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Reader's guide

The way the discipline of International Relations 'maps' the world shows the importance of representation, the relationship of power and knowledge, and the politics of identity to the production and understanding of global politics. Poststructuralism directly engages these issues even though it is not a new paradigm or theory of International Relations. It is, rather, a critical attitude or ethos that explores the assumptions that make certain ways of being, acting, and knowing possible. This chapter details how and why poststructuralism engaged International Relations from the 1980s onwards. It explores the interdisciplinary context of social and political theory from which poststructuralism emerged, and examines the misconceptions evident in the reception this approach received from mainstream theorists. The chapter details what the critical attitude of poststructuralism means for social and political inquiry. Focusing on the work of Michel Foucault, it shows the importance of discourse, identity, subjectivity, and power to this approach, and discusses the methodological features employed by poststructuralists in their readings of, and interventions in, international politics. The chapter concludes with a case study of images of humanitarian crises that illustrates the poststructural approach.

Introduction

Interpretation, mapping, and meta-theory

Every discussion and every understanding of international politics depends upon abstraction, representation, and interpretation. That is because 'the world' does not present itself to us in the form of ready-made categories, theories, or statements. As the French philosopher-historian Michel Foucault (1984b: 127) has argued, 'the world does not provide us with a legible face, leaving us merely to decipher it; it does not work hand in glove with what we already know'. This means whenever we write or speak of 'the realm of anarchy', the 'end of the Cold War', 'gendered relations of power', 'globalization', 'humanitarian intervention', 'finance capital' – indeed, when we employ any term to grasp the meaning of events and issues – we are engaging in abstraction, representation, and interpretation. No matter what particular perspectives claim, even the most 'objective' theory that claims to offer a perfect resemblance or mirror image of things does not escape the inevitability and indispensability of interpretation (Bleiker 2001).

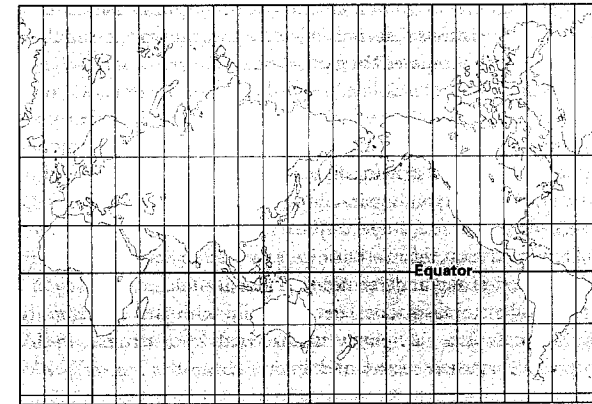
Political leaders, social activists, scholars, and students are all involved in the abstraction, representation, and interpretation of 'the world' whether they engage in the practice, theory, or study of international relations. This does not mean, however, that anyone can simply make things up and have the products of their imagination count as legitimate knowledge. That is because the dominant understandings of world politics are both *arbitrary* and *non-arbitrary*: arbitrary in the sense that they are but one possibility among a range of possibilities, and non-arbitrary in the sense that certain social and historical practices have given rise to dominant ways of making 'the world' that have very real effects upon our lives.

The dominant interpretations of 'the world' have been established by the discipline of International Relations, which traditionally talks of states and their policy-makers pursuing interests and providing security, of conflict and the need to balance power, of stability and the danger of anarchy, of economic relations and their material effects, of the rights of those who are being badly treated. The 'we' who talk in this way do so from a particular vantage point. 'We' are often white, Western, affluent, and comfortable. These representations, then, are related to our identities, and they establish a discourse of identity politics (primarily organized around the state) as the favoured frame of reference for world politics.

This highlights the relationship between knowledge and power. It is commonplace to say that 'knowledge is power', but this assumes they are synonymous rather than related. The production of maps illustrates the significance of the relationship between knowledge and power and the inevitability of interpretation. Maps are not simply inert records or passive reflections of the world of objects. They are selective in their content, particular in their styles, and limited in their subjects. They favour, promote, and influence specific sets of social relations (Harley 1988).

