclusive Economic Zone, and to the question of what, if anything, it illuminates about international transformation. The relevant facts about it are these (United Nations 1983). Each coastal state now has the right to establish an EEZ beyond its territorial sea, up to two hundred nautical miles from its coast or baseline. Jurisdiction within the EEZ is by activity, however, not by area. The coastal state has exclusive sovereign rights for the purposes of exploring, exploiting, conserving, and managing all natural resources of the waters, seabed, and subsoil; and with regard to any other economic exploration and exploitation, such as the production of energy from the water, currents, and winds. The coastal state has the right to control all installations as well as the dumping of wastes by other states, the latter coupled with safeguards for the accused. The coastal state also has the right to be informed of and participate in proposed scientific research, or to withhold its consent under specific circumstances. The coastal state has the duty to protect the marine environment, to ensure the conservation of living resources, to determine their maximum sustainable yield, and to grant access by other states to any surplus. Land-locked and geographically disadvantaged states have special rights to such surpluses. All states have the freedom of navigation, overflight, the laying of submarine cables and pipelines, and other internationally lawful uses of the sea related thereto. Each state must exercise its rights with "due regard" to the rights and duties of others. And if the Law of the Sea Treaty takes effect, all states are obliged to work within its dispute settlement provisions.

What if anything does the EEZ imply for change in international political structure? That is to say, does this new component of the world's oceans regime exhibit any kind of discontinuity in the prevailing mode of ordering political relations among states? Apparently, it all depends on how one looks at it. There are at least three contending interpretations.

One position focuses on the extent of offshore national jurisdiction. It views the EEZ as a massive land-grab, favoring coastal states in general and industrialized coastal states in particular; as a Pyrrhic victory for developing countries who advocated the EEZ but by the luck of the resource draw ended up with a minor share of its wealth; and as a rout for the international community as a whole, in whose name the concept of the "common heritage of mankind" (which catalyzed the entire Law of the Sea negotiations) was advanced in the first place (see Oxman et al. 1983).

A second and quite different view holds that the EEZ is a reflection of "the contemporary thrust for economic development" (Puri 1980, 39), and that it "will

place the developing countries in a better position in their relations with the developed world and make a basic change in the directions of overall development leading to greater ultimate economic gains for all the developing countries" (Alam and Khan 1983, 35). The focus here is not simply on the extent of national jurisdiction. More importantly, it is believed, this extension enclosed in part the high seas from which the Third World derived few benefits in any case; the share of the enclosure that now accrues to the developing countries gives them greater standing and bargaining power in the future governance of the oceans; and because the enclosure is functional, not territorial, the developing countries now have some rights they did not have before in the richer EEZs of the industrialized world.

Yet a third and perhaps the most radical position contends that the ultimate winner from the existence of the EEZ is the international community at large. In this view, the EEZ represents nothing less than one instance of a new form of international governance. It holds that the EEZ comprises a "horizontally shared zone between the coastal state and other states," in which the coastal state "must have due regard" for the rights of other states, and in which the "unfettered freedom" of the past has been replaced by "delegated powers" that are exercised by the coastal state in behalf of international society (Allott 1983, 15). Consequently, the EEZ is said to exemplify a deeper change in the constitutive principle of international governance, "involving states more and more not only in the mystical composite personage of the international legislator but also in performing the function of the executive branch of their own self-government" (Allott 1983, 24).[3]

Ignore for the sake of the argument the possibility that any or all of the three interpretations may be wide of the mark. The points I wish to explore are methodological, not substantive; therefore it doesn't much matter for my purposes what the correct answer is. Treat the interpretations as stylized facts. Two features about them stand out.

