

## **Beyond Realism and Idealism in Foreign Affairs**

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### **Abstract**

Both neo-realism and neo-liberalism approach foreign affairs in ‘Westphalian’ terms; i.e., both have a worldview focused on the nation state, which has objective interests and relationships to international institutions. This paper approaches foreign policy from a Constructivist and post-Westphalian position. In other words, it claims that the ‘invisible hand’ of shared beliefs, including religious beliefs, continuously constructs the (inter)subjective social reality of communities, be they religious, cultural, gender, national, or other ‘imagined’ communities. This (inter)subjective consensus influences political decision making, including decisions about war and peace.

From a constructivist position the paper revisits the unfinished project of global democratization. The latest wave, that of forced democratization, has aimed at achieving Idealist ends of foreign policy through Realist means. Proudly initiated by the George W. Bush administration, it seems destined to become an embarrassing failure. One of the main reasons for the failure appears to be a counterintuitive grass-roots resistance to it—in fact, a paradoxical democratic rejection of democratization, or an ‘aporia of democratization.’ The paper claims that a deliberative model of democracy with an emphasis on ‘discursive will formation’ (rather than ‘preference aggregation’) mechanisms may be more suitable for the promotion of the ideal of a global ‘imagined community’ of shared understandings.

### **Beyond Realism and Idealism in Foreign Affairs**

*“The empires of the future will be empires of the mind.”*  
Winston Churchill

My intention was to start writing a normally organized academic paper on the topic of Realism versus Idealism in foreign affairs. However, while researching the subject, my thoughts kept wandering, in a stream-of-consciousness manner of continental modernism. I recalled a conversation I had with my next door, American neighbor ... another conversation I had on Skype with a long-time Armenian friend... I thought about the Chinese proverb ‘May you live in interesting times’... and about Plato’s concept that those who tell the story also rule society... Finally, I decided to give in and incorporate personal material into this paper on international relations.

### **‘May You Live in Interesting Times’**

This Chinese proverb implies the difficult, if rewarding, experience of those who happen to live in times of significant societal transformations. All of us who lived through the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can testify to its truth. To a greater or lesser degree, the transformative international and

global events of our lifetime—particularly from the end of the Cold War to the onset of globalization—had implications for everyone. And this social and political context is reflected in our academic texts, transcending the boundaries of the personal and the political.

My own personal history seems like an illustration of the idea of the ‘patchwork ‘and ‘dialogic’ identities, a’ la Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva.

During my career as a scholar and a professor of social and political philosophy, I have been expected to be an insider of three very different socio-political and intellectual systems, in fact to pledge allegiance to three very different nations, shifting between languages and identities. I started to teach Western political thought in the late Soviet Union, in the Russian language and within the limiting framework of Marxist orthodoxy. Gorbachev’s perestroika and the end of the Soviet Union brought along hopes for intellectual freedom and liberation from the dead hand of authoritarianism. However, the hopes for intellectual liberation did not come true.

In 1991, without ever having changed the physical residence in which I was living or the physical classroom in which I was teaching, I suddenly found myself living in a different country, that of newly independent Armenia. While teaching social and political philosophy in independent Armenia, in the Armenian language, I was confined by a different set of restrictions: i.e., the spirit of strong ethno-nationalism dominated by a limited cultural and intellectual life.

Finally, after entering U.S. academia as a Fulbright scholar in 1998, I started to teach in English, within a liberal-democratic social, political and intellectual context.

Most of the time my internal ‘inter-national relations’ are peaceful and I perceive my mismatched experiences more as enriching than as fragmenting ones. There are, however, those moments when there is a ‘clash of civilizations.’ Some time ago I mentioned to our next door neighbor that I was impressed by my then teenage son’s adjustment to life in the US as an immigrant. The neighbor thought that my son was, probably, ecstatic to move to the best and the freest country of the world. She never thought for an instant of the difficulties my son had of leaving behind his friends and extended family and moving to a place where he barely knew the language! The normative hegemonic narrative of the American Dream silenced considerations of other narratives and attachments.

Recently a long-time friend of mine in Armenia made a comment that Americans are lonely, selfish and greedy people. I felt almost insulted and murmured something about the generous economic aid provided by the U.S. to so many countries in the world. She insisted: Well, the aid constitutes just a small percentage of their GDP, they are rich, they can afford it; but look at their health care debate; it appears that Americans don’t want to have universal health coverage, because they don’t want to share their incomes even with those in need in their own country!

I can cite many more instances of the ‘clash of civilizations’ in my personal world. The confusion and dissonance they cause me has not necessarily been brought about by wrong

judgments or misinterpretations by my interlocutors. Far from that, in a certain sense their judgments and interpretations may be quite right. After all, the U.S. is the richest country in the world, with the most wonderful protections for individual liberties; and most Americans do prefer the individualistic, libertarian over the communitarian ‘philosophy of life.’

