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FSS

Competing visions of international politics: Liberalism (and Constructivism)

Security Systems and Actors, March 7, 2023

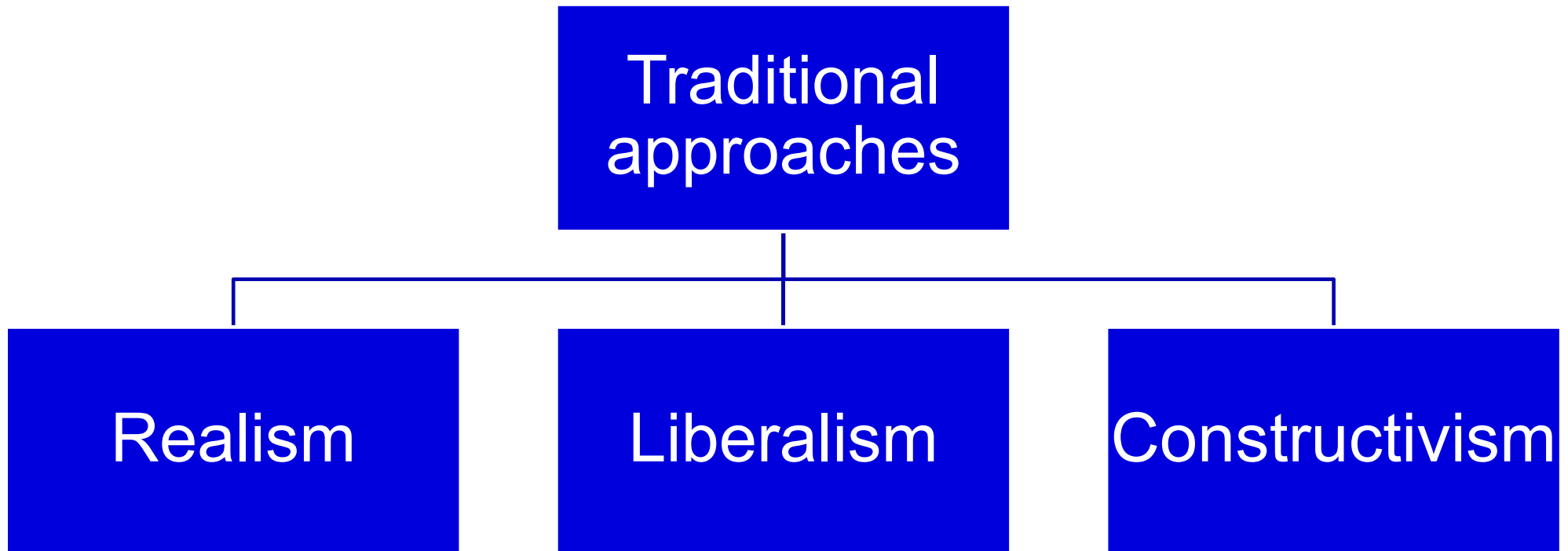
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Outline

- Liberalism: key propositions
 - Traditional / Kantian liberalism
 - “Doux commerce“
 - The democratic peace thesis
 - Neo-liberal institutionalism

- Constructivism: key propositions

Theories in international relations



Liberalism: key propositions

- idealism - founding tradition of IR, renewed attention after the CW (see next slide)
- rejection of power politics
- **human nature as essentially good** → possibility of mutual aid and cooperation
 - bad human behaviour - product of evil institutions
- possibility of eradicating anarchical conditions → reducing frequency of wars
 - idea of **international society** - common interests (welfare > warfare)
 - domestic analogy (democracy as a good form of organization)
- international institutions, rules, laws

Table 3.2 What can realism explain and what can't realism explain?

Realism can explain

Cold War conflictual activities among sovereign nation-states, e.g.:

- "lust for power"
 - "appetite for imperial expansion"
 - "struggle for hegemony"
 - "superpower arms race"
 - "obsession with national security"
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Realism cannot explain

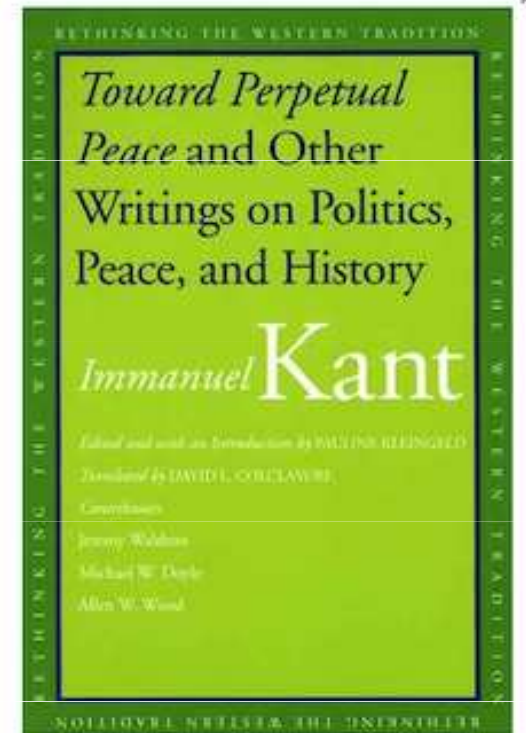
Post-Cold War realities of cooperation among sovereign nation-states, e.g.:

