



世界政治与国际关系原版影印丛书

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〔美〕亚历山大·温特 著

国际政治的社会理论

SOCIAL THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Alexander Wendt



北京大学出版社
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Alexander Wendt

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出版说明

引进和交流,是国际研究诸学科发展壮大所不可或缺的环节和纽带。没有引进和交流,学术就难以活跃,也不易创新。每一位从事世界政治与国际关系研究的学者、每一位学习世界政治与国际关系的学生,无不深感阅读外文原文文献的重要性,他们都深知,原文的报刊、教材和专著,是获取最新国际信息、最新理论论争、最新参考资料的必不可少的重要来源,而获得这样的原文文献的机会是不均等的,因此,他们极其渴望更为方便地直接接触到原文文献。而在目前不易直接在国内购买原版书籍的情况下,采取原版影印的方式引进国际上的优秀教材和专著是解决问题的一条捷径,如此就可以使国内普通读者方便地获得最有权威的原文读物,从而可以快速了解国外同行的教学和学术成果,为深入学习和研究、为开展有效的对外学术交流、也为国际关系诸学科在我国的创新和发展,打下更坚实的基础。

这套“世界政治与国际关系原版影印丛书”,正是基于上述认识而组织出版的,并且得到了我国国际关系教学与科研领域最有权威的专家教授们的认可,他们分别来自于北京大学国际关系学院、复旦大学国际关系与公共事务学院、中国人民大学国际关系学院、外交学院、清华大学国际问题研究所、中国社会科学院世界经济与政治研究所、中共中央党校战略研究所等单位,作为本套丛书的学术顾问,他们愿意向我国该学科及相关领域的广大学者和学生共同推荐这套丛书。

本丛书第一批先行选入了一些经典文献选读性质的国外优秀教材,也包括美国大学中的一些知名国际关系学教员所编著的教材,内容主要在国际关系理论方面,也包括国际政治经济学和比较政治学方面的优秀教材。它们皆可称为原文中的精品,值得研读和收藏,不仅如此,由于它们本身在国外的大学课堂里都是应用较广的教材和读物,所以特别适合作为我国国际关系与世界政治专业大学教学中的参考读物,甚至可以直接作为以外文授课的课堂教材。在每本书的前面,我们都邀请国内比较权威的专家学者撰写了精彩的导论,以指导读者更好地阅读和使用这些文献。

根据读者的反映和我国建设中的国际关系学科的发展需要,我们决定在上述影印图书的基础上,开辟一个“学术精品系列”,以让我国国际关系专业的学者和学生有机会更方便地接触到那些堪称“精品中的精品”的学术书籍,比如摩根索的《国家间政治》、沃尔兹的《国际政治理论》和基欧汉的《权力与相互依赖》等等。这些作品大都已经有了中文译本,而且有的还不只一种中译本,它们的学术和学科地位是不言而喻的,在中国读者心目中也已有着持久深入的影响,正因如此,在这个新系列的每一种图书前面我们没有再烦请学术顾问们撰写导言。我们相信,如此有生命力的作品,当它们以新的面目出现在中国读者面前时,一定会引发新的阅读感受、新的理论遐思和新的战略决策思考。至少,

它们可以带给我们真正原汁原味的享受,让我们更加贴近当代的国际关系理论和国际关系理论家。

今后,我们会陆续推出更新、更好的原版教材和专著,希望广大读者提出宝贵意见和建议,尤其欢迎更多的专家学者向我们推荐适合引进的国外优秀教材和专著,以帮助我们完善这套丛书的出版,并最终形成一套完整的世界政治与国际关系及其相关学科适用的原文教学研究参考书系。

最后也要特别提醒读者,我们引进这套丛书,目的主要在于推动学术交流、促进学科发育、完善教学体系,而其著作者的出发点和指导思想、基本观点和结论等,则完全属于由读者加以认识、比较、讨论甚至批评的内容,均不代表北京大学出版社。

Acknowledgements

In this book I develop a theory of the international system as a social construction. Since the term is used in many ways, the first half of the book is a conceptual analysis of what I mean by "social construction." The issues here are philosophical and may be unfamiliar to some students of international politics. However, I have tried throughout to be as clear as possible, keeping in mind a comment James Caporaso made about my first publication in 1987, that "there is nothing so profound here that it cannot be said in ordinary language." I cannot really say that what follows is "ordinary language," but his plea for clarity has become for me an important demand of this kind of work. The other half of the book is a theory of international politics based on that philosophical analysis. Juxtaposed to the Realisms that tend to dominate at least North American IR scholarship, this theory is a kind of Idealism, a Structural Idealism, although I refer to it only as a constructivist approach to international politics. As such, the book might be seen overall as a work of applied social theory. While not reducible to social theory, many debates in IR have a social theory aspect. My hope is that even when the arguments below prove problematic, the contours of those issues will have been brought into sharper relief.

