Beyond Paradigms

Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics

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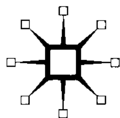

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Chapter 2

Eclecticism, pragmatism, and paradigms in international relations

Since its inception in the early twentieth century, the field of international relations has been divided by enduring and evolving fault lines between proponents of realism and idealism, of behaviorism and traditionalism, of neoliberalism and neorealism, and of rationalism and constructivism. Beginning with the publication of Kuhn's (1962) book on scientific revolutions, it has been fashionable to think of these contending schools of thought as paradigms. In fact, recent surveys conducted by the Project on Teaching, Research, and International Practice (TRIP) indicate that the vast majority of scholars worldwide continue to view international relations scholarship as dominated by paradigmatic analysis. In the 2006 survey of 1,112 scholars in the United States and Canada, respondents indicated that over 80 percent of the international relations literature is devoted to scholarly studies based on one paradigm or another (Maliniak et al. 2007, p. 16). This pattern continued to be evident in the 2008 survey, which included responses from 2,724 scholars from the United States and nine other countries. American respondents estimated that non-paradigmatic scholarship accounted for just 11 percent of the literature, while estimates from respondents in other countries ranged anywhere from 6 percent of the literature in South Africa to 13 percent in Ireland (Jordan et al. 2009, p. 41). The prevalence of paradigms is evident in teaching as well: in the 2008 survey, respondents estimated that 73 percent of course readings in international relations courses taught worldwide represented paradigmatic work of one sort or another, with two-thirds of that work coming from the triad of realism, liberalism, and constructivism (Jordan et al. 2009, p. 18).

For the purpose of distinguishing eclectic scholarship in contemporary international relations, we rely in this chapter on the

familiar triad of constructivism, liberalism, and realism. It goes without saying that other paradigms have acquired significance, at times for long periods, in various countries. Marxism and the English School, for example, continue to be influential outside of the United States. Furthermore, there exist important variations within and across paradigms. Nevertheless, the TRIP surveys confirm that currently constructivism, liberalism, and realism are the most established and most visible contenders for paradigmatic dominance.[1] These three labels capture meaningful differences in the ways in which scholars identify themselves and in the cognitive structures that shape how they pose and approach the problems they seek to solve. Thus, it is in the context of debates between realists, liberals, and constructivists that we find it most useful to elaborate on the significance of analytic eclecticism for the study of world politics.

We are self-conscious in not using capitals to delineate analytic eclecticism. Eclecticism is not meant to constitute a discrete new 'ism' to replace or subsume all other 'isms' in the field of international relations. It is, however, a useful heuristic for capturing the common requirements of metatheoretical flexibility and theoretical multilingualism necessary for substantive analyses that are not embedded in any one paradigm. In fact, there are indications of at least some growing interest in such analyses among a sizable minority of international relations scholars worldwide. It is worth noting, for example, that 36 percent of the American respondents in the 2008 TRIP survey (and about the same percentage of respondents worldwide) indicated that their own work did *not* fall within one of the major international relations paradigms.[2] This figure is noticeably larger than in previous years (Jordan et al. 2009, pp. 9, 33). This increased receptiveness to non-paradigmatic scholarship makes it all the more necessary to think carefully and systematically about what kinds of metatheoretical reformulations and research strategies are most likely to produce useful, coherent eclectic alternatives to theories put forward by the established paradigms.

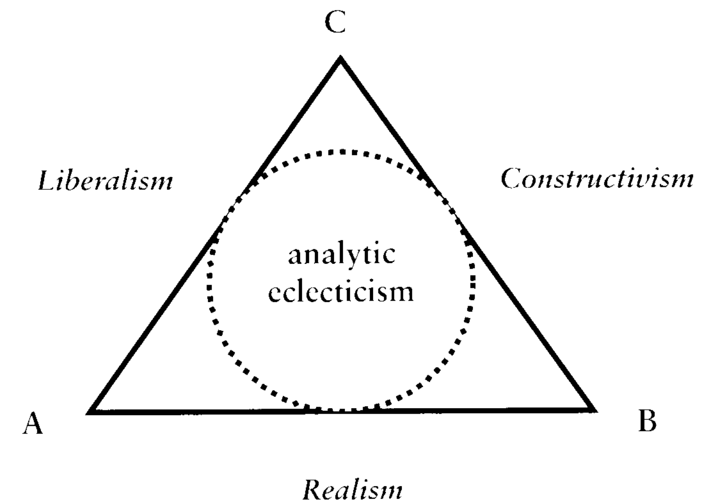
The next section considers the implications for inter-paradigm debates of the proliferation of discrete clusters of theories within a paradigm, and of the substantive convergence sometimes seen among theories embedded in contending paradigms. The following section considers what an eclectic approach brings to the study of

world politics, highlighting statements from prominent scholars who identify with a given paradigm but anticipate the need for complementary eclectic modes of analysis. The final section identifies important points of connection between analytic eclecticism and the ethos of pragmatism, a philosophical perspective that has been on the margins of American international relations but is now beginning to gain some ground.