The dissonance in my world is caused by the apparent irreconcilability of points of view or narratives which have some degree of validity in a given context or society to which I belong but not in another to which I also belong. Civilizations clash in my personal space; to paraphrase Plato, the society rules those who tell the stories. At the same time, as much as my individual experiences mean to me, I realize that there is very little that is unique to my ‘life-world’. Those experiences are rather common manifestations of larger socio-political contexts.

### **Overview**

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on some critical processes and methodologies of the democratic empowerment of the agents of divergent socio-political belief systems held by the diverse ‘imagined communities’ of the contemporary ‘global village.’ The paper starts with a much abbreviated overview of the empirical policies (ontological aspect) and normative paradigms (epistemological aspect) of macro-level international political communication in recent history, including the unfinished project of global democratization initiated by the previous U.S. administration. The paper then moves to a general summary of the concepts of realism and liberalism (idealism) in foreign affairs, including neo-realism and neo-liberalism (neo-idealism) in international relations. Next, the paper considers the limitations of neo-realism and neo-liberalism alike as ‘Westphalian’ and rationalist normative and empirical approaches, i.e. as approaches tailored for conceptualizing and practicing of ‘globalized community relations’ in a world determined almost exclusively by nation states that are seen as pursuing rationally stipulated and objective national interests.

In today’s globalized community, however, the traditional, nation-state centered understanding of foreign affairs needs to be complemented by ‘post-Westphalian’ concepts and paradigms. The paper accordingly discusses the constructivist alternative to neo-realism and neo-liberalism, as a means for theoretical interpretations and political implementations. Finally, from a constructivist position the paper returns to the discussion of the unfinished project of global democratization and makes some public policy suggestions.

### **The Best Society?**

The intellectual, social and political context of the past century can be read as a vivid and sometimes violent international interaction (debate) among differing social philosophies and systems of political beliefs. There was, however, a narrow ‘window of time’ when the discord of meanings appeared to be modified by a new international synthesis. I am talking about the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the ‘soft power’ of liberal democracy seemed to provide a common belief system for a united humanity.

Today, at the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the world is much less optimistic (and certainly less naive) regarding the prospects for a global harmony of shared understandings, than it was at the end of the last century. The liberal-democratic euphoria of the end of the Cold War is long gone. Despite the idealistic aspirations of those times, history did not end in the 1990s with the, “Triumph of the Western idea and total exhaustion of viable systemic alternatives to Western liberalism” (Fukuyama 2006).

While being politically exciting, the end of history projections of the last ‘fin de siècle’ proved to be heuristically utopian, resembling in that regard their predecessors, such as the Hegelian announcements of the ‘end of history’ during the Prussian monarchy, or the Marxist claims of the ‘end of history’ in the Communist model. Twenty years later we know that other ‘warring gods’ (Max Weber) have come to replace fallen Communism in the transformed ‘clash of civilizations’ (Huntington 1998). This sober knowledge has only been reinforced by the fate of the recent, practical resurrection of the ‘democratic end of history’ aspirations manifested in the latest policy of the global promotion of democracy, proudly initiated by the George W. Bush administration. The theoretical basis of that policy was well explained by then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in her 2008 article in Foreign Affairs. She wrote:

The United States has long tried to marry power and principle—realism and idealism. At times, there have been short term tensions between them. But we have always known where our long-term interests lie. Thus, the United States has not been neutral about the importance of human rights or the superiority of democracy as a form of government, both in principle and in practice. This uniquely American realism has guided us over the past eight years, and it must guide us over the years to come (Rice 2008, 3).

Similar normative ideas, but stated in more ‘theological’ terms, were expressed by Presidential aspirant and former Mayor of New York City Rudolph Giuliani:

America is a nation that loves peace and hates war. At the core of all Americans is the belief that all human beings have certain unalienable rights that proceed from God but must be protected by the state. Americans believe that to the extent that nations recognize these rights within their own laws and customs, peace with them is achievable. To the extent that they do not, violence and disorder are much more likely. Preserving and extending American ideals must remain the goal of the all U.S. policy, foreign and domestic. But unless we pursue our idealistic goals through realistic means, peace will not be achieved (Giuliani 2007, 4).

The neo-conservative praxis of forced democratization of Afghanistan, Iraq, and potentially, the broader Middle East, was largely derived from the above mentioned theoretical premises and aimed at achieving idealist aims of foreign policy (popular empowerment) through mostly realist means (military power).

## **The Will of the People and the Paradoxes of Democracy**

However, contrary to the hopes of its architects, the political project of the compulsory spread of liberal democracy did not necessarily enjoy widespread popularity among its presumed beneficiaries, i.e. the populations of the target societies. The most striking examples of this phenomenon were provided in the Middle East. According to the Arab Barometer surveys conducted in 2003-2006, more than half of the respondents in four Arab countries indicated that “the government should implement as law nothing but Islamic Sharia” (Diamond 2010, 96).

