

# *Theory Talks*

*Presents*

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## THEORY TALK #52

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### IVER NEUMANN ON THE PRACTICES OF DIPLOMACY, SOCIAL FORM, AND IR OF THE STEPPE

#### Theory Talks

is an interactive forum for discussion of debates in International Relations with an emphasis of the underlying theoretical issues. By frequently inviting cutting-edge specialists in the field to elucidate their work and to explain current developments both in IR theory and real-world politics, *Theory Talks* aims to offer both scholars and students a comprehensive view of the field and its most important protagonists.

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## IVER NEUMANN ON THE PRACTICES OF DIPLOMACY, SOCIAL FORM, AND IR OF THE STEPPE



*Theory Talks* is happy to close 2012 with an engaging *Talk* with one of IR's most idiosyncratic protagonists—Iver B. Neumann. An oeuvre that effortlessly moves from the hallways and paperwork of diplomatic sites through native Amerindian symbolic practices, stopping over in the Eurasian steppe of yore, to cover—in passing—meta-theoretical debates on

the balance between practice and discourse, can only make us wonder about the man behind the ideas. In this *Talk*, the ambition is higher: in an elegant journey across theory, practice, and history, we explore both together—amongst others, by discussing Foucault, diplomacy, open-access publishing, and the importance of social form for theorizing.

**What is, according to you, the central challenge or principal debate in International Relations? And what is your position regarding this challenge/in this debate?**

The central, and rather large, task before us is to make IR into more of a social science discipline, in the sense that we want not an analysis of the outcome of different processes, but an analysis of how the globe hangs together in the first place and what is it that integrates different political units. So the key argument for separating IR from political science even further and make it a proper and self-contained discipline—meaning self-contained in an *institutional* way; it could never be self-contained *intellectually*—is that our proper object of study is the study of social form, which is the form of more than one political entity together, and ultimately, the globe. I emphasize this because this is a way of understanding social science work that one finds in sociology and anthropology. One does not find it so much in political science, where the set-up of the social is usually taken for granted, and we simply look at the output of any one specific process, given that this set-up is already there.

This is definitely a meta concern, and I think the way to change this is to include more social theory in our courses, in our debates, and in our written output; that we touch base with the

names that are constitutive of social sciences at large—meaning Weber, Durkheim, Marx and the traditions that flow from them—but it also could be new theorists.

### **How did you arrive at where you currently are in your thinking about IR?**

I came into IR because I had a general interest in the political and particularly in understanding the Soviet Union, and that relates to how I grew up. I came from a NATO country, so I grew up with the Soviet Union being the ‘enemy’ in my country, which was Norway. I did the conscription from 1978-1980 and picked up Russian, and I applied that knowledge to the study of Russian foreign policy and international relations. And then as my Post-doc, I chose to do something on diplomacy. I got a Jean Monnet fellowship to the European University Institute, and I came down there and started to do the research and discovered that given the skills I had from political science and international relations, I simply could *not* do the job because I realized that their study of diplomacy is the study of specific sequences where representatives of two states meet, confer, and produce some kind of result. While that is very worthy of study, it was *not* what I wanted to do. I wanted to study diplomacy as a social form—how it had originated and how it came to be institutionalized in a sociological sense—that is, as a set of ever-more dense relations. In order to do that, I had to go back and re-train as an anthropologist.

In my young days, we had a tri-pod educational system in Norway where one chose three different subjects for the Bachelor’s degree. I chose Russian, English, Political Science and Anthropology (I did four). So, I had already completed one year of Anthropology in 1981. Finally, what I did was I went back and added half a year’s unit of study after that, and then I did a Master’s for two years and then I did a doctorate. In doing my second degree, I let go of some of my frustrations with my political science background, but I also incurred new frustrations about anthropology. While anthropologists discuss the constitutive nature of things, there is a hesitance in anthropology to study *outcomes*, which we cannot afford because we cannot have a study of International Relations without outcomes. Ultimately, we need both.