The limits of the inter-paradigm debate

For heuristic purposes, Figure 2.1 depicts constructivism, liberalism, and realism as three sides of a triangle. Eclectic scholarship explores points of connection between at least two, and preferably all three, of the sides.[3] The three paradigms are typically distinguished based on certain core assumptions about the nature of international life, for example in the priority given to identities and norms, to interests and efficiency gains, or to the distribution of material capabilities. Because these paradigms are so well known, we do not offer a comprehensive overview of each of them. Rather, our discussion emphasizes two related points that are significant for the case we make for analytic eclecticism. First, each of the major paradigms encompasses discrete strands that can be distinguished in terms of the relative priorities assigned to different ontological, epistemological, and substantive assumptions normally associated with that paradigm. The resulting heterogeneity of approaches *within* paradigms suggests that they may not be as coherent, uniform, and rigid as often assumed. Second, because of their internal heterogeneity, each of the paradigms has produced a fairly wide range of substantive arguments, some of which converge with arguments developed in other paradigms on particular issues and policies. This may not herald the end of inter-paradigm debates, as some have hoped (Waever 1996). It does, however, point to the possibility of relaxing some of the more restrictive metatheoretical postulates and theoretical assumptions typically employed to delimit and distinguish paradigms. If so, this would pave the way for a greater acceptance of eclectic modes of inquiry.

Figure 2.1 *The triad of major international relations paradigms*



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The emergence of diversity within paradigms

For much of the twentieth century, realism was the dominant paradigm in international relations scholarship. After a period of decline immediately following the Cold War, realism appears to have entered a phase of 'renewal' (Frankel 1996). Realists view the most critical outcomes in world politics – war and peace among states – as driven primarily by the balance of power among states operating in an anarchic system based on the principle of self-help. In such an environment, what matters most are relative gains in the distribution of material capabilities, measured largely in terms of resources required to defend one's borders and inflict harm on other states. Given the objective character of these measurements, realists see no need for the emphasis constructivists place on the ontological priority of intersubjective constructions. Contra liberals, they see patterns of cooperation, however institutionalized, as reflecting either the mutual interests of alliance members or a fleeting convergence of interests around issues of 'low' politics rather than the 'high' politics of war and peace.

Over time, important distinctions have emerged within the realist paradigm. The most significant move featured a departure from the classical realism of Hans Morgenthau – which emphasized statecraft based on a balance-of-power logic – in favor of a focus on structural processes and outcomes at the level of the international system. Neorealists, or structural realists, view states in the international system as analogous to firms in the marketplace. Thus, they treat the distribution of material capabilities among the great powers in the system in zero-sum terms; the extent to which there exists a balance of power is directly related to the persistence or disruption of equilibrium in the system (Waltz 1979). Among structural realists, there is a significant divide between offensive and defensive variants, which stress, respectively, states' readiness to engage in conflict in the quest for greater power (Mearsheimer 2001) and states' preoccupation with their own security (Waltz 1979). Recent neorealists have turned their attention to the emulation of successful military practices and innovations, something never fully developed by earlier realists but clearly implied by the logic of competition under anarchy (Resende-Santos 2007). An increasingly prominent neoclassical variant of realism (Rose 1998) has sought to integrate classical realism's emphasis on statecraft with neorealism's focus on the structure of an anarchic international system. This approach is concerned with how individual actors' preferences and perceptions, as well as the character and internal political dynamics of states, mediate system effects on the content of grand strategies and specific foreign policy choices in various international environments (Lobell, Ripsman, and Taliaferro 2009; Schweller 2006; see also Finel 2001/02). Neoclassical realists differ from other realists in the importance they attach to the role of emotions, identities, and interests of individual actors (Lobell et al. 2009). These differences are significant in that they anticipate the possibility of interfacing with approaches drawn from constructivism and liberalism that stress, respectively, the role of ideas, norms, and identities, and the significance of information and coordination in institutions.