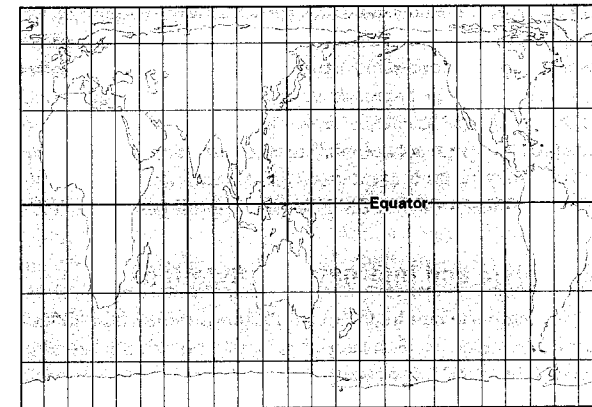
Consider the commonly used Mercator projection (Figure 11.1). Drafted in 1569 in order to provide the direct lines necessary for navigation, it placed Europe at the centre and put two-thirds of the world's landmass in the Northern Hemisphere. This representation

Figure 11.1 The Mercator projection (Pacific central).



Source: Oxford University Press.

Figure 11.2 The Peters projection (Pacific central).



Source: Oxford University Press.

supported the British Empire, and later reinforced Cold War perceptions of the Soviet threat (Monmonier 1996). Contrast this to the Peters projection, developed in the 1970s (Figure 11.2). This was based on equal-area projection which de-emphasized Europe and the North, and gave greater prominence to the South. Although not the first equal-area projection (which had been available since 1772) it was technically more accurate.

The Peters projection was significant because it came to prominence at a time of Third World political assertiveness in the United Nations, and was promoted by UN agencies keen to secure more resources for development. The Peters projection is, therefore, a manifestation of the power relations that challenged the two superpowers in the 1970s, and a form of knowledge which promoted the global South.

International Relations as a discipline 'maps' the world. However, it is only the critical perspectives – and poststructuralism in particular – which put the issues of interpretation and representation, power and knowledge, and the politics of identity at the forefront of concerns. Because of this poststructuralism is not a model or theory of international relations. Rather than setting out a paradigm through which everything is understood, poststructuralism is a critical attitude, approach, or ethos which calls attention to the importance of representation, the relationship of power and knowledge, and the politics of identity in the production and understanding of global affairs.

This means poststructuralism does not fit easily with the conventional view that International Relations is a discipline characterized by a diverse set of paradigms competing in 'great debates' (discussed in Chapter 1). Instead of being regarded as another school with its own favoured actors and issues to highlight, poststructuralism needs to be understood as promoting a new set of questions and concerns. This function – as a critical attitude rather than theory – means poststructuralism has a different perspective on the relationship between theory and practice. Instead of seeing a distinction *between* theory and practice, it sees theory *as* practice. This comes about because, in the first instance, poststructuralism poses a series of meta-theoretical questions – questions about the theory of theory – in order to understand how particular ways of knowing, what counts as knowing, and who can know (which includes other theories and theorists), have been established over time. In this context, poststructuralism is part and parcel of a wider group of critical social theories. It is an approach which comes from prior and extensive debates in the humanities and social science, in a manner akin to critical theory (Chapter 8), feminism (Chapter 10), and postcolonialism (Chapter 12). Like those perspectives, poststructuralism enters the study of international relations once the possibility of posing meta-theoretical questions within the discipline has been established.

Poststructuralism and International Relations

Poststructuralism's entrance into International Relations came in the 1980s through the work of Richard Ashley (1981, 1984), James Der Derian (1987), Michael Shapiro (1988), and R. B. J. Walker (1987, 1993). Two important collections (Der Derian and Shapiro 1989; Ashley and Walker 1990) brought together the early studies. These focused mostly on articulating the meta-theoretical critique of realist and neoliberal theories to demonstrate how the theoretical assumptions of the traditional perspectives shaped what could be said about international politics. What drove many of these contributions was an awareness of how other branches of the social sciences and humanities had witnessed significant debates about how knowledge of the world was constructed. Recognizing that the dominant approaches to International Relations were unaware, uninterested, or hostile to such questions, the above authors sought to connect International Relations to its

interdisciplinary context by introducing new sources of theory. The motivation for the turn to poststructuralism was not purely theoretical, however. Critical scholars were dissatisfied with the way realism – and its revivification at that time through neorealism – remained powerful in the face of new global transformations. These scholars felt that realism marginalized the importance of new transnational actors, issues, and relationships and failed to hear (let alone appreciate) the voices of excluded peoples and perspectives. As such, poststructuralism began with an ethical concern to include those who had been overlooked or excluded by the mainstream of International Relations.