First, because they take seriously the possibility of international transformation, each of the three interpretations treats international structure as a *dependent*, not an independent, variable. And there is nothing strange about that. If international political transformation means change in international political structure, then the extent to which that structure is or is not changing must, ipso facto, constitute the focus of inquiry. Due to this duality of structure, Anthony Giddens has formulated what he calls a theory not of *structure*, but of *structuration*:

> According to the theory of structuration, all social action consists of social practices, situated in time-space, and organized in a skilled and knowledgeable fashion by human agents. But such knowledgeability is always "bounded" by unacknowledged conditions of action on the one side, and unintended consequences of action on the other. . . . The structured properties of social systems are simultaneously the medium and outcome of social acts [Giddens 1981, 19].

The conventional understanding of structures in international theory encompasses solely the "unacknowledged conditions" of action: the sediments of the past, the constraints of the present.

Waltz has addressed this issue explicity, first in his original formulation (1979), and then again in his response to his critics (1986). In both places, he contends that treating structure as a dependent variable—endogenizing structure into the theory, rather than taking it as exogenously given—simply does not belong within his realm of discourse because it is inherently reductionist in character. That is to say, the sources of structural change, he maintains, reside in the units and unit attributes, not in systems and systemic factors. Therefore for Waltz they have no place in systemic theory. But our simple oceans example suggests otherwise. A *claim* for the ownership of ocean space may be an attribute of an individual state. But the *structure* of ownership of ocean space surely is an attribute of the system of states—it is a social fact no less than is the configuration of power among states. Indeed, it is a social fact that can affect the efficacy of the configuration of power.

As for the second point, each of the three interpretations of the EEZ focuses on a different component of international structure. What is more, the three look remarkably like the three components of Waltz's general definition of political structure! And they suggest an interesting pattern of possible variation.

From the vantage point of the first position, the "land-grab" view, the EEZ exhibits no structural change: states moved out into the oceans, and the haves got more while the have-nots got less. Here structure is viewed much as the conventional structural theories see it—and the evidence suggests that it was simply replicated in the new context of the EEZ.

In the second assessment, that the place of the Third World has been enhanced, the EEZ is measured not only in miles and isobaths. The relevant facts that are adduced by the analysts we cited—Third World analysts, we might note—include progress in the political efficacy and collective self-concept of a group of states who in many instances until recently were, and in some cases continue to feel themselves, dispossessed of autonomous international identity. Seen in this light, it is not unreasonable to entertain the notion that the Third World gained from the EEZ, that there was a change in their relative status even if not in their actual allocation of resources. After all, in large measure they authored this particular chapter of history. But where is structure here? Structure is conceived of as *differentiation* among states based on *status*—not material capability, but status. Such a differentiation is not unheard of historically. Each civilization, including the West, has systematically differentiated between its members and outsiders, and has treated them differently in peace and war (Wight 1977). Has that practice ended? When did it end? Could it return? Are there other modes of differentiating among states beyond their material capabilities that still remain in place and that systematically affect international outcomes? What if groups of actors believe and behave as though such modes of differentiation exist and are important—as Krasner (1985) seems to suggest in his study of North-South relations? Then we have variation in a

second component of international structure, a component apart from the distribution of capabilities.

When we shift to the third position, the international community view, what matters about the EEZ is the balance of rights and obligations that determines how states stand in relation to one another in it—not only as coastal versus maritime versus landlocked states, industrialized versus developing states, or capitalist versus socialist states, but as states qua states. The argument is advanced that, though states did indeed move into the oceans, the principled bases legitimizing their actions in doing so—the institutional context—now express broader community norms and processes than before. This of course speaks directly to the issue of anarchy or self-help, the "deep" structure of the international polity. And it suggests that a variety of forms of nonhierarchical rule should be explored systematically—not merely short of but fundamentally different from the domestication of international politics on the one hand, and the emergence of a universal "socialist commonwealth" on the other, which are the only kinds of "ultimate" transformation recognized by the two major branches of conventional structural theory, realism and Marxism respectively.

In sum, the three interpretations of the EEZ offer two suggestions for the study of international transformation. First, that structure be treated simultaneously as dependent as well as independent variable, that the appropriate formulation in fact would combine this duality of structure in a theory of *structuration*. Second, that the one component of international structure that is permitted to vary in the prevailing structural theories shows no variation, but it may be that change is taking place precisely in those other components of international structure that are assumed not to vary at all!