The key aim in my mind for education generally, and the nurturing or culturing of the self, is to understand how it is possible to deal with the world in a different way. I therefore began with Norway as a sort of ‘zero option’ and then created an ‘other’, which was the Soviet Union—Russia. It was a sensitizing exercise for me to see how it was possible to think about the world in this arcane Soviet way, not only in the sense of this being a Communist ideology with a particular worldview and a particular view of political processes, but also this being cast along the social traditions of Russians. I set out my findings in a series of studies of Russia and Europe, which

ultimately was the first book coming out of my doctorate, *Russia and the Idea of Europe* (1996). Then, following the trend of the 1990's, I generalized this concern in terms of 'self' and 'other' scholarship by applying this idea that you are who you are in terms of making social boundaries towards the outside that constitute the self. Since you are what you are in relation to something outside of yourself, obviously the process of keeping that outside at bay will be constitutive of your own self. That book was called [\*Uses of the Other\*](#) (1998).

I came to the issue of diplomacy by taking this idea and applying it to a series of specific cases on the level of states, on the level of regions, and on the level of 'Europe' as such, with Russia and Turkey as the 'other'. That led to diplomacy, because the overall discourse study of the ideas of how this was constituted begged for a more specific analysis of what this looked like in terms of everyday politics. And then, once you've invested a lot of time and effort in a topic, I think it would be wasteful intellectually—indeffensible, really—to just drop it. Today, I still do research on Russia, though it's a bit on the backburner, and I still do diplomacy. The follow-up to [\*At Home with the Diplomats\*](#) (2012) is actually in press, and is called *Diplomatic Sites*. However, my present project, which I am undertaking with an IR scholar/Turkologist friend and student of mine, looks at the Eurasian Steppe. We are observing what was going on in the Steppe over a 3,000-year period as a way of trying to understand the 'differentness' of Russia and Turkey. So, while my central research concerns remain the same, my understanding of them comes from different disciplines, from different geographical areas, and from different issue areas.

This 'differentness' keeps cropping up, not only in Russian and Turkish discourse, but also in overall European discourse, although in a more submerged form. But then you start looking at something like the first time that the concept of Europe was used, which was around the court of Charlemagne. As you recall, he was crowned in the year 800, and why was he crowned? Because he was celebrating his victory over the [\*Avars\*](#), a Steppe people who had a polity in what was only then begun to be called 'Europe'. So the concept of Europe and the presence of the Eurasian Steppe are right there, not only in the constitution of Bulgaria and Hungary, Turkey, and Russia—which are all obvious cases—but also in somewhere like France. So this is the background, but it's a new departure for me, because it's historical sociology, but the concerns remain the same.

The smartest thing I did in terms of intellectual training was that I came to a point when I finished my M.Phil. in political science in Norway and I went to Britain to do my doctorate. The reason for that was that I wanted to do the [\*English School\*](#). With hindsight, I see that the major reason for that was that the English School in IR asked big questions, and American Political

Science tended and tends to ask small questions—the English School had a concern with history using a sweeping, thorough style of analysis that I liked. I came up to Oxford in 1987 and started studying and I had a brilliant time with John Vincent; he was a mainstay of the English School at that stage. Then, I came across articles by Richard Ashley and James Der Derian and Rob Walker and I was captivated, because I had already had a meeting with Nietzsche and Foucault. But seeing these applications to IR, everything immediately came together and I went back to Foucault and read him properly and then never looked back. Foucault is still my special theoretical friend; he's the person I turn to when I have a problem. I have others, but Foucault is the man.

Why Foucault? One of the things that Foucault would be the first to point out—perhaps Bob Dylan put it best—is 'don't follow leaders, watch the parking meters'. I think it was Hegel who said only one person had understood him and he had misunderstood, because he wanted to do what Hegel was doing and what Hegel wanted to impart upon his students was: 'you have to grow your own paradigm!' Foucault said the same thing. So I'm not a doctrinarian in any sense and I don't follow him, for example, on the need to do exclusively micro-politics. I think you can do politics in a number of other ways as well—to engage. But he's still absolutely my main man.