Moreover, despite the moderate success of the recent parliamentary elections in Iraq, and despite the repulsive methods of terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan, the very cause of terrorism in these countries can be interpreted as a perverse form of grass-roots popular (all volunteer!) resistance to the (foreign) imposition of liberal democracy. Less striking, but still telling examples of international popular disapproval of the Western-style liberal democracy can be seen in the results of public opinion polls in Russia, a few former Soviet and East European countries, in a number of Latin American countries, some East Asian countries, and in some other Muslim countries. For example, while the Western world laments the anti-democratic nature of the Iranian regime and emphasizes the anti-governmental demonstrations in Tehran, according to Worldpublicopinion.org, several comprehensive opinion polls conducted in 2009, before and after the last presidential elections in Iran showed that the majority of Iranians supported the government of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as legitimate. Another example, as the Western world denounced the decline of the free press and general weakening of democracy in Russia, 63% of Russians did not think that freedom of speech or freedom of the press was very important, and 73% of Russians were against civilian control over the military, according to a comprehensive poll conducted in 2009 by the Pew Research Center ( posted on its website, at <http://pewglobal.org/2009/11/02/end-of-communism-cheered-but-now-with-more-reservations/>).

More examples of local popular support for antidemocratic regimes and the rejection of recent, Western-led democratization efforts could be mentioned, but will not. What is somewhat curious is that these popular anti-democratic tendencies are only sporadically and partially acknowledged in the current literature on democratization, for example in discussions of the ‘democratic recession’ and literature about ‘authoritarian capitalist’ alternatives to democracy. To a large degree these anti-democratic preferences are being dismissed as mere populism (Plattner 2010).

The problem with these dismissals is that the ultimate source of democratic legitimacy is still the consent of the governed, the will of the people. While it is important not to reduce democracy to majoritarianism, the will of the majority of people is still a pivotal pillar of a liberal-democratic polity, not to be ignored when it does not fit our political or theoretical aspirations.

## **Primary Question and Hypothesis**

To sum up this discussion, as shown by the grass-roots insurgency (large enough to be reckoned with) organized in response to the last wave of democratization, as well as by many opinion polls, we seem to be facing an apparently counterintuitive, fairly broad (across several cultures) popular resistance to, even rejection of the global meta-project of popular empowerment through international democratization. In a sense, we are dealing with a democratic rejection of democracy. I have dubbed this apparently paradoxical phenomenon **‘the aporia of democratization’** in a book I recently co-authored. (2009, 2). We will return to this matter below.

The new U.S. (Obama) administration appears to be abandoning some of the objectives of the international export of democracy (Brzezinski, 2010). Foreign policy has been comprehensively reconceptualized to include more soft power, and has been structured around more immediate, global and geopolitical issues and concerns, ranging from Iran’s nuclear ambitions to environmental warming, to terrorism, to the role of China, to relationships with Russia, etc. (Brzezinski 2010).

In the context of the new, less ideological conceptualization of foreign affairs, the discussion of realism versus idealism in international relations resurfaces as both a timely and important, if classical, theoretical debate. An especially interesting dimension of this topic is the correlation of the dichotomy of realism/idealism in international relations on the one side, with the issues of democracy/international democratization on the other. This paper seeks to contribute to discussion of the topic by returning to the deliberation of the unfinished project of global democratization.

**The hypothesis is that the discredited global promotion of democracy could still be reintegrated into foreign policy as a legitimate objective, if it were reconceptualized from an emphasis on establishing democratic national regimes to an emphasis on facilitating more democratically defined processes for the development of a global democratic agency (citizenry).** We will address this hypothesis in detail in the second part of the paper.

## **Political Realism and Idealism in Foreign Affairs**

The praxis and the conceptual approach of political realism in foreign affairs might be as old as the practice of foreign affairs itself, having been exercised since the time of Thucydides. Certainly, we recognize that Richelieu, Napoleon, Bismarck, Teddy Roosevelt, and the British Empire for centuries practiced the art of realpolitik or political realism before the term itself came into widespread use in American and British scholarship in the first half of the last century. While there were 18<sup>th</sup> century European philosophers and 19<sup>th</sup> century British politicians who were antecedents to Woodrow Wilson’s liberal internationalism, the terms now used of liberalism and idealism also only took hold sometime during the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Carr 2001). All this is to say that, academically speaking, the terms and concepts of

realism, liberalism and idealism have been only relatively recently (during the last 60 or 70 years) subjected to rigorous analysis, critique and debate.

In the last 30 years or so, challenges to classical concepts of liberalism and realism have led to further development of the quasi-alternative and complementary theories of structural realism (neo-realism) and structural liberalism (neo-liberalism). Those newer approaches emphasize the significance of the structure of (international) systems in which states exist. They are “competing, but closely related orthodoxies” (Kubalkova, Onuf, Kowert 1998), which are based on a common epistemic paradigm.