- "march of democracy"
 - "increase in liberal free trade agreements"
 - "renewed role of the United Nations"
 - "proliferation of arms control agreements"
 - "international humanitarianism"
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Source: Kegley, 1993, 1995

Traditional / Kantian liberalism

- **republican government** - only justifiable form of government
- republican states as „peace producers“ - habits of consultation + rule of law
- being republican – not sufficient for world peace to occur
- **conditions of peace**
 - preliminary articles - to end the conditions conducive to war
 - three definitive articles - actual foundations for peace



Traditional / Kantian liberalism

Preliminary Articles

1. "No secret treaty of peace shall be held valid in which there is tacitly reserved matter for a future war"
2. "No independent states, large or small, shall come under the dominion of another state by inheritance, exchange, purchase, or donation"
3. "Standing armies shall in time be totally abolished"
4. "National debts shall not be contracted with a view to the external friction of states"
5. "No state shall by force interfere with the constitution or government of another state"
6. "No state shall, during war, permit such acts of hostility which would make mutual confidence in the subsequent peace impossible"

Definitive Articles

- i. "The civil constitution of each state shall be republican."
- ii. "The law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states."
- iii. "The rights of men, as citizens of the world, shall be limited to the conditions of universal hospitality."

Doux commerce

- trade among states, like trade among individuals, was mutually beneficial
 - Montesquieu: trade tends to civilize people
- market competition as peaceful cooperation (x conflict)
- global division of labour / specialization → economic interdependence → conflict reduction
- thesis mostly supported by empirical evidence - but different conditions under which the thesis holds true

The democratic peace thesis

- liberal states do not fight wars against other liberal states (Doyle, 1983)
- 2 variants of the theory
 - democracies are inherently more peaceful than non-democracies
 - liberal states are not necessarily more peaceful than non-liberal states, but eschew the use of force in relation to other democracies
- two specific causes:
 1. liberal institutions
 2. liberal ideology / culture

Neo-liberal institutionalism

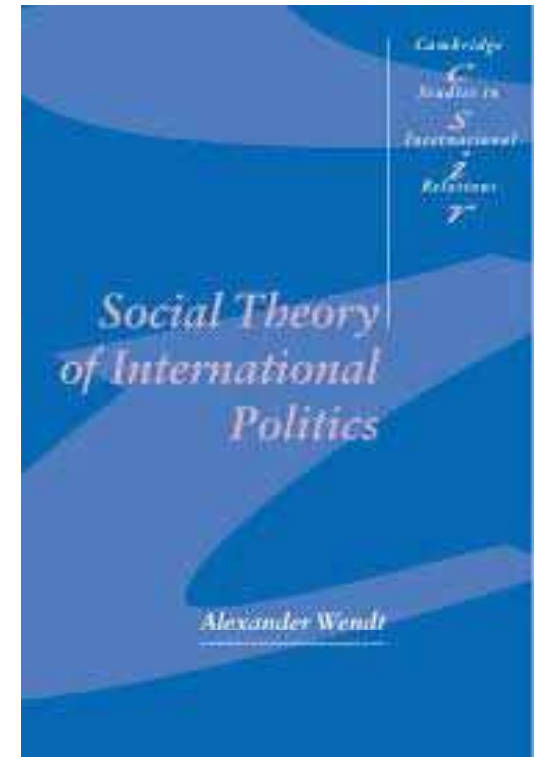
- the role of international institutions in mitigating conflict - by influencing state preferences and state behaviour (x eliminating anarchy)
- institutions as means of providing incentives for cooperation or disincentives for non-cooperation
- more than formal institutions → international regimes (norms, practices)
- institutions reduce transactions costs (negotiating, enforcing, conflict resolution)
- several conditions under which international cooperation can emerge

Liberal theory



Constructivism

- a broader social theory
- security as socially constructed - developed in a particular social and historical context through social interaction
- security as a site of negotiation and contestation (expands beyond political leaders)
- importance of identity and norms (e.g., non use of WMD) - as expectations of behaviour → limits for legitimate action
- agents and structures are mutually constituted → anarchy and security dilemma are not inevitable (change is always possible)



Constructivism



Group discussion

- Do you agree that anarchical conditions of the international system can be overcome? If so, how?
- Do you think the liberal idea of international society is feasible? And if so, under what conditions?
- Does the continuing existence of NATO after the Cold War better align with the realist or liberal perspective of international relations?