**What would a student need to become a specialist in IR or understand the world in a global way?**

The most important thing is to acquire knowledge of *something else!* You can say a lot of bad things about the old dead white male tradition of the 17 and 1800s in the European traditions, but the great thing about it was that you studied the Ancients: you studied the Greeks, you studied the Romans, and they lived differently. You couldn't help but see that this was a different way of being in the world. And that was extremely important! My main worry now is that students pay less attention to languages. Languages are useful for this because when you study them, you learn about a different culture. Learning a different language is a fast track to learning about a different culture—and a necessary one. In particular, the way the Americans are training students these days is questionable to me: most of them don't have any languages, most of them don't have any history, and they're counting stuff instead of thinking about it! So this is *not* conducive to what I'm talking about.

The specific answer to your question would be: pick up a language, or two, or three, and learn something about somewhere else thoroughly. It doesn't really matter whether it is some other way of thinking than the one you've been trained in or understanding the logic of some other

state or place or knowing an issue area inside out, but knowing something *properly* and something *different* from what you've actually been raised in and stand in. In my case, a thorough knowledge of Norwegian history would not have cut it, because that would have only bred orthodoxy, even if I had developed and established a critical approach to Norwegian history, it would still have been looking at Norway in isolation. It's super depressing to see Norwegian historians; they're just not interested in the world overall; it's small-state narcissism. And Norway is not special here; the Dutch are the same. Instead of looking at the Anglo-Dutch naval wars of the 1700s, for example, as a set of relations, they are forever discussing the specifics of which Dutch agent did what—and it's the same in Norway. You are digging yourself a hole that just becomes deeper and deeper the more knowledge you gather, and to use an Americanism that I've just picked up, the result is that you disappear up your own asshole.

Finally, I think one challenge for the coming generation is related to how academic work is published. The coming of net publishing will change intellectual life, but I do not claim any specific expertise on that. I simply know from my general study of knowledge transmission that it's going to be important and it's probably something that will dominate our discussions in a couple of years. You as an editor of this venture *Theory Talks* and as someone versed in Science Studies would be eminently placed—you and your comrades—to do something; to use the tools that are presented in Latour and Woolgar's *Laboratory Life* and other studies to analyze what you need to do to have knowledge production if we started publishing in open-source channels, because I think that's the way it's going. I'm just waiting for the one big publishing house to go out and it's going to be very interesting!

### **So what's the issue with the way we're publishing academic knowledge now?**

If there is one thing we know about people, it is that they hunt in groups and if we should leave it to a big number of people what should and shouldn't be published, it would be that we wouldn't get anything published altogether, because what do you do with the new? You kill it. And an eminent example in our discipline of this is how the *American Political Science Review* is so dull. And why is it so dull? Because they have a system where all peer reviews, all peers have to give a thumb's up in order for the manuscript to make it into print, which means any attempt at doing something different will just be shot down. You have to have everyone on board. And this is the same logic that I traced in the speech writing in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: if everyone wants to chime in, then you get a text that looks like the previous text. So I think that might be a dangerous idea, actually. We'd overcome the problem that you are before a bench full of reviewers who don't have to disclose their identity and they can actually try to shoot you down

if they for instance have a personal gripe, or don't like your style of writing—but I think the peer-review system is basically sound, as long as editors are able to wield their sort of governmental powers, as it were.

**To move to something completely different: what is everyday practice and why is it so important for understanding contemporary International Politics?**

'Everyday practice' would be socially recognized ways of doing things that can be done well or badly. So, taking an example from the realm of IR: the way you approach an embassy. If you work in a foreign ministry, there is a set of these practices which determine how you go about accomplishing something; what is happening during a state visit, for example. A state visit comes off if all the little practices by the enormous number of individuals involved actually congeal and make for a seamless performance. So, the key thing to me about studying everyday practices is that you don't start with a picture of a state system or a picture of an economic system, but you rather start with going out there and looking at what people are actually *doing* and what the relations actually *are*. There has to be some kind of give-and-take between our expectations of what we will find in the world in our theories; the taking down of the empirical research that we're doing; and the feedback towards those theories.