While debating numerous issues (such as the content of state preferences for economic versus military power, absolute versus relative gains, the role and limits of international organizations, etc.) both theoretical approaches share a number of fundamental premises. For example, despite recurring debates over the most appropriate ‘level of analysis,’ both approaches normally conceptualize the socio-political world in Westphalian terms of nation-states as unitary actors. Moreover, for both approaches (as with classical realism and liberalism) nation states rationally pursue their mostly objective national interests in an anarchical international system (“states relate to each other like gladiators”<sup>1</sup>). Disagreement regarding the alleged level of anarchy in international relations and the nature of ‘social contracts’ among the states, represented in international institutions, constitute the major difference between the approaches of neo-realism and neo-liberalism.

### **Globalization, Democratization and Limitations of Conventional Approaches**

Political realism and liberalism, either classical or neo-, with their positivist views of global political interactions, have traditionally provided sufficient methodological tools for interpretation and regulation of international affairs. Today, however, the world has changed dramatically.

One set of social and political transformations, very thoroughly described in an enormous literature on globalization, has been fostered by the parallel mega-processes of reorganization in global production systems and revolutionary changes in technology. Related to these mega-processes is the emergence of new meta-patterns of trans-national and sub-national global interconnectedness in business, communication, finance, culture and other aspects of life in the new ‘global village.’

Regardless of the emotionally charged political assessments of globalization by different actors, on-going globalization challenges and redefines the established conventional world order that has been historically dominated in every domain—political, economic and cultural—by sovereign, unitary nation states. New actors now empowered by the communications revolution,

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<sup>1</sup> I owe this image to Gianfranco Poggi. He used it in his keynote speech for the 6<sup>th</sup> Pan European Conference on International Relations, University of Turin, September 2007.

range from multi-national corporations, to international non-governmental organizations, faith-based and common interests-based ‘virtual’ communities, and even international terrorist organizations.

Cumulatively the new actors diminish the traditional economic, cultural and political power of nation states. They change the role and status of national governments by ‘de-territorialization’ of contemporary ‘life-worlds’ (Tomlinson 2007). Cross-national subcultures and virtual ‘hyperreality’ penetrate and fragment traditionally, relatively unified national cultures (Baudrillard 1989). Such challenges to the almost inviolable sovereignty of the nation state, which has been the norm and basis of territorially based ‘imagined’ national communities since the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, has fostered the academic discourse concerning the post-Westphalian world<sup>2</sup>.

It is important to note that the emerging post-Westphalian reality does not really deny Westphalian political arrangements, but rather incorporates them. In other words, the conventional world of nation states, organized in international organizations and loosely regulated by international law, undoubtedly continues to play its role. The only quality that has changed is related to the uniqueness of nation states as universal political actors; the world scene just grew larger and beyond the nation-state focal point. As the saying goes, “Microsoft matters, but so do the Marines” (author unknown; possibly Thomas Friedman).

Scholars have attempted to grasp elaborate post-Westphalian realities, with blurred boundaries between the global and the local, the domestic and the international, in hybrid concepts, such as ‘glocalized cultures’ (Risse 2007) or ‘intermestic issues’ (Rosenau 2002). For the purposes of this paper the bottom-line is that the complexity of the political scene of the globalized post-Westphalian world cannot be adequately interpreted within the conventional paradigms of realism and/or liberalism and requires approaches that go beyond them.

Another, albeit closely related, factor that challenges conventional, nation-state based approaches to international relations is what Zbigniew Brzezinski characterized as ‘the global political awakening’. For the first time, all of humanity is politically active (Brzezinski, Scowcroft 2008). In other words, we live in times of unprecedented historical process of de-centering the active agency of political and social decision making. Talking about the current times as a ‘democratic age’ Fareed Zakaria profoundly writes:

From its Greek root, ‘democracy’ means ‘the rule of the people.’ And everywhere we are witnessing the shift of power downward. I call this ‘democratization,’ even though it goes far beyond politics, because the process is similar: hierarchies are

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<sup>2</sup> For a good analysis of the reservations regarding the assessment of the Peace Westphalia as a decisive chapter in history of states, see Osiander, Andreas. 2001. Sovereignty, International Relations and the Westphalian Myth. *International Organizations* 55: 251-89

breaking down, closed systems are opening up, and the pressures from the masses are now the primary engine of social change. Democracy has gone from being a form of government to a way of life (Zakaria 2004, 13-14).

The ‘aporia of democratization,’ discussed above, constitutes an undeniable, historical reality of the ‘democratic age.’ One can imagine that had the international export of representative democracy happened in an earlier historical period of lower mass participation in politics (probably, in bygone times the term ‘the civilizing mission’ rather than ‘democratization’ would have been used) chances are that the regime changes would have been passively absorbed by the targeted populations. In our times, however, the imported (democratic) changes are being democratically rejected by the awakened masses.