Before going on, let me repeat a point I made above: my aim has been not to "test" the three interpretations of the EEZ, but to use them as stylized facts in order to raise the more important theoretical issue of whether the way in which we conceptualize international structure in the mainstream of our field is appropriate if our concern is to explore the possibility of international transformation.

Beyond Physicalist Structure

Doing better involves more than merely turning structure around and treating it as a dependent variable, together with turning into variables several components of structure that now are held constant. If our concern is international transformation, then there is something more profoundly wrong with conventional structural theory. An analogy will help describe it.

In its epistemological assumptions, the prevailing conception of international structure is not unlike the corresponding views of Newtonian mechanics: "Newtonian mechanics by itself did not attempt to explain what forces might exist in nature, but rather described how motion occurred when the force was known"

(Feinberg 1978, 9). In point of fact, Newton's contemporaries were quite explicit in drawing on this analogy, especially in their rhapsodies about the balance of power. The Peace of Utrecht (1713) enshrined the self-regulating equilibrium as a venerable institution of European society. And for theorists of the day, "The sovereign states followed their ordered paths in a harmony of mutual attraction and repulsion like the gravitational law that swings planets in their orbits. Perhaps no statesmanship was needed. As Grotius had said that natural law would be binding even if God did not exist, so Rousseau said that the balance of power was self-regulating whether or not anybody troubled to maintain it" (Wight 1973, 98). The parallel with Waltz's treatment of the balance of power is striking (1979, chaps. 3 and 6)—and ironically also Wallerstein's (1974). Let us call theirs the physicalist conception of international structure. It is a conception of structure as "being," not of "becoming" (Prigogine 1980).

Now, Newtonian mechanics served well enough in situations of ordinary human experience: day-to-day life in the palpable here-and-now. However, once Newtonian mechanics was pushed up against the limits of ordinary experience, in the form of the speed of light, for instance, or the behavior of subatomic particles, it no longer sufficed. It had to yield to relativity and quantum mechanics. I would suggest that similar kinds of limits exist for the physicalist conceptions of international structure. Those limits too appear when the basic "field of forces," as it were, begins to shift.

Periods of fundamental political transition—of transformation—are characterized by a generalized loss of predictability and control among social actors. The reestablishment of an effective system of rule once again fixes parametric conditions. The world then returns to the realm of "ordinary experience," albeit often of a radically different kind than it knew before. The disarticulation of the medieval system of rule, and the emergence of the modern international state formation, constituted such an instance (Wight 1977; Ruggie 1983). It transformed the prevailing system of rule in European society. The issue that was up for grabs during the transformation was not who had *how much power*, but who had *the right to act as a power* (cf. Ashley 1984). From the vantage point of models of structure that are defined solely by the configuration of power, the outcome is not merely anomalous; it has to appear as being positively bizarre. For when all was said and done, Europe ended up with numerous political entities, beginning with many of the more than two hundred German "states," which simply could not have vindicated their right to act as constitutive units of the new European state system had their fate depended on their possession of material capabilities, while far more powerful actors disappeared from the political landscape.

The explanation is that their fate rested on more than physicalist structure: the "field of forces" was changing—or, in a formulation that I prefer, the institutional context for the exercise of power was changing. The right to act as a power shifted toward some actors, and away from others; some types of units were socially deemed to be legitimate wielders of authority, others were delegitimized. To

understand that transformation on the grand scale, or the transformation of property rights in ocean space on a smaller scale, it is not enough therefore to describe "how motion occurs when the force is known." It becomes necessary "to explain what forces might exist in nature." Completing the analogy, doing that in turn requires introducing space/time into the "equation."