Liberal theories take issue with realists' skepticism concerning the prospects for cooperation in a fundamentally anarchic world (Mearsheimer 1994/95), and instead stress the potential for enlightened self-interest and progressive change. While liberalism may be traced back to Wilsonianism, the spectacular failure of the liberal international order between the two world wars prompted most

'new liberals' (Moravcsik 1997) to move away from idealism toward a rationalist conception of state interests. This is illustrated well by Keohane and Nye's (1977) landmark study of 'complex interdependence' and its implications for states' prioritization of various types of interests. Liberals accept the realist view of the anarchic nature of the international system but allow for a wider range of conditions, particularly in an interdependent world, under which absolute gains motivate cooperative state behavior even in the absence of a hegemon (Keohane 1984). Thus, what distinguishes neoliberals from realists is not ontology or epistemology so much as the designation of the central problems to be investigated. This, in turn, reflects competing assumptions about the preference-ordering of states (whether they seek absolute or relative gains) and the causal impact of international institutions (whether, in the interest of all states, they introduce a greater degree of transparency, reciprocity, and predictability).

The past two decades have witnessed the emergence of discrete strands of liberalism that differ in their view of the variability of state interests and the extent to which these are influenced or constrained by institutions, ideas, and transnational factors. One prominent strand discounts the configuration of international institutions in favor of evolving state preferences that are embedded in states' domestic and transnational social environments (Moravcsik 1997). In a similar vein, commercial liberalism focuses on how the shifting structure of the global economy alters the position of particular assets in international markets as well as patterns of distributional conflict within and between states. This prompts domestic economic actors to reformulate their interests and to pressure governments to adjust or maintain their policies on free trade, exchange rates, and other aspects of economic exchange (Alt and Gilligan 1994; Frieden 1991; Milner 1988; Moravcsik 2008). Neoliberal institutionalists emphasize the significance of extensive investments that powerful states have made in a whole range of multilateral institutions. These represent equilibrium outcomes of strategic interactions and payoff structures in relation to various sorts of cooperation problems. Institutions serve the interests of states by reducing transaction costs, providing information, making commitments more credible, and encouraging reciprocity (Keohane and Martin 1995; Krasner 1983; Martin 1992). Some neoliberals take seriously the role of ideas and beliefs in connection with international institutions (Goldstein and Keohane 1993). However,

they treat ideas, not as forces that can independently alter the core interests of actors, but rather as focal points for coordinating policies. These and other variants of liberalism differ from a more normative strand of liberal theory that harkens back to Wilsonian idealism in its emphasis on the role of a community of liberal democratic states in designing a rule-centered world order based on international laws and institutions (Hoffmann 2000; Ikenberry and Slaughter 2006; see also Simpson 2008).

Constructivism is defined less in terms of specific assumptions about the nature of states and their environments, and more in terms of its ontology. It holds to the premise that social constructs that are not directly observable – most commonly collective norms and identities – have a powerful effect on how actors in particular contexts perceive, understand, negotiate, and reproduce the social structures they inhabit (Wendt 1999). Constructivists may be open to both the realist precondition of international anarchy and the liberal emphasis on the possibilities for negotiated cooperation. They emphasize, however, the ontological priority of unobservable identities and norms. These emergent identities and norms are 'constructed' by actors in the context of long-term processes of social interaction, but they also mediate how actors perceive, create, and respond to emergent features of world politics. Such a view of international relations requires, at the individual level, 'a conception of actors who are not only strategically but also discursively competent' (Ruggie 1998, p. 21). This perspective also enables constructivism to highlight the significance of generative or transformative processes such as deliberation, persuasion, and socialization, which, for better or worse, can lead to the transformation of identities and preferences (Johnston 2001; Wendt 1999).

As with realism and liberalism, constructivism has also seen the crystallization of discrete strands that represent different foundational orientations. 'Conventional' constructivists adopt a more positivist orientation when it comes to issues of epistemology and methodology (Hopf 1998; Checkel 2004). They are comfortable proceeding on the basis of a 'naturalist' form of positivism (Dessler 1999; Wendt 1999), and can commit themselves to contingent explanatory propositions in which ideational variables play a central role. Post-positivist alternatives to conventional constructivism adopt a constitutive epistemology (Hopf 1998), seeking to understand and/or critique, rather than trace the causes or effects of, ideational constructions. An 'interpretivist' variant, which has been more popular in Europe (Checkel 2004), seeks to reconstruct identities through the analysis of discourse. It seeks to understand rather than discover the causes and consequences of norms and identities as reflected in discourse. Critical constructivism has a markedly more normative orientation (Price and Reus-Smit 1998; Checkel 2004), rejecting the neutrality professed by conventional constructivists and seeking to expose the naturalized power relationships that lie behind myths and social practices (Hopf 1998). Finally, some scholars have built on Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of practice by highlighting 'the logic of habit' (Hopf 2009). This approach focuses on the importance of dispositions and self-evident understandings as illustrated, for example, in the impact of everyday diplomatic practice on foreign affairs (Pouliot 2010).