I approach this material as a political scientist, which is to say that I have little formal training in social theory, the primary analytical tool of this study. To address this problem I have read broadly but without much guidance, in mostly contemporary philosophy and sociology. To credit these sources I have followed a generous citation policy, even if specialists – in IR and social theory alike – will still find much that is missing. By the same token, however, it was not possible here to properly address all of that scholarship. The bibliography should be

Acknowledgements

seen as a resource for further reading rather than as a measure of what I have seriously engaged.

Over the long course of writing this book I have acquired a number of significant debts.

The book is descended from a dissertation done at the University of Minnesota, was mostly written at Yale University, and then completed at Dartmouth College. I am grateful for the time and support provided by all of these institutions. Among many esteemed colleagues I have benefitted especially from the advice and role models of David Lumsdaine, Ian Shapiro, and Rogers Smith.

The most sustained debt is to my classmates in the "Minnesota School" of constructivism, and especially Mike Barnett, Mark Laffey, Rhona Leibel, and Jutta Weldes. Although their thicker constructivisms should not be identified with the thin one on offer below, this book is in a real sense a joint product of our conversations over the past 15 years.

For most of the book's writing my graduate students at Yale were my primary intellectual community and reality check, particularly the "third year class" of Janice Bially, Steve Brooks, Ian Cooper, Ian Hurd, and Roland Paris. Many of the formulations below, and many more that failed, were first tried on them.

I am especially grateful to the following individuals.

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Mike Barnett (again), whose unflagging humor and regular phone calls helped keep me in perspective.

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The book is dedicated to Raymond (Bud) Duvall, dissertation advisor and father of the Minnesota School. He cannot be blamed for all of what follows, but without him the book would not have been written.

No science can be more secure than the unconscious
metaphysics which tacitly it presupposes.

Alfred North Whitehead

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1 Four sociologies of international politics

In recent academic scholarship it has become commonplace to see international politics described as “socially constructed.” Drawing on a variety of social theories – critical theory, postmodernism, feminist theory, historical institutionalism, sociological institutionalism, symbolic interactionism, structuration theory, and the like – students of international politics have increasingly accepted two basic tenets of “constructivism”:¹ (1) that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature. The first represents an “idealist” approach to social life, and in its emphasis on the sharing of ideas it is also “social” in a way which the opposing “materialist” view’s emphasis on biology, technology, or the environment, is not. The second is a “holist” or “structuralist” approach because of its emphasis on the emergent powers of social structures, which opposes the “individualist” view that social structures are reducible to individuals. Constructivism could therefore be seen as a kind of “structural idealism.”

As the list above suggests there are many forms of constructivism. In this book I defend one form and use it to theorize about the international system. The version of constructivism that I defend is a moderate one that draws especially on structurationist and symbolic interactionist sociology. As such it concedes important points to materialist and individualist perspectives and endorses a scientific approach to social inquiry. For these reasons it may be rejected by more radical constructivists for not going far enough; indeed it is a

¹ A term first used in International Relations scholarship by Nicholas Onuf (1989).

thin constructivism. It goes much farther than most mainstream International Relations (IR)² scholars today, however, who sometimes dismiss any talk of social construction as “postmodernism.” Between these extremes I hope to find a philosophically principled middle way. I then show that this makes a difference for thinking about international politics.

The international system is a hard case for constructivism on both the social and construction counts. On the social side, while norms and law govern most domestic politics, self-interest and coercion seem to rule international politics. International law and institutions exist, but the ability of this superstructure to counter the material base of power and interest seems limited. This suggests that the international system is not a very “social” place, and so provides intuitive support for materialism in that domain. On the construction side, while the dependence of individuals on society makes the claim that their identities are constructed by society relatively uncontroversial, the primary actors in international politics, states, are much more autonomous from the social system in which they are embedded. Their foreign policy behavior is often determined primarily by domestic politics, the analogue to individual personality, rather than by the international system (society). Some states, like Albania or Burma, have interacted so little with others that they have been called “autistic.”³ This suggests that the international system does not do much “constructing” of states, and so provides intuitive support for individualism in that domain (assuming states are “individuals”). The underlying problem here is that the social structure of the international system is not very thick or dense, which seems to reduce substantially the scope for constructivist arguments.

Mainstream IR scholarship today largely accepts these individualist and materialist conclusions about the states system. It is dominated by *Theory of International Politics*, Kenneth Waltz’s powerful statement of “Neorealism,” which combines a micro-economic approach to the international system (individualism) with the Classical Realist emphasis on power and interest (materialism).⁴ Waltz’s book helped

² Following Onuf (1989), capital letters denote the academic field, lower case the phenomenon of international relations itself.

³ Buzan (1993: 341).

⁴ Waltz (1979). I will use capital letters to designate theories of international relations in order to distinguish them from social theories.