What we have to be conscious of, is the notion of a *tabula rasa* creeping in, a clean slate; that's philosophically impossible. But you then have to have some kind of circulation between the two or else, again, you are stuck. So, to me, an obvious example of how wrong this can go would be Neo-realism. Kenneth Waltz ([Theory Talk #40](#)), whose work is theoretically extremely rigorous and strong, has been provoking people for thirty years to engage in a discussion of his ideas. He's a first-class scholar, the only problem being that the Cold War—and the Cold War was the event, after all, that this theory was hatched to explain—ended. That somehow doesn't indent anything for his theory. I've heard it said that one data point is not enough to falsify a theory, which is true; but in this case, it is much *more* than a data point. Now, of course, if we take Ken Waltz at his word, the falsification is not relevant, because he says—I think on page 8—that a theory can only be displaced by a better theory, so he's an ideal-typical thinker whose work cannot be falsified.

Finally, I think most of the interesting work in the social sciences is like that; it's not falsifiable. It's simply a statement on the way of thinking about certain topics, and then it gives way to better statements or is complemented by other statements. But still, I dwell on this falsification because that's the way in particular that American scholars are talking about these ideas. If you look at the

King, Keohane and Verba book (*Designing Social Inquiry*, read chapter 1 [here](#)), for example, they just define science as a question of what could make you think that this is wrong. They are positing that everything should be falsifiable. Well that's just wrong! That's just thwarting the entire social science experience. It's this new stuff; I'm old school!

**It seems the linguistic turn dominates continental and/or critical approaches to IR...**

I don't think there's anything wrong with the linguistic turn. I think we need it to get out of the hirsute materialism of the '60s and '70s, which I caught the tail end of. I finished my A-levels in 1978, so I saw what radical Marxism can do to people. These Maoist automata treated everything I am interested in—meaning, identity, group relations—as epiphenomena, that is something that cannot explain anything on its own. And that is a very poor understanding of the human condition. We have to look at self-reflection and how thinking about thinking about something is adding to our understanding of other issues, like our social reality. This was a concern of Durkheim's and a partial concern of Weber's, and it's important to maintain that! The way the social sciences were going in the '60s and '70s, with the take-no-prisoners materialism of the orthodox Marxists on the one hand and the screaming positivism of the mainstream on the other, meant that something had to be done! So I think it was over-determined that what happened in France with the break with Structuralism had an enormous impact across the Social Sciences.

But, as is so often the case, the linguistic turn which started as a corrective to all of this then became dominant and had, in turn, to be corrected by a new materialism. My own work is part of that whole movement. I started doing discourse analysis and I tired of always looking at the preconditions for actions; I wanted to be looking at the actions themselves. The lucky break there was my 2002 article in *Millennium* on practices (*Returning Practice to the Material Turn*, read the full article [here](#)). The journal did this special issue on pragmatism and I sat down during the summer holidays and wrote my contribution as a call for a practice turn in IR. Bingo!

Yet despite my being critical of radical Marxism, its demise as an IR theory with the end of the Cold War is a handicap. And hereby I don't refer to the Marxism tradition that I know best—the Soviet one—because it's not the most intellectually vibrant one. Indeed, it's perhaps the *least* intellectually vibrant one. So, we should definitely forget about the Soviet participation because it's not useful to the discussion and that's another example of a State taking some idea, stylizing it, and using it to oppress its enemies. So that's not intellectually viable, really. But Marx himself, when it comes to his analyses of the world that he called his own, was masterful! The



problem came when he started to universalize everything. The younger Marx is fascinating. The older Marx is a doctrinarian, and not always interesting. But it is a rule of intellectual life that you should judge people on their best work. So Marx is one of the three major founders of the social sciences, and remains so, and should be studied on par with Weber and Durkheim.