Points of convergence across paradigms

The emergence of discrete variants within each of the major paradigms suggests that paradigmatic fault lines are less impermeable than is frequently assumed, and the problems of inter-paradigm incommensurability correspondingly less daunting than they first appear (Jackson and Nexon 2009; see also Moravcsik 2008). Because they encompass a number of ontological and epistemological principles that are not uniformly ordered and weighted within each paradigm, the metatheoretical postulates of competing paradigms can be reformulated or reprioritized to permit some convergence on substantive arguments and prescriptions. This is precisely what we see happening in recent discussions tracking the convergence of certain strands of realism and liberalism (around corner A in Figure 2.1), of constructivism and realism (around corner B), and of constructivism and liberalism (around corner C).[4]

The realist assumption that a state's material interests and resources are unproblematic is not inconsistent with the neoliberal premise that states are self-interested rational actors motivated by material gains. This overlap permits some convergence in substantive analyses (at corner A in Figure 2.1) around issues that realists may assign to the domain of 'low' politics but consider worth investigating nonetheless. Moreover, in terms of fundamental issues of ontology, the gap between neorealists and neoliberals is certainly not as significant as that between both of these traditions and

constructivism. In fact, it may be in response to the emergence of constructivism as a distinct tradition that strands of neorealism and neoliberalism have converged upon a 'neo-neo synthesis' (Waever 1996, p. 163). This synthesis, often referred to as 'rationalist' (Katzenstein 1996; Katzenstein, Keohane, and Krasner 1999) or 'neo-utilitarian' (Ruggie 1998), is predicated on the shared premise of the centrality of state interests and rational state behavior, in combination with a common positivist search for explanations of states' behavioral regularities within an objective international reality that transcends specific contexts (Keohane 1989, esp. p. 165). While not all realists and liberals see this underlying rationalism as important enough to warrant ignoring all other principles that have long distinguished the two camps, the appeal of this synthesis among many proponents of neorealism and neoliberalism points to the possibility of a convergence in substantive theories generated by the two paradigms.

Yet this synthesis has not overrun the field of international relations precisely because, in different intellectual contexts, other points of convergence have also emerged. One such point (at corner B in Figure 2.1) involves a 'realist-constructivism' as articulated in the work of Samuel Barkin (2003, 2004, 2010), among others. Realist constructivists (Barkin 2010; see also Nau 2002) acknowledge that, in addition to their respective emphases on material and ideational factors, realists and constructivists diverge on whether actors are following the logic of consequences or the logic of appropriateness. However, the gap between the two paradigms is frequently overstated, as specific strands of each can converge in their analysis of different forms and expressions of power in specific contexts (Barkin 2003, 2010). Norm-guided behavior can emerge from material interests, and rational action can be oriented towards socially constructed ideals. Patrick Jackson and Daniel Nexon (2004) offer a somewhat different view of the convergence of realism and constructivism, emphasizing a post-structuralist grounding that discards the emphasis on human nature and international anarchy in favor of a focus on the forms of power within all social structures. A more structured version of realist constructivism views the social construction of domestic group identities and practices as mediating the perceptions of international anarchy and mitigating its negative effects on the possibilities for cooperation (Sterling-Folker 2002, pp. 101–4). These different formulations of realist constructivism vary in the

ontological status they assign to power and anarchy; they share, however, a focus on the operation of power in various domains of international life.

Finally, there is a range of possibilities (at corner C in Figure 2.1) where constructivism and liberalism converge. Classical liberalism, in particular, shares with constructivism an emphasis on how the interplay of ideas, shared knowledge, emergent legal principles and multilateral institutions can reshape actors' identities and preferences, and engender reciprocal understandings and levels of cooperation that cannot be reduced to fixed state interests (Haas 2001; Reus-Smit 2001). For some liberals and constructivists, this commonality is so significant that they choose to transcend fundamental differences in ontology and gravitate towards a liberal-constructivist orientation along the lines outlined by Jackson and Nexon (2009). Indeed, some proponents of realist constructivism characterize conventional constructivism as an alternative reconstruction of liberal idealism (Barkin 2003). The rationalist features that permit a convergence between neoliberal and neorealist approaches (at corner A) are discounted in this broader view of liberal theory; the focus is less on actor preferences and strategic rationality, and more on the complex processes leading to the emergence of cooperation in specific contexts. In relation to these processes, conventional constructivism and classical liberalism can be treated as complementary rather than competing (Sterling-Folker 2000). Some constructivists (Steele 2007) see this move as undermining the distinctive foundations of constructivism and diluting its ability to challenge mainstream realist and liberal theories. However, if we choose to relax paradigmatic commitments in favor of practical assumptions that can guide problem-focused substantive research, then there is reason to take seriously the idea of some common ground between specific strands of liberalism and constructivism, at least for certain questions.