But what does it mean to introduce space/time into our analysis of international structure? If we go back and reexamine the three interpretations of the EEZ, we find that though they all look at the same thing, each sees a different reality, not only substantively but also epistemologically. Each in fact is embedded within a different space/time complex.[4]

The "land-grab" view exemplifies physicalist structure. It sees the reality of the EEZ in terms of separate and distinct actors; palpable, discrete, and infinitely divisible properties; and discontinuous events. The actors are individual states. The properties in question are miles, isobaths, tons of fish and barrels of oil. The "shadow of the future" may be longer or it may be shorter and thereby affect outcomes (Oye 1985). But time itself is a succession of discrete temporal increments. And if history plays any role in this view, it is *l'histoire événementielle*, the history of the event (Braudel 1980): a battle, a conference, a new technology, a move, a countermove. Understanding this level of reality involves straightforward empirical research using "objective" indicators—at the extreme, Waltz's simple act of counting heads.

In the second interpretation, history weighs more heavily, and it is the history of a conjuncture—of which an appropriate example might be what Barraclaugh (1967) called "the revolt against the West." The socially relevant universe is visualized in terms of groupings and their collective destinies, and temporality as the unfolding of some dynamic movement or process that acts through a succession of events. Understanding this level of social reality requires that we probe beyond the palpable here-and-now until we come to see the historicity—the historically contingent subjectivities—of the pertinent social groupings as they see it themselves.

When we reach the third position, the international community view, social totalities comprise the units of analysis. The focus here shifts to the "constitutive structures" of such totalities, those inclusive frameworks of social discourse and practices that give meaning to the social totality and to behavior within it. History in this context is the history of *la longue durée* (Braudel 1980) which, as Jacques Le Goff (1980, xi) has made clear, should be regarded not simply as lasting a long period of time but as having the quality of a system.[5] Constitutive structures form such a deep level of social reality that, at any particular moment, they may seem a *rule* rather than a *regularity* of social life. Moreover, any given change in the elements of such structures may be imperceptible or may seem insignificant at any particular point in time. Only over the entire lifespan of a social totality will their historical contingency become apparent. Finally, the relevant facts for analysis here are institutional facts, and institutional facts inherently are intersubjective facts, not "brute" or palpable facts (Kratochwil forthcoming).[6] As Garrett Mattingly found in his magisterial study of the transition from medieval to modern diplomatic

practices, the outward appearances of institutions changed less and more slowly than people's understanding of and expectations about them (Mattingly 1964).

In sum, the three interpretations of the EEZ not only focus on different substantive attributes of international structure. They also are premised on different epistemological grounds. Most importantly, they are grounded in three very different space/time complexes. Fundamental international transformation—the medieval to modern shift, for example, or a shift from the modern to some postmodern form of organizing political space on this planet—is well beyond the grasp of physicalist conceptions of structure. It *is* in the province of the third perspective. With due apologies to Waltz, let us term it the "third image" of structure.

The Third Image

There is a lively debate going on in European social thought over the issue of modernity versus postmodernity. It began in the arts, spread to culture more generally, and now encompasses the social realm as well. Among the leading protagonists are Jürgen Habermas, upholding the virtues of what he calls the project of modernity (Habermas 1981), and Jean-François Lyotard, making the case for postmodernity (1984). What is intriging about this debate are some of the terms used to convey the essential features of postmodernity: detotalized, decentered, and fragmented discourses and practices; multiple and field-dependent referents in place of single-point fixed referents; flow-defined spaces and the simultaneity of temporal experiences as opposed to place-defined spaces and sequential temporal experiences; the erosion of sovereign or macro powers over society coupled with the diffusion of disciplinary or micro powers within society.

To the student of international political economy these terms sound a great deal like descriptions of certain recently emerged global systems of economic transaction: the global markets in currencies, for example, or in credit and even equities; to a somewhat lesser but still considerable extent global production; and in several of the institutional arrangements that have emerged in the global commons, including the oceans and the biosphere. But the economic realm isn't the only one in which such changes have taken place. Brian Jenkins of the RAND Corporation has studied the global infrastructure that sustains international terrorism and new modes of low-intensity warfare. He concludes: "With continuous, sporadic armed conflict, blurred in time and space, waged on several levels by a large array of national and subnational forces, warfare in the last quarter of the twentieth century may well come to resemble warfare in the Italian Renaissance or warfare in the early seventeenth century, before the emergence of national armies and more organized modern warfare" (1983, 17).