While he is not completely silenced in IR, he exists as an important side stream, I think, not only in the work of people like [Justin Rosenberg](#) and the Trotskyites coming out of Sussex, but also in the work of a number of American scholars who do not flaunt Marx references, but whose work clearly bears the imprint of having read the key texts. I would not go as far as saying that Marx is completely gone, but he is definitely less visible. And again, that may not be a bad thing, because the tendency was that you quoted Marx at the expense of everything else. So this is probably a sign of Marx becoming one amongst of other thinkers, and I applaud that; that's exactly what we should do with the man.

**The way you describe the response of Post-Structuralism to Structuralism—and now since 2002 or earlier we've seen a corrective movement to that—there seems to be a generational pattern in IR, where what was liberating for one generation, is what the next generation tries to liberate itself from.**

This is something I've given some thought to lately, because now my students are the same age as my children; that's a sobering thought. There is certainly an institutionalization of patricide in the Social Sciences, in that in order to get published and to get recognized and establish yourself, you have to chop off the head of the former generation—and that's as it should be. The whole thing is not about there being an attack or not being an attack—there *should* be an attack. But the question is whether you literally try to chop off people's heads or only metaphorically. I'm lucky in the sense that the younger generation that comes up now is overall a very civilized generation. They argue against stuff that my generation did, which is exactly what they should do. My heart goes out to the generation of scholars twice removed before me into history. Their young patricidal students were often staunch Maoists who basically often wanted to kill them, and who actually applauded the killings of millions of people in Cambodia and then tried to be taken seriously at home at the same time. Now, *that's* not OK. So you know, when I look at the challenge from younger scholars to my generation now, I'm very happy with that. It's exactly what it should be. The basic figures in the Western tradition here are of course Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, who did their different things, and related to the previous one in very different ways. They are very different thinkers, but it's nice to be able to say something very very positive and unequivocally positive about a line-up of really dead white males.

Finally, the patricide thing is tragic! In Greek, you have this quality in tragedy called *hamartia*, which means that the tragic is not tragic because it all goes to hell in a hand basket—it is tragic because it *has* to go to hell in a hand basket. I think the previous generations must see the nature of being a target of the next generation as a necessary thing, which is an insight into freedom. But we don't want any killing here!

**Diplomacy is at the core of IR if one understands it to be efforts to prevent war. And beyond that, could you explain how practice arose in the first place?**

We don't want to go into the state of nature here because that is an analytical construct and people have done very different things with it, famously. But from what we know of anthropological work on early relations between hunters and gatherers, there were contacts among different groups, which had to set up something, and usually when people populated stretches that were close to one another, there were certain ways of respecting mutual or overlapping spaces: having, for example, the possibility of free movement in the territory of others, in order to perform a rite or find a certain sacred object. This would often be done by wearing or carrying some kind of sign—a little wooden pole or wearing an amulet around your neck—so this would definitely be proto-diplomatic stuff: that you stylized ways of being in the world together, which saw to it that you were not killed, basically. Then these patterns became denser and the interesting thing to me is that this seems to happen in a number of different social settings.

I looked at how it was done among the [Iroquois](#), for example, over centuries—and the parallels to the European tradition are quite interesting. There are two major themes that come up: one of them is kinship, and not biological kinship, but classificatory kinship. We metaphorically talk about ourselves amongst ourselves as brothers. In the Swedish academic tradition, when you write to someone else, you can write brother or sister, because you are supposed to be brothers—not in arms, but in the pursuit of knowledge. So this is classificatory, and it seems to be a key figure in diplomacy. My favorite example is the Greeks that go out and find other wild peoples and if they find them to be strong people with whom they have to form a relationship, the Macedonians for example, they are just classified as kin! It's a great way of talking to people. And you find the same thing in [Amarna](#) diplomacy, in the written stuff we have from around 1400 b.c.: Egyptians, Hittites, Assyrians. There, the whole thing is whether they call one another brother or father or son, and whether it's hierarchical or whether it's basically reciprocal. That's one facet. The other is religion. Religion is key! I think Weber was wrong in saying that there's been a disenchantment of the world; it takes other forms, but it's still there. And the first treaty

that we know of—it does not only dictate peace between the Egyptian and Hittite kings involved, but it also called for peace between their gods! I think that’s rather nice, to have peace not only in our realm but in the realm beyond, as well. Another cool corollary to this is that, because these kings are gods, they are also entitled to draw up treaties in their gods’ names. It makes you think, who is the *real* boss? And I think those two themes—of kinship and religion—crop up at least in all the different diplomatic systems that I’ve seen. There’s some sort of kinship metaphor and some sort of religious thing. These, of course, take very different shapes.