The significance of these various points of convergence becomes even clearer when we consider that adherents of any given paradigm are capable of developing theories to support quite varied, even diametrically opposed, policy prescriptions. This also implies that scholars identifying with different paradigms can converge in their support for, or opposition to, particular policies. This point is demonstrated in Fred Chernoff's (2007, pp. 75–7) effort to lay out

the various rationales that potentially support either a more aggressive or a more cooperative approach in US policies towards Iraq, North Korea, and China. Concerning Iraq, for example, opposition to unilateral invasion was backed by liberal arguments about the long-term value of multilateralism and institutionalized cooperation, and by constructivist arguments emphasizing the emergence of a social basis for sustained cooperation through long-term engagement. The Bush administration invoked realist principles justifying unilateral invasion on the grounds that Iraq's nuclear weapons program posed a serious and imminent threat, as well as liberal ones asserting that the invasion would uncover the roots of a vigorous democratic politics. At the same time, many realists joined liberals and constructivists in opposing the invasion, based on doubts about the extent of the threat posed by Iraq.

Similarly, in relation to North Korea, a policy of isolation and containment could be supported by rationalist theories drawing on both realism and liberalism to emphasize the dangers of rewarding bad behavior. On the other side, a 'sunshine policy' aimed at easing North Korea's insecurity and building confidence through incremental concessions could be justified through constructivist arguments about how actors' identities change, liberal arguments about how engagement can spur demands for political reform, and realist arguments about the increased restraint likely to be shown by states possessing nuclear deterrents. As Chernoff (2007, p. 153) puts it, 'There is no inherent reason why one of the foundational-philosophical positions is locked into supporting one particular substantive theory above others.'

In advancing the case for greater analytic eclecticism in international relations, it is worth underlining the obvious. Although they are based on competing epistemic commitments, paradigms and research traditions are not usually so rigid as to produce uniform research products that predictably converge on substantive interpretations, explanations, or prescriptions. In engaging particular problems, it is entirely possible for constructivists, liberals, and realists to disagree amongst themselves, while some types of realists, liberals, and constructivists may be able to converge on substantive characterizations of, and prescriptions for, a particular problem in international life. Such convergence points to the possibility and utility of eclecticism in the study of world politics.

What eclecticism can contribute

As noted in Chapter 1, paradigms have an enduring quality and confer certain important advantages. Paradigms and the theoretical languages they employ enable more focused and fluent conversations about problems that are considered significant. They offer criteria for assessing the quality of scholarship, and help scholars to cultivate recognizable professional identities while facilitating the psychological and institutional support of fellow adherents. In addition, the debates among paradigms create the conditions for developing sharper, more refined analyses. All of this contributes to the professionalization of international relations research, and partly explains the findings about the continuing prevalence of paradigmatic analysis in the TRIP surveys (Jordan et al. 2009; Maliniak et al. 2007).

The boundaries between paradigms, however, also produce an excessive compartmentalization in international relations scholarship. They obscure conceptual and empirical points of connection between analyses constructed in competing research traditions and presented in different theoretical vocabularies.[5] Moreover, the host of intellectual, financial, institutional, and psychological investments that go into building and sustaining a paradigm militate against addressing important aspects of problems that are not easily represented in the conceptual apparatus it favors. And the focus on intra-paradigm progress and inter-paradigm debates detracts from attention to practical real-world dilemmas while widening the chasm between academia and the world of policy and practice. This chasm is particularly disappointing in view of the fact that the field of international relations originally emerged out of 'reflections on policy, and out of the desire to influence policy, or to improve the practice of policy' (Wallace 1996, p. 302).

Analytic eclecticism is essentially a countervailing effort to overcome these limitations inherent in paradigm-bound research in international relations. Eclectic scholarship is designed to highlight the substantive intersections and practical relevance of theories originally constructed within separate paradigms. Rather than 'stigmatizing as eclectic whatever approach to the current problems in international politics does not fit along the established axes of scholarly enlightenment' (Hellmann 2003, p. 149), the academe could then recognize the virtues of scholarship that can serve to expand the channels of communication among separate research

communities, and to generate recombinant analytic frameworks that incorporate concepts, logics, interpretations, and mechanisms from various paradigms. Since no one paradigm is universally recognized by the discipline as having a monopoly on intellectual progress, 'the best case for progress in the understanding of social life lies in ... the expanding fund of insights and understandings derived from a wide variety of theoretical inspirations' (Rule 1997, p. 18).