Sometimes the rejection happens through direct grass-roots activities of ‘democratized violence’ (Zakaria 2004), such as insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan. At other times the democratic rejection of democracy happens through electoral procedures. For example, Hamas, though empowered through democratic procedures, has established strict Sharia rule in the Gaza Strip. But in any case, it is the critical mass of the ordinary agents of a particular polity that makes the difference. Thus the paradoxical democratic rejection of (imported) democracy as a form of government constitutes a perverted beacon to global democracy as a way of life. In such a light, the way of resolving the ‘aporia of democratization’ is not through muting and silencing (obscuring) the international democratization polity and discourse, as is happening today. The way to resolve it is through an international ‘**democratization of democracy,**’ facilitating the development of adequate, democratic global structures for already existing democratic agents of today’s dialogic and plural-logic, inter-subjective and multi-voiced post-Westphalian global discourse. The conventional traditional duo of the normative theories of political realism and liberalism does not possess and cannot provide sufficient descriptive and prescriptive tools for the reasonably thorough epistemic conceptualization of political evolution in the post-Westphalian world.

### **Constructivism: Moving beyond the Conventional Approaches**

One approach in IR that may provide more suitable bridges between epistemology and ontology of post-Westphalian foreign affairs appears to be social constructivism. The term ‘constructivism’ was introduced to international relations by Nicholas Onuf. Having developed within the last thirty years or so, constructivism is today recognized as one of the major schools of thought in the field of international relations (Funnemore 1996; Zehfuss 2002). It is habitually referred to as an intellectual opponent to the mainstream rationalist approaches, especially neorealist, but also neoliberal, with their shared positivist assumption that the unitary actors of international politics are states, making their decisions on the basis of exogenously determined, instrumental rationality.

Different variations of constructivism have a common proposition that inter-subjective meanings, i.e., common beliefs, culturally affected rules, and other endogenous denotations

determine the actors' understandings of their political interests and preferences (Wendt 1999; Onuf 1989; Onuf 1998; Kratochwil 1991). These 'inter-subjective' consensual understandings of preferences and formulations of interests, in their turn, influence the choice of political practices, thus turning the actors into agents of certain policies. Thus agents and structures become mutually constitutive (Onuf 1989, Wendt 1999, Kratochwil 1991). An informative and concise synopsis of the constructivist approach was offered by Vincent Pouliot (2007, 361). Following Guzzini (2000) and Adler (2002) he put forward the following definition:

Constructivism is conceived as a 'methodological commitment' based on three tenets: first, that knowledge is socially constructed (an epistemological claim); second, that social reality is constructed (an ontological claim); and third, that knowledge and reality are mutually constitutive (a reflexive claim). Accordingly, the social construction of knowledge and the construction of social reality are two sides of the same coin.

While the 'post-positivist' character of any variety of constructivism makes it into a more suitable approach to today's pluralistic international realities than any of the conventional approaches, the brand of constructivism pioneered by Nicholas Onuf seems to be the most appropriate theory for the contemporary global practices. In his overview of social constructivism, Onuf argues:

Fundamental to constructivism is the proposition that human beings are social beings, and we would not be human but for our social relations. In other words, social relations *make* or *construct* people—*ourselves*—into the kind of beings we are. Conversely, we make the world what it is, from the raw materials that nature provides, by doing what we do with each other and saying what we say to each other. Indeed, saying is doing: talking is undoubtedly the most important way that we go about making the world what it is (Onuf 1998, 59).

This discursive, dialogic, speech-centered process of the 'making of our world(s)' can be applied to very different levels of social analysis, from a personal (as we are very personally social beings) and up to the global. For example, in my personal dialogues discussed at the beginning of this essay, both my American neighbor and my Armenian friend were acting as agents of certain social constructions. In their, using Onuf's language, 'assertive speech acts' about the superiority (in case of the neighbor) or inferiority (in case of the Armenian friend) of 'the American ways' both the neighbor and the friend were acting on behalf of their respective communities and were seeking normative agreement(s), potentially leading to the formation of rules (Onuf 1998; Onuf 1989; Prugl 1998) of construction of the Americans/the American in a certain way. I am afraid, though, that my disagreements with both of them ruined those particular projects.

To bring an example of 'making of our world' on the global level, from a constructivist position, the very phenomenon of globalization may constitute a discursive social construction. Thomas Risse argues:

At a deeper level, social constructivists would probably insist that the concept of 'globalization' itself constitutes a particular interpretation of social reality which is being itself interpreted and reinterpreted by social agents. Moreover, the concept has long lost its analytic innocence ... If we construct the world as globalized, we focus on interconnectedness, networks, and complex interdependence... At the same time we de-emphasize those forces in the current world order that contribute to fragmentation and (cultural) difference. Furthermore, one does not have to be a realist to notice that the globalization and the interconnectedness of the world cannot be reconciled easily with a worldview of unipolarity emphasizing American hegemony (Risse 2007, 129).