If they are visible anywhere, we ought to be able to find the contours of a postmodern international system in these increasingly globalized domains of human

behavior. Hence it is here that we should begin to look. It seems to me that an appropriate research program consists of three steps.

The first is to specify and operationalize the notion of "global." Perhaps the best way to put it is that the globe itself has become a *region* in the international system, albeit a *nonterritorial* one. Thus, global does not mean universal. Instead, the concept refers to a subset of social interactions that take place on the globe. This subset constitutes an inclusive level of social interaction that is distinct from the *international* level, in that it comprises a multiplicity of integrated functional systems, operating in real time, which span the globe, and which affect in varying degrees what transpires elsewhere on the globe. As Emory and Trist (1973, 11) have put it: "Any person or group is at any instant in many 'presents'," each corresponding to the different space/time complexes in which they are embedded. Simply put, the globe is one such "present." And it has changed radically since the time when it first made sense to speak of a global factor in world politics—as Sir Halford Mackinder did, for example, at the outset of this century (Mackinder 1904).

The second step is to study the process of political structuration in this global present. Some of those employing conventional structural approaches have already dismissed the case. They have concluded—with only a little element of caricature in my characterization—that the superpowers are still the superpowers, and the United States is still stronger than anybody else, therefore no structural change of significance is occurring.[7] I am highly dubious about that proposition, but this is not the place to quarrel with it. I merely point out that the work testing it simply has not been done. All the tests of which I know employ a conception of international structure that, for the reasons suggested in this chapter, are epistemologically incapable of capturing the phenomenon. The continuity thesis, therefore, has no firmer a scientific footing than its opposite, that fundamental change is taking place. Unless the "third image" of structure is operationalized and employed in empirical research, no firm conclusion can be reached. And what it means to operationalize the "third image" of structure is, as we have seen, to specify and examine appropriate institutional facts that are suggestive of authority relations in various global contexts. We must note how states see themselves in relation to one another; how they stand in relation to private actors; the principled bases of state behavior; the extent to which both states and private actors are socially empowered to act as they do or merely reflect their respective material capabilities; the extent to which relations differ when the resource at stake is knowledge and information rather than material things; the shared mental imageries actors bring to bear in organizing their relations when time is telescoped and space is temporalized—in short, how the structures of disjoint territoriality are faring in that part of the world that is nonterritorial and globalized.

The third and most critical step will be to see to what extent the modal patterns of structuration in the global arena, if they are different, affect behavior in the other areas of contemporary international life. Several possibilities exist: that

the global domains enjoy no ontological autonomy and are strictly dependent on the familiar structures of modernity, which would be the conventional structural expectation; that global domains do enjoy relative autonomy but are encapsulated and have little effect beyond their bounds, which is a view I would expect some of the so-called "modified structural realists" among us to hold; that global domains are relatively autonomous and have increasing spillover effects on other domains, which amounts to a liberal or functionalist view; or, finally, that global domains enjoy a degree of autonomy and are growing more important relative to other domains of international relations even though they are not fundamentally reshaping them—which would be my own hunch. But choosing among these scenarios given our current ignorance of the facts of the matter amounts to no more than acting out our most deeply held "themata"—defined by Robert Merton (1975, 335) as "tacit cognitive imageries and preferences for or commitments to certain kinds of concepts, certain kinds of methods, certain kinds of evidence, and certain forms of solutions to deep questions and engaging puzzles." The exercise can be fun, but it's not yet social science.

Conclusion

This has been an essay in thinking about how to think about international transformation. There surely is more such thinking to be done, but enough has been said to establish my basic points: how we think about transformation fundamentally shapes what we look for; what we look for obviously has an effect on what we find; if we look for signs of transformation through the lenses of the conventional structural approach of our discipline we are unlikely to conclude that anything much is happening out there; but we cannot say whether or not that conclusion is correct because the epistemological biases of that approach are such that it is ill-equipped to detect signs of transformation.