The specific attributes of a given intellectual environment obviously affect what counts as 'mainstream' scholarship and what constitutes an eclectic mode of inquiry. As noted above, analytic eclecticism is conceptualized in this book in relation to realism, liberalism, and constructivism, since these are the most prevalent approaches in the United States and worldwide. In other countries, however, a number of other paradigms enjoy equal or greater visibility in international relations debates (Jordan et al. 2009; Maliniak et al. 2007). For example, the English school, feminism, post-modernism, and Marxism all have a much broader following in Britain, Canada, and Australia than in the United States. On the European continent, hermeneutic and interpretive approaches are much more a part of the 'mainstream' than in the United States. In China and Russia, Marxism continues to offer a suitable analytical frame in some circles. And in various other countries and regions, distinctive cultural templates and intellectual traditions frequently inflect scholarly analyses of world politics (Acharya and Buzan 2010; Lemke 2003; Tickner 2003; Tickner and Waever 2009). Moreover, in contrast to the United States, rationalist perspectives in those countries and regions occupy a less central place in scholarly debates, and do not influence as significantly the prevailing research protocols or evidentiary requirements. In such settings, although the general logic of eclecticism still applies, what constitutes eclectic research practice would have to be redefined.

Eclecticism can also be recast at a more general level, beyond the field of international relations. For example, it can take the form of analytic frameworks seeking to bridge comparative politics and international relations (Caporaso 1997) and of interdisciplinary research seeking to draw together insights from economics, psychology, sociology, and geography (Sil and Doherty 2000; Wallerstein et al. 1996). At an even higher level of generality, eclecticism can take the form of efforts to translate or combine concepts and processes originally posited within very different

kinds of scholarly projects in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities (Kagan 2009). Here, advances in neuroscience, evolutionary biology, and the study of chaos and complexity point to new mechanisms potentially affecting international processes and outcomes. In short, eclecticism is a general strategy for developing complex problem-focused arguments that cut across, and draw creatively from, artificially segmented bodies of scholarship. The specific contours of this strategy depend on the relevant intellectual context.

In the context of contemporary international relations, analytic eclecticism is minimally operationalized as analysis that extricates and recombines elements of theories embedded in the three major paradigms – realism, liberalism, and constructivism – in the process of building complex middle-range causal stories that bear on important matters of policy and practice. Eclectic modes of analysis trace the dialectical and evolving relationship between individual and collective actors in world politics, on the one hand, and the material and ideational structures that constitute the contexts within which these actors form and pursue their preferences. This requires attention to two sets of factors: first, the manner in which external environments shape actors' understandings of their interests, the constraints and opportunities they face, and their capabilities; and second, the manner in which environments are reproduced or transformed as a result of those actors' varying preferences and capacities. An eclectic approach also assumes the existence of complex interactions among the distribution of material capabilities (typically emphasized in realism), the gains pursued by self-interested individual and collective actors (typically emphasized by liberals), and the role of ideas, norms, and identities in framing actors' understanding of the world and of their roles within it (privileged by constructivists). Put differently, eclectic analysis seeks to cut across and draw connections between processes that are normally cast at different levels of analysis, and are often confined to either material or ideational dimensions of social reality (see Figure 1.1 in the previous chapter).

The anticipation of eclecticism

While the label of analytic eclecticism and the specific definition we offer may be original, it is not difficult to find examples of scholars,

including prominent scholars frequently identified with an established paradigm, who have acknowledged the limitations of paradigmatic work. No less a realist than Morgenthau noted long ago the limitations of scholarship confined to a single theoretical perspective. Most theories of international relations, he argued (1967, p. 247), offer 'a respectable protective shield' behind which members of the academic community engage in theoretical pursuits while bypassing controversies relevant to the policies and prospects for survival of entire nations. In his classic book, *Man, the State and War*, Kenneth Waltz (1959, pp. 229–30) also highlights the necessity of considering numerous causal forces operating at multiple levels of analysis:

> The prescriptions directly derived from a single image [of international relations] are incomplete because they are based upon partial analyses. The partial quality of each image sets up a tension that drives one toward inclusion of the others. ... One is led to search for the inclusive nexus of causes.

While Waltz's later (1979) work focuses at the level of the system, his earlier openness to the multiplicity of causal factors located at different levels is recaptured in neoclassical realist commentaries emphasizing the importance of opening up the 'black box' of the unit level (Finel 2001/02; see also Waltz 1967).