In more theoretical words, Onuf argues, "constituting practices in categories (even perception takes practice) is not just universal, it is fundamental." However, "if categorization is fundamental, no set of categories is" (Onuf 1989, 109). Vendulka Kubalkova offered a good analysis of the specific features of Onuf's constructivism. She writes:

While for other constructivist approaches... the act of construction is restricted to 'states,' for Onuf constructivism is a universal experience. His constructivism is not only a contribution to the IR discipline; it is a full-fledged social theory as well. Onuf's constructivism is applicable not simply to the level of states, but to humans in any dimension of their social activity, international relations being merely one, albeit an extremely important one, among many (Kubalkova 1998, 52).

Addressing the concerns expressed by some of Onuf's colleagues regarding his challenge to the concept of anarchy as a pivotal concept for the subject matter of international relations, Kubalkova continued:

Onuf obviously does not share these fears. His constructivism makes it possible to see layers of mutually constructed relations operating along the same basic lines. The key point is that speech acts, rules and norms, which are at the heart of his approach and at the heart of human existence as social beings, are generated from within people; that is to say, they are *endogenous* to real people as active, creative beings, and to their practice. They are not dictated by some outside, *exogenous* structures ... which has taken a life and dynamism of its own.

To sum up, being subjective and inter-subjective, endogenous and hermeneutic, the constructionist understanding of social reality, including foreign relations, appears to be both a theory and a methodology that is pertinent to the pluralistic, both fragmented and globalized, contemporary world. Meanwhile, if different combinations and degrees of the conventional approaches of realism and liberalism have had their empirical chances of informing real world policy makers, constructivism so far has not had such a chance.

## **Toward The Construction of A Cosmopolitan Democratic E-Quality**

What would be some of the concrete policies in foreign affairs that would be informed by the continuation of (global) democratic transformation, based on the constructivist school of thought and relevant to the features of the contemporary, post-Westphalian world? In order to address this question, we first need to sum up the discussion above and roughly outline the principles behind the democratization policies that have been exercised recently.

We tried to establish that within the last few decades the world has changed dramatically. The major systemic changes can be very roughly described as (1) A Communications Revolution (the ascent of the age of global electronic interconnectedness) and (2) A Global Political Awakening (the ascent of the age of the ‘democratic way of life’). There have been other global processes as well, all cumulatively resulting in (a) an increased interconnectedness of the world, and (b) a decreased ability of traditional decision makers (national governments) to impose their will on the traditional decision takers (subject populations).

Recent practical policies and institutional arrangements for democratization, however, have often ignored these global changes. Recent policies, as well as historical ones, have been mostly tailored for the partly obsolete Westphalian conditions. For example, in thinking about democratic empowerment internationally, we have almost exclusively relied on the establishment of functioning institutions of representative democracy on a national level (and less at the local level), reflecting a no longer sufficient (if still relevant) nation-state-centered approach to foreign affairs. The practical results of such foreign policies may bring some level of success, as the preliminary results of the recent (2010) Iraqi national elections may show. However, one should bear in mind that even this cautious optimism about Iraqi democracy has strong Realist undertones to it. In the style of Machiavellian traditions, it tacitly implies that the end (the establishment of national democratic institutions) justifies the means (the killing of thousands of people in the process).

Moreover, the practical results of the current-style democratization policies are often even more controversial. For example, fair elections, which Americans and other proponents of democracy invariably support, can bring to power those whom the proponents of democracy view as criminal organizations, or, at least, as ideological opponents, as shown by the examples of the democratic empowerment of Hamas, Hezbollah, and the not-yet-elected but popular Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Related are those cases where the US Government recognizes or politically aligns itself with undemocratic regimes (e.g. Egypt and Saudi Arabia) from a fear that democratically elected governments may end up being both hostile to U.S. interests and abusive of the human rights of the very populations who elected them. Such cases, obviously, bring up accusations of U.S. hypocrisy and double-standards in its support of democracy. All sorts of tensions arise, ranging from tensions between democracy and human rights (civil liberties) and ending with tensions between the international promotion of democracy and U.S. national interests. All these constitute different aspects of the ‘aporia of democratization.’

A reconceptualized international democratization policy, based on the constructivist school of international relations, could be built upon a (dialogic) model of democracy -- one that shares a common denominator with both the dialogic quality of the contemporary, internet based 'global commons', and the dialogic construction of social reality propagated by constructivism. Such a model would be a form of deliberative democracy.

Deliberative democracy has emerged as a particular brand of constitutional democracy within the last twenty to twenty five years. The term was introduced by Joseph Bessette (Bessette, 1980, 1994)). Broadly defined, deliberative democratic politics is organized around the ideal of political legitimacy (Gutmann and Thompson 1998; Marti 2005). It claims that legitimacy of political decisions comes from a deliberative procedure that precedes voting.

