Foundations:

Frameworks for Understanding International Relations

Rich Nielsen
I am a model of an object, so T/F is a category error.

Is it useful?

Like a map.

Theory

Interests, Interactions, Institutions

Paradigms

Are Paradigms Useful?
a model

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

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

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paradigm</th>
<th>Main theoretical proposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>Self-interested states compete constantly for power or security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberalism</td>
<td>Concern for power overridden by economic/political considerations (desire for prosperity, commitment to liberal values)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivism</td>
<td>State behavior shaped by elite beliefs, collective norms, and social identities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradigms</td>
<td>Main units of analysis</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>Systems, States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberalism</td>
<td>States, Institutions, Markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivism</td>
<td>Individuals, Organizations, Transnational networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Interests, Interactions, Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>Economic and especially military power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberalism</td>
<td>International institutions, economic exchange, promotion of democracy,...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradigms</td>
<td>Post-Cold War Prediction</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Realism</strong></td>
<td>Resurgence of overt great power competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liberalism</strong></td>
<td>Increased cooperation as liberal values, free markets, and international institutions spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constructivism</strong></td>
<td>Agnostic because it cannot predict the content of ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Interests, Interactions, Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Main limitation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>Does not account for international change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberalism</td>
<td>Tends to ignore the role of power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivism</td>
<td>Better at describing the past than anticipating the future</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Words in Paradigmatic Scholarship
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Words in Paradigmatic Scholarship
Feminist International Relations

Marxism

Non-paradigmatic (primarily Rational Choice)

...and some others
Words in Non-Paradigmatic Scholarship
Paradigms Respond to World Events

"soviet"

Fall of Berlin Wall
U.S.S.R. break-up

Word Frequency


Realism
Liberalism
Constructivism
Non–paradigmatic
Are Paradigms Useful?
Are Paradigms Useful?

The chart shows the number of articles published each year, categorized by theoretical paradigms and non-paradigmatic theories. The x-axis represents the years from 1980 to 2005, and the y-axis represents the number of articles ranging from 0 to 70.

- Realism
- Liberalism
- Constructivism
- Non-paradigmatic

The chart indicates a trend where the number of articles in non-paradigmatic theories has increased over time, while the other paradigms show fluctuations.
Paradigms in a Survey of US IR Scholars