In the context of political economy, Robert Gilpin's (1975, 1987) attempts to grapple systematically with competing perspectives led him to draw upon liberal, realist, and Marxist analytic principles in order to shed light on different facets of international political economy. In his more recent work, characterized as a 'state-realist' approach to political economy, Gilpin (2001) goes on to challenge the stark separation of constructivism and realism. He notes:

> Ideas are obviously important, but the world is composed of many economic, technological, and other powerful constraints that limit the wisdom and practicality of certain ideas and social constructions. Any theory that seeks to understand the world must ... seek to integrate both ideas and material forces. (Gilpin 2001, p. 20)

A leading figure in the neoliberal camp, Robert Keohane, also acknowledges the importance of approaching problems from multiple vantage points, as is evident in his analysis of cooperation without a hegemon. Keohane (1984, p. 39) accepts the realist theory of hegemonic stability as 'a useful, if somewhat simplistic starting point.' But he then goes on to construct a framework of analysis that not only combines elements of realist and liberal theory, but also borrows extensively from Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony as well as the work of Karl Kautsky (Keohane 1984, pp. 43–5). Keohane (1986), as well as John Ruggie (1986), although generally considered critics of neorealism, do not discard Waltz's structural realism. Instead, they view it as an essential and valuable foundation for the building of more complex frameworks, in which Waltz's notion of structure coexists with other non-systemic factors that can better capture the effects of growing interdependence and the dynamics of system change.

A strong proponent of liberalism, Andrew Moravcsik (2008), has also called for de-emphasizing theoretical parsimony and ontological consistency in order to facilitate synthetic analyses featuring causal factors drawn from different theories. Moravcsik (2003, p. 132) notes:

> The complexity of most large events in world politics precludes plausible unicausal explanations. The outbreak of World Wars I and II, the emergence of international human rights norms, and the evolution of the European Union, for example, are surely important enough events to merit comprehensive explanation even at the expense of theoretical parsimony.

For this reason, Moravcsik (2003, p. 136) has called for empirically grounded 'midrange theories of concrete phenomena' that are not constrained by prior assumptions about the 'metatheoretical, ontological or philosophical status of social science.'

Stanley Hoffmann (1995, 2000) has been increasingly convinced that liberalism is in crisis and in desperate need of rethinking. Hoffmann attacks liberal theory's tendency to bypass ethical considerations and to overvalue the significance of convergent state interests and economic interdependence for international harmony. Anticipating some of the arguments of liberal-constructivists, Hoffmann (1995, 2000) emphasizes the need for a serious reformulation of liberalism that might incorporate ethical considerations in supporting a stronger role for international institutions

to regulate 'what may soon be seen as a transnational Frankenstein monster' (Hoffmann 1995, p. 177).

Generally identified with defensive realism, Jack Snyder (2002, p. 34) has also argued recently for a more holistic and multi-dimensional conception of systems than the one realists have generally employed: 'No single part of a system suffices to define the system and its behavior. Even anarchy itself, though it may load the dice probabilistically in favor of war, does not predetermine action in the system.' This does not imply, however, a defection to the constructivist camp. In fact, Snyder describes constructivism as 'one-dimensional,' insisting that a more useful approach would be to 'integrate material, institutional, and cultural aspects of social change, drawing on the insights of theories of complex systems' (Snyder 2002, p. 9).

Nina Tannenwald (2005) has sought to expand the boundaries of constructivism by suggesting that ideas operate through mechanisms (such as learning and socialization) whose effects can vary depending on material conditions and constraints (such as interests and resources). Tannenwald breaks down the concept of 'ideas' into discrete elements (ideological, normative, and causal beliefs as well as policy prescriptions), recognizing the different ways in which each of these elements interact with material factors. She emphasizes that material conditions and constraints are often constituted by prior ideas that, in turn, take shape within particular material environments even if they subsequently have long-term independent effects. Tannenwald's move is aimed at defining and defending 'constitutive explanation' in constructivist research. Yet, like Snyder, she effectively opens the door to an eclectic approach.

A more general case for moving beyond paradigm-bound research in international relations is evident in the critique of the field offered by Steven Bernstein, Richard Ned Lebow, Janice Stein, and Steven Weber (2000). For them, international relations theory has been inordinately influenced by a model of science drawn from physics, a field featuring closed systems in which strict boundary conditions can be specified and consistently maintained in order to reveal law-like relationships between variables. In the construction of useful theories of international relations, this is neither feasible, nor effective. The authors argue:

> Even the most robust generalizations or laws we can state – war is more likely between neighboring states, weaker states are less likely to attack stronger states – are close to trivial, have important exceptions, and for the most part stand outside any consistent body of theory. (Bernstein et al. 2000, p. 44)

A more appropriate model, they argue, would be evolutionary biology, which features a more open-ended system in which specific mutation and interaction processes cannot be foreseen in light of uncertainty regarding contingencies. Under these conditions, a practically useful approach is oriented not towards point predictions based on rigid theoretical principles, but rather towards scenarios that require 'the identification and connection of chains of contingencies that could shape the future' (Bernstein et al. 2000, p. 53). In the context of international relations, Bernstein et al. (2000, p. 57) point out that while competing theories emphasize different drivers and behavioral expectations, they frequently 'acknowledge the importance – sometimes determining – of elements outside their theory.' This suggests that international relations theories are likely to do better when they take into account the wide-ranging causal factors from diverse paradigms, then demonstrate how these factors affect one another or combine to generate certain outcomes under certain conditions.