The theoretical predecessors of deliberative democracy were the economic and elitist theories of the 'crisis of democracy' and the democratic studies in the outlook of 'public spirit,' as well as applications of social choice theory to the study of democracy (Besson and Marti 2006, xv). Francis Cheneval defines deliberative politics as "a form of communication within and among democratic peoples, polities, legal communities and society at large" (Cheneval 2006, 161).

**In the implementation of deliberative democracy for international democratization, the focal point of the 'export of democracy' policies would not be so much in bringing the institutions of representative democracy to sovereign nations, as in designing and spreading the institutions of cross-cultural democratic deliberation internationally. The actual meeting place for these global conversations could be the Internet.**

Through the World Wide Web today we already have a spontaneous, if mainly unstructured ('anarchic') global discourse, including some debate about public issues. I.e., the web constitutes elements of a global public sphere, if we follow the Habermasian intellectual project and terminology. There are also a few national and state level e-government and e-democracy initiatives, such as Minnesota E-Democracy, or DNet in California and OpenDemocracy.net in the UK. Most of these initiatives are aimed at promotion of debate and evaluation of candidates running for local public office; some are aimed at public discussion of global issues (Held 2006, 250; Beetham 2005). But even when discussing the issues of global concern, these few sites are mainly aimed at their regional, Western, audiences, as is evident in the structure of their discourse. The practical implementation of this democratic model could be expanded and modified for developing and sustaining direct communication among countless individuals from various parts of the world.

Purposefully expanded access to the web, through properly organized regional, international and global institutions, could conceivably result in near universal involvement in global public communication (and deliberations) between the 'West and the Rest.' With appropriately designed institutions providing equal legitimacy to voices, themes and concerns of

all contributors, previously ‘mute’ and obscure ‘other’ groups, different perceived ‘subalterns’ of modernity (Spivak 1988), could directly contribute to the dialog. Tactically, questions of language, translation and appropriate mediums of communication (film, art, etc.) would need to be addressed, e.g. through appropriate institutional design.

### **Theory and Practice**

It is important to note different underlying theoretical traditions that inform different democratization policies. The last wave of international democratization, discussed in the beginning of this essay, was informed, as we tried to show, by the classical ‘positivist’ tradition within the discipline of international relations. The methodological paradigm of that tradition, realist and idealist alike, is strategic and universalistic, claiming neutrality of knowledge. As opposed to that, democratization policies based on a constructivist approach would be informed by the post-positivist tradition of the ‘third debate,’ as well as interdisciplinary (feminist; peace studies) and sociological paradigms that recognize the contextual validity of multiple epistemologies. Differences in the theoretical backgrounds of these models of democratization determine differences in their practical goals. The immediate aim of ‘positivist’ democratization has been to improve governance through the use of generic recipes for establishing electoral institutions for representative democracy, which are presumably capable of curing the political ills of any society. The immediate aims of a post-positivist democratization would be to increase the interaction and improve the mutual understanding of the agents of different epistemologies by creating a meeting place for them.

One has to note that the practical use of communicative methods for the improvement of cross-cultural understandings does not constitute a particularly new idea. E.g., it has been utilized by the U.S. government for many years in the international Fulbright and IREX programs, among others. These programs have been providing opportunities for international and cross-cultural communication to certain groups (scholars, students, journalists, etc.) with the aim of promoting cross-cultural understanding. Beyond the governmental programs, similar aims have been pursued and similar principles utilized by various peace building NGOs that have brought together grass-roots representatives from groups in conflict (e.g., Palestinians and Israelis, or Armenians and Azerbaijanis) with the hope of facilitating their mutual understanding (i.e., their construction of a new inter-group reality).

There are, however, principle differences between these existing programs and the proposed global promotion of deliberative democracy. The most significant differences can be summarized in four major groups: (1) differences in scope; (2) differences in the means of implementation; (3) structural differences; and (4) institutional differences. We will address those differences and their implications one by one.

### ***Differences in Scope***

Various exchange and communication programs, governmental and non-governmental alike, provide the experience of cross-cultural communication only to certain select groups, such as academicians, parliamentarians, students, journalists, other professionals, civil society leaders, etc. In addition, as such programs normally entail opportunities for all-expense-paid international travel and often a handsome stipend (at least on the scale of less developed ‘other worlds’), there usually is fierce competition among local professionals eligible to participate in those programs. This inevitably creates an elitist process of selection of participants with results which may be meritocratic, but certainly not democratic. In contrast, in the deliberative democratic model, as in any democracy, non-discriminatory mass participation would be the key principle.