The second important strain in the emergence of diplomacy is hybridization and power. As different traditions meet and, in particular, as Europeans hit their stride and dominated the world from 1800 to 1950, they were able to dominate the modes of diplomatic practice as well. They had an advantage because they stressed reciprocity so much. But what you still find is that present-day diplomacy carries remnants or marks of other traditions, but is overwhelmingly European at the core. This hybridization will definitely speed up now, because it has to do with the relative power relations of the different agents that meet. It has a relational logic, and will change with Europe having been hegemonic and now on the wane. We will see the marks from other traditions having a more profound influence on diplomacy. These are exciting times for scholars of diplomacy!

**Many critical and mainstream approaches to IR seem to hold that what diplomats *say* is actually far removed from the *actual* intentions of the state, which is why we should not take diplomacy and what diplomats say so seriously.**

I would agree with the first part of your statement, but disagree with the latter. It is obvious that what diplomats say is only a slice of the world.... It’s obvious as well in normal social situations—meeting new people, flirting, or networking—that what a person *says* is not the full spectrum of what he or she thinks and does in the world; it’s a little slice that is there for a *purpose*. And it’s the same with diplomats. They are not there to tell the truth about everything; that would be a naïve and quite frankly stupid understanding of the social. They are there to shape the situation and make a room for dialogue where room did not exist before. And in order to do that, they will selectively choose their topics and speak about those topics in a very, very careful way that has been shaped by practices for centuries in order not to give unnecessary offense. When a diplomat wants to give offense, he or she knows how to do it, but it happens in a very regular way. And if it doesn’t, you’re simply a bad diplomat. We all make rational choices all of the time, but we do so under conditions that we have not ourselves chosen, in conditions that vary, and those contexts deeply impinge on us; often our rationality does not stretch all that far, and it’s not an

individual thing, it's a *social* thing. So yes, rational choices are a part. But rational choice as an approach to diplomacy? Absolutely not.

**It is easy to draw a parallel between your anthropological study inside of government offices and the kind of ethnographies of scientists that Latour and Woolgar did inside laboratories, which you referred to earlier. Did these inspire you?**

One is always an extremely poor judge of one's own work, but if I were to point to one piece of writing that I'm really satisfied with, it would be *A Speech That The Entire Ministry May Stand For* (read full article [here](#)), my analysis of how documents are made in bureaucracies. Specifically, I followed speech writing for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, looking at how the process of writing a speech determined the content—it is a form-determined content. Then, I generalized it and tried to show that all documents written by the state are written like this. And the interesting thing is, this article has not had much traction at all! A number of other things I have written that have relevance to Russian foreign policy have been much discussed, but this article has not yet received much attention. Therefore, what you say about parallels to his work gives me heart! At least you have noticed it – that's already something!

**IR is a profoundly Eurocentric discipline. How important is what happens outside the West for IR?**

I think it's super interesting. Again, my own experience is indicative. I was considered quaint when I wanted to study the Soviet Union as a student because it was not really politics, it was just perversions. That seemed to be the judgment of the political scientists, and they had no way of really dealing properly with the Soviet Union. Sociologists did, but political scientists did not, because theirs is a discipline that is specifically tailored to understanding specific and rather limited negotiation games within strictly defined institutional settings that are culturally unique. So, studying the Soviet Union was already a departure from that, and pointed up the Eurocentrism of political science. I did this in the '80s and was central to debates then; now, 2012, I have become thoroughly marginalized because my knowledge of places like Brazil, India, China, is so limited—and according to my own standards, an IR scholar simply needs to know about what goes on inside these other countries. In order to be a good IR scholar today, you just need to know the outlines of Indian, Chinese, Brazilian history. And frankly, you didn't 30 years ago; it was nice to have, but now it's a need-to-have.