I used a micro case to help illustrate my argument because the fabric of international life is made up of micro cases: policymakers generally do not get to choose on the future of the state system; they confront choices on exchange rates, trade deficits, arms-control treaties, hostile acts against international shipping, terrorist attacks on airport lobbies and embassy compounds, and garbage that floats down a river or is transported through the air. If change comes it will be the product of micro practices. Hence if we want to understand change or help to shape it, it is to these micro practices that we should look.[8]

I also used an analogy from physics to illustrate my argument because only the appropriate macro perspectives can elucidate the full significance and signification of micro practices. Like Newtonian mechanics, conventional international structural approaches are simple, powerful, elegant, and useful for many things. But just as Newtonian mechanics does not have much of a grasp on transformation of the palpable forces in nature—because the universe comprised by the theory

presupposes their stability—so too it is with conventional structuralism in international relations. As a result, the processes of international transformation are among its voids.

Notes

1. Note Waltz's observation (1979, 117): "If there is any distinctively political theory of international politics, balance-of-power theory is it. And yet one cannot find a statement of the theory that is generally accepted. Carefully surveying the copious balance-of-power literature, Ernst Haas discovered eight distinct meanings of the term, and Martin Wight found nine. Hans Morgenthau, in his profound historical and analytical treatment of the subject, makes use of four different definitions."

2. By and large, my critique does not apply to the unconventional Marxist approach of Robert Cox (1986, 1987), who is extremely sensitive to most of the issues I raise here and from whom I have learned a great deal. My problem with his approach is that an interesting argument is grounded in what I consider to be a highly problematical base: the priority of production.

3. It is interesting to note that Allott was a member of the U.K. delegation to the Law of the Sea negotiations.

4. For a more extended discussion of social time on which I draw here, see Ruggie (1986).

5. Bolingbroke, writing in the early eighteenth century, had much the same idea when he differentiated epochs by the chain of events being so broken "as to have little or no real or visible connexion with that which we see continue. . . . the end of the fifteenth century seems to be just such a period as I have been describing, for those who live in the eighteenth, and who inhabit the western parts of Europe." Similarly, Creighton, in his 1902 introductory essay to the *Cambridge Modern History,* defined the beginning of the modern era as "the period in which the problems that still occupy us came into conscious recognition, and were dealt with in ways intelligible to us as resembling our own." Both citations are from Wight (1977, chap. 4).

6. John Rawls long ago spelled out the significance of this distinction, but he seems to have had little impact on political scientists who study institutions: "One may illustrate this point from the game of baseball. Many of the actions one performs in a game of baseball one can do by oneself or with others whether there is a game or not. For example, one can throw a ball, run, or swing a peculiarly shaped piece of wood. But one cannot steal a base, or strike out, or draw a walk, or make an error, or balk; although one can do certain things which appear to resemble these actions such as sliding into a bag, missing a grounder and so on. Striking out, stealing a base, balking, etc., are all actions which can only happen in a game. No matter what a person did, what he did would not be described as stealing a base or striking out or drawing a walk unless he could also be described as playing baseball, and for him to be doing this presupposes the rule-like practice which constitutes the game. The practice is logically prior to particular cases: unless there is the practice the terms referring to actions specified by it lack a sense" (Rawls 1955, 25).

7. Indeed, at least one practitioner of this genre has recently concluded that the United States if anything is strengthened by such developments and that any discussion of fundamental change is ideologically inspired, in part to obfuscate the continuing power of the United States (Strange 1987).

8. In this connection, I have always been puzzled why some critical theorists, including Ashley (1984) and Cox (1986), refer to the conventional structural approach as "problem solving." How would any policymaker solve problems with it? What would he or she do? Alter the international configuration of power? Modify anarchy? Tell the weak to get stronger, the poor richer?

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