### ***Differences in the Means of Implementation***

The above-described limitations of participation in current exchange (i.e., communicative) programs are understandable and justified as implementation normally requires the physical proximity of the participants. This requirement results in high costs for such programs, with the travel, lodging and living expenses entailed. Such programs also limit the time allocated for participation; e.g., foreign Fulbright scholars are supposed to stay in the U.S. no longer than 6 to 12 months and a Fulbright scholarship can usually be awarded only once in a lifetime. In contrast, the means of implementing deliberative communication would be electronic (e-mail, Skype, Facebook, blogging, etc.). With the low cost and interactive nature of the internet we who live today have an unprecedented historical opportunity to construct a global context for mass exchange and deliberation of ‘life-world texts’ by ordinary people living half the globe away from each other.

### ***Structural Differences***

While the existing exchange programs are ostensibly aimed at promotion of *mutual* cross-cultural understanding, in fact they are structured to promote only a uni-directional, not mutual, improvement in understanding. Explicitly or implicitly, but almost exclusively, they target foreign participants who are expected to gain an understanding of American ‘cultural ways,’ but not necessarily those who can assist Americans to understand foreign ways of thinking. For example, the Fulbright program’s web site openly states that “the Fulbright Program creates a context to provide a better understanding of U.S. views and values.” It says little or nothing about conveying to Americans information on foreign views and values.

Similarly, American participants in the Fulbright program who go abroad are exhorted to be good ambassadors and to spread information about American approaches to issues, while putting far less emphasis upon gaining knowledge and appreciation of the foreign cultures. While being historically grounded, this approach clearly reinforces structural inequality among the participants and, in a sense, disadvantages both sides. The foreign participants feel (and are being!) patronized, while the American participants are likely to miss the opportunity to

understand other cultures and points of view, as they may be too busy trying to make themselves understood.

As opposed to the above, the deliberative democratic international project, as any form of democracy, would be structured to provide equal fora for expression (i.e., equal recognition) of ‘cultural ideologies’ of all of its members. Moreover, as with other forms of democracy, equality of participation would be the major criteria of success.

### ***Differences in Institutional Arrangements***

Appropriate, thoughtfully designed, operative and effective institutions are the lifeblood of any model of functional democracy. Deliberative democracy is no exception. A concrete, well-specified design of possible institutional features for grass-roots democratic deliberation on a global scale is a large topic beyond the scope of this essay. Overall, the possibilities are numerous and fascinating. Current literature on deliberative democracy contains many interesting institutional devices that could be adapted to and tested in international and internet-based settings (see for example, Held 2006, 246-252; Besson and Marti 2006).

As this school of thought develops, surely many more institutional possibilities will be envisioned, devised and justified. For example, one could imagine borrowing some ideas from the classical practices of the legendary direct democracy of the Ancient Greek *polis*, including the choice of ‘officials’ for some offices (in our case—interlocutors for some deliberations) being determined by lot, subsidizing the needy for their attendance in the Assembly (in our case—participation in deliberations). In any case, with most probability an institutionalization of a cosmopolitan (international) deliberative democracy would be more complex than the current exchange programs.

### **In Conclusion: Constructing Cosmopolitan Public Sphere**

In the previous (19<sup>th</sup> century) fin-de-siècle, the socio-cultural life of major European cities was characterized by a flourishing public sphere. In literary salons, coffee houses, pubs, and bookstores, as well as in political clubs and parliaments, people had egalitarian critical discussions (deliberations) of issues of public concern and cultural interest. Jurgen Habermas famously contrasted that participatory, free liberal-democratic public sphere with its degeneration into interest-group dominated, ‘spectator’ politics during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Today, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, there appears to be an urgent political need (determined by the global political awakening, global interconnectedness and development of democracy as a way of life, discussed above) as well as an unprecedented technological possibility of developing a vivid and cosmopolitan virtual public sphere. Similar to its predecessor in the coffee houses of Vienna and Paris, this cosmopolitan (this time - global!) meeting place of people, knowledge and ideas has the potential to generate new, different and yet-to-be-discovered cultural capital, ranging from diverse solidarities to avant-garde political ideas. Unlike its predecessor, this

cosmopolitan public sphere would be truly global in its geographical and socio-political inclusiveness.

The major advantage of promoting such a globally *deliberative* democratization effort (versus the current exclusive emphasis on *representative* democracy) comes from its attention to discursive *will formation* (i.e., agency developing mechanisms) rather than to preference aggregation (i.e., decision making mechanisms). The hope is that widened equality of global participation and deliberation— on whatever issues the equal interlocutors consider to be of public interest or concern— could contribute to the promotion of common epistemologies and the movement toward a global ‘imagined community’ of shared understanding.

In addition, the global democratic public sphere could also bring the meaning of democracy closer to the classical ideal of universal and equal participation in the governance of a community. In that sense it could constitute **democratization of the contemporary concept of democracy itself**, making the contents of the concept of democracy less associated with the imposition of Western hegemonic knowledge and ideas and more associated with the development of a global community of truly common sense!

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