We could easily expand this list of calls for more complex theoretical frameworks extending beyond the boundaries of prevailing paradigms. Instead, our purpose is better served by considering studies of specific problems that, explicitly or implicitly, illustrate the potential value of analytic eclecticism. We undertake this task in Chapters 3 to 5, which address concrete problems related respectively to issues of conflict and security, political economy, and governance in regional, international, and global settings.

A note on labels

We view here as 'eclectic' the arguments of some scholars who may not generally think of their work in such terms. Indeed, many scholars tend to identify with a recognizable paradigm even while engaging in pragmatic, middle-range theorizing that incorporates a wide range of mechanisms and factors in the same way that we expect self-consciously eclectic scholars to do. This is especially true

in the case of constructivism. Chronologically, it is the last member of the 'triad' to arrive on the scene, and so must contend with well-developed arguments embedded in well-established paradigms. Analytically, it sees as one of its missions the incorporation of 'omitted variables' that are considered fundamental in other social science disciplines but were tangential to the realist–liberal debate that until recently dominated the field of international relations. That is, in an environment dominated by contending rationalist perspectives, it is not surprising that a scholar seeking to bring in the role of norms and identities would choose to self-identify as a 'constructivist' solely for the purpose of targeting an audience that does not a priori discount ideational factors.[6]

Given these circumstances, when a scholar characterizes their work as 'constructivist' primarily for the purpose of demonstrating how ideas matter – a proposition now acknowledged by many realists and liberals – we are not deterred from classifying that work as analytically eclectic so long as it roughly matches the three identifying markers of eclecticism noted at the end of Chapter 1 (see Table 1.1). This is, in fact, the case with a number of the authors we discuss below, such as Finnemore (2003) in Chapter 3, Jabko (2006) in Chapter 4, and Ba (2009) in Chapter 5. What is not consistent with eclecticism is a program aimed at a total reorganization of international relations in which the 'social construction' thesis is deployed so as to privilege ideational mechanisms, subsume other mechanisms, and dismiss the significance of previous work that ignores or rejects the primacy of ideas. In this regard, we concur with Gilpin (2001, pp. 19–20) when he writes:

> Although constructivism is an important corrective to some strands of realism and the individualist rational-choice methodology of neoclassical economics, the implicit assumption of constructivism that we should abandon our knowledge of international politics and start afresh from a tabula rasa wiped clean by constructivism is not compelling.

A meaningful and consistent line can thus be drawn between the 'practical' (or weak) identification with constructivism, or with any paradigm for that matter, and a 'programmatic' (or strong) identification that compels a scholar to follows specific epistemic commitments linked to fixed analytic boundaries and rigid research protocols. Constructivists – as well as realists and liberals – who are not programmatically committed to the epistemological and causal primacy of particular analytical factors operating within a particular empirical domain and at a particular level of analysis may produce eclectic research. This, however, is not likely to be the case when problems are defined in such a manner as to explicitly correspond to the analytic boundaries of a paradigm; when the research is designed to vindicate existing theories or fill in gaps within paradigm-bound scholarship; or when substantive arguments are premised on an analytic framework that assumes the significance of certain mechanisms and chooses to discount others. In other circumstances, however, it is entirely possible for a scholar to nominally self-identify with a paradigm when in fact their scholarship is eclectic in design and substance. Similarly, a scholar may opt to frame an argument as eclectic when in fact that argument is little more than a refinement of an existing paradigm-bound theory. In the end, whatever label others may apply to a given research product, any scholarly work that meets the three criteria outlined at the end of Chapter 1 (see Table 1.1) – open-ended problem formulation, a complex causal story featuring mechanisms from multiple paradigms, and pragmatic engagement with issues of policy and practice – qualifies here as analytically eclectic.

Analytic eclecticism and the pragmatist turn[7]

Positivists, while disagreeing on certain ontological and epistemological issues,[8] share a view of social science in which patterns of human behavior are presumed to reflect objective laws or law-like regularities. These laws and regularities exist above and beyond the subjective orientations of actors and observers, and can be approximated with increasingly greater accuracy through the cumulation of theory and the application of increasingly more sophisticated research techniques (Laudan 1996, p. 21). Although subjectivist approaches, too, vary in terms of specific assumptions, objectives, and methods,[9] they evince a common skepticism about the possibility of inferring generalizations on the basis of human behavior that is meaningful only within particular contexts. Instead, they commit to a context-bound understanding of the 'meaning-making' (Yanow 2006) efforts of actors as they make sense of their roles and identities within their immediate social environments. In light of