

Foundations: Frameworks for Understanding International Relations

Rich Nielsen

Theory
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Interests, Interactions, Institutions
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Paradigms
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Are Paradigms Useful?
○○

▶ a **model**

- ▶ an object, so T/F is a category error
- ▶ criterion: is it useful?
- ▶ an abstraction
- ▶ like a map

Theory
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Interests, Interactions, Institutions
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Paradigms
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Are Paradigms Useful?
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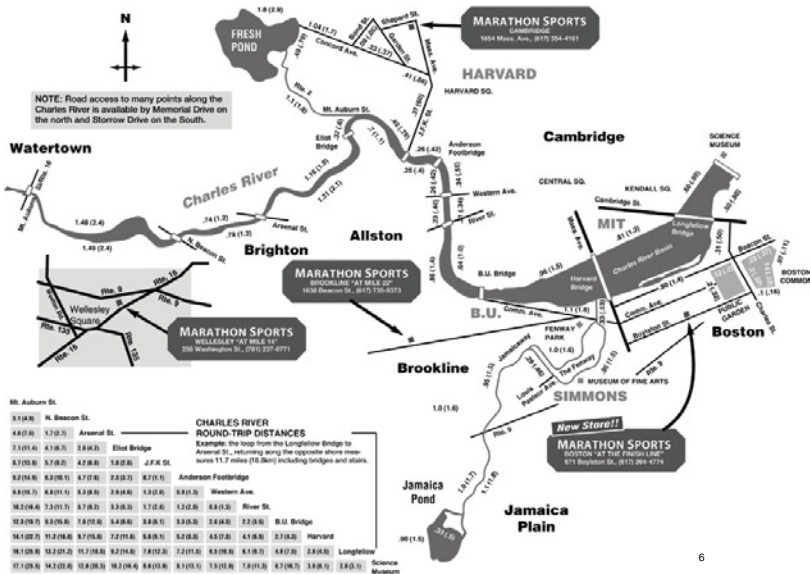
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Interests, Interactions, Institutions

- ▶ **interests:** goals that actors have
 - ▶ individuals
 - ▶ countries/states
 - ▶ transnational entities

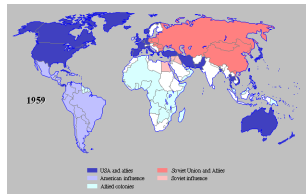
Levels of analysis:



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Interests, Interactions, Institutions

- ▶ **interactions:** ways actors' choices combine
 - ▶ *bargaining:* actors try to divide something they both want
 - ▶ *cooperation:* actors coordinate to pursue common interests



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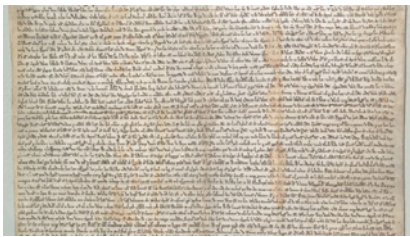
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Interests, Interactions, Institutions

- ▶ **institutions:** rules, formal and informal, that structure political interactions



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	Main theoretical proposition
Realism	Self-interested states compete constantly for power or security
Liberalism	Concern for power overridden by economic/political considerations (desire for prosperity, commitment to liberal values)
Constructivism	State behavior shaped by elite beliefs, collective norms, and social identities

	Main units of analysis
Realism	Systems, States
Liberalism	States, Institutions, Markets
Constructivism	Individuals, Organizations, Transnational networks

	Main instruments
Realism	Economic and especially military power
Liberalism	International institutions, economic exchange, promotion of democracy, . . .
Constructivism	Ideas and discourse

	Post-Cold War Prediction
Realism	Resurgence of overt great power competition
Liberalism	Increased cooperation as liberal values, free markets, and international institutions spread
Constructivism	Agnostic because it cannot predict the content of ideas

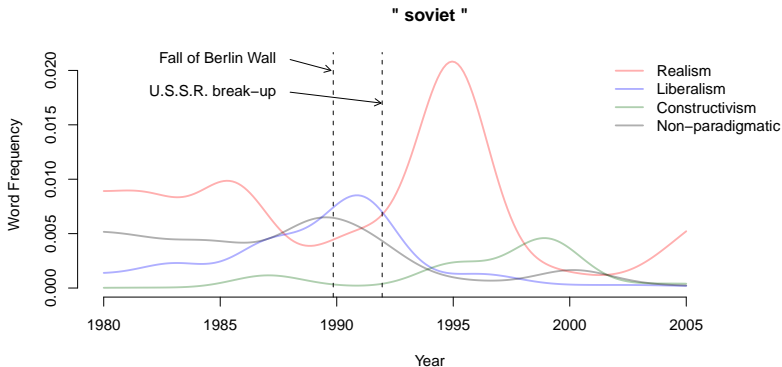
	Main limitation
Realism	Does not account for international change
Liberalism	Tends to ignore the role of power
Constructivism	Better at describing the past than anticipating the future

Words in Paradigmatic Scholarship



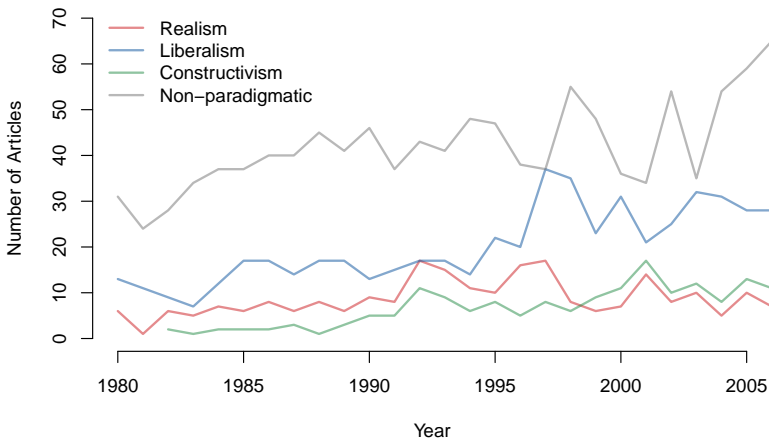
- ▶ Feminist International Relations
- ▶ Marxism
- ▶ Non-paradigmatic (primarily Rational Choice)
- ▶ ...and some others

Paradigms Respond to World Events

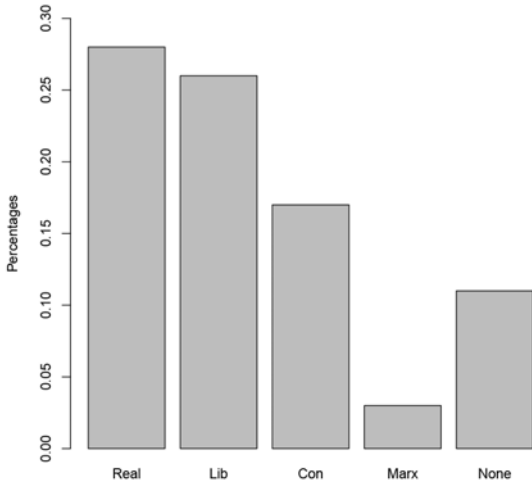


Are Paradigms Useful?

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Paradigms in a Survey of US IR Scholars



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17.41 Introduction to International Relations
Spring 2023

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