This is as it should be. Globalization has caught up with us, not only as a theoretical construct, but also as something that accuses us: your knowledge is inadequate. In order to do your job, you have to know this stuff. And I think in another couple of years, we will have the same situation with China as we have now with the United States: There will not be one issue area or one sequence to study in IR where China does not have some kind of influence, and where China will not directly or indirectly be affecting, which means that an IR department or institute without sinologists would simply be an intellectual impossibility.

The historical trajectories of these other places should inform IR, intellectually, but as I see in my own everyday existence, this would warrant a tremendous amount of work. If you want to read up on Chinese history, just learning the names of the dynasties and getting an outline of the whole thing takes a lot of time. Narrowly, we think of Chinese history as spanning 3,000 years, but it could easily go up to 5,000 years. Moreover, you have to take in all the *other* stuff, not only the historical context, but the social contexts as well. And we need this! It is not enough to look at the state system and the economic system in isolation. We need to look at how these different agents of the system are constituted socially, and so need to also look at where they come from domestically. This should not be controversial! Take Waltz again, the man with the stylization and reification of the state system. The man also did a very good book of the foreign policy of the US and UK, which I strongly recommend. In those days, the discipline was not that big and he was clear, we have to look at foreign policy as well!

**IR is often scorned as hardly autonomous because of its propensity to import from other disciplines—in your case, for instance, anthropology. Does IR need to be an autonomous field, and why does it not seem to persist as such?**

This is a tough one, because when you look at how we institutionalize it, or how the Social Sciences were institutionalized in the late 1800s, stuff that had been going on here and there was basically sorted: Political Science got the state, sociology got society, geography got space, history got time, and anthropology got what was left with the world outside of ‘civilization’. And obviously with globalization and post-modernity, these boundaries have broken down. This division of tasks basically doesn’t hold up. So in that sense, we could make everything into one big concern, and I would say that a number of the really good scholars in the Social Sciences do exactly this. But the problem is that the world is just too big. When I started going to the International Studies Association’s annual meetings in the early ‘90s, we were not even 2,000 people; the last time I was there, it was 7,000 people. And the number of people and the number of stuff they could use and the number of book series and journals was just humongous. For this

task, you need a sizable discipline where you have a vague idea of what is going on throughout. The sheer quantity is an argument for having more disciplines. But Hegel reminds us that quantity becomes quality at some point. It would be impossible to have a general Social Science simply because you need something in common, something to talk about in order for there to be a discipline. And that's one of the nice things about the states' system: at least it gives us a common object to talk about!

And when I talk about the importance of empirical knowledge of China, India and so on, I don't mean area studies! Area studies is a humanities thing; they don't have theory in area studies, by definition. It was set-up---the CIA paid for this---in order to get knowledge that could be easily converted into readily useable knowledge for the Cold War effort. Now we shouldn't climb our high horses here, because if you look at the history of the social sciences, there is of course a big element of that too: anthropologists were funded because colonial authorities needed to know what was going on on the ground so they could change it, and this remains a thing about funding. When you look at the stuff that people get money for, it is clearly instrumental. But the area studies don't have their own theories, and neither should they, but I think they should not be there at all; they would have been much better off as a part of history and IR and anthropology.

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- Read Neumann's *Russia as a Great Power, 1815-2007* (Journal of International Relations and Development, 2008) [here](#) (pdf)
- Read Neumann & Sending's *Governance to Governmentality: Analyzing NGOs, States, and Power* (International Studies Quarterly, 2006) [here](#) (pdf)
- Read Neumann's *European Identity and its Changing Others* (2006 NUPI working paper) [here](#)(pdf)
- Read Neumann & Gstohl's *Lilliputians in Gulliver's World? Small States in International Relations* (2004 Working Paper) [here](#) (pdf)
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