In focusing on the conceptual and political practices that included some and excluded others, poststructural approaches were concerned with how the relations of inside and outside were mutually constructed. For realism, the state marked the border between inside/outside, sovereign/anarchic, us/them. Accordingly, poststructuralism began by questioning how the state came to be regarded as the most important actor in world politics, and how the state came to be understood as a unitary, rational actor. Poststructuralism was thus concerned at the outset with the *practices of statecraft* that made the state and its importance seem both natural and necessary. This approach is not anti-state, it does not overlook the state, nor does it seek to move beyond the state. In many respects, poststructuralism pays more attention to the state than realism, because – instead of merely asserting that the state is the foundation of its paradigm – poststructuralism is concerned with the state's historical and conceptual production, and its political formation, economic constitution, and social exclusions.

After the first wave of meta-theoretical critiques, subsequent studies employing a poststructural approach – while continuing to develop the theoretical basis for their alternative interpretations – engaged political events and questions directly. This research includes analyses of state identity and foreign policy in Korea, Bosnia, and the USA (Bleiker 2005; Campbell 1992, 1998b, 2005); studies of the gendered character of state identity in the context of US intervention (Weber 1994, 1999); studies of the centrality of representation in North–South relations and immigration policies (Doty 1993, 1996) a deconstructive account of famine and humanitarian crises (Edkins 2000); interpretive readings of diplomacy and European security (Constantinou 1995, 1996); the radical rethinking of international order and security (Dillon 1996); critical analyses of international law and African sovereignties (Grovougi 1996); a recasting of ecopolitics (Kuehls 1996); the rearticulation of the refugee regime and sovereignty (Soguk 1999); a problematization of the UN and peacekeeping (Debrix 1999); a semiotic reading of militarism in Hawaii (Ferguson and Turnbull 1998); investigations of contemporary warfare, strategic identities, security landscapes, and representations of sovereignty (Coward 2002, Der Derian 1992, 2001; Dillon 2003; Dillon and Reid 2001; Klein 1994; Lisle and Pepper 2005); a reinterpretation of area studies (Philpott 2001); and a rethinking of finance and the field of international political economy (de Goede 2005, 2006).

This list is not exhaustive, nor is it the case that all the authors cited would willingly accept the label 'poststructural' for their work. Nonetheless, their work intersects with, and would not have been possible without, an interdisciplinary debate that called into question the authority of the positivist meta-theoretical assumptions which secured realist and other traditional perspectives in International Relations. Before detailing what a

poststructuralist perspective involves, it is necessary, therefore, to outline the key elements of this interdisciplinary debate.

The interdisciplinary context of poststructuralism

Positivism and science in question

International Relations has been shaped by the influence of science and technology in the development of the modern world. The potential for control and predictive capacity that the natural sciences seemed to offer provided a model that social scientists sought to emulate. This model, **positivism**, was founded on the empiricist theory of knowledge, which argued that sensory experience provides the only legitimate source of knowledge. 'Experience' refers to direct sensory access to an external reality comprising material things. As an epistemology (a meta-theory concerning how we know), the empiricist conception of knowledge understands knowledge as deriving from a relationship between a given subject (the person that knows) and a given object (that which is known).

These theoretical developments were central to a major historical transformation – the intellectual clash in the Renaissance period between the church and science which challenged the dominance of theology for social order. These intellectual developments, named as the Enlightenment, included making 'man' and 'reason', rather than 'god' and 'belief', the centre of philosophical discourse, and the construction and legitimization of the state, rather than the church, as the basis for political order. It was a moment in which knowledge intersected with power to lasting effect. Although the Enlightenment conception of knowledge was intended to free humanity from religious dogma, it was eventually transformed into a dogma itself. By the end of the nineteenth century, its dominance meant that knowledge was equated with science and reason limited to scientific reason. This dogmatization of science meant that social life is centred on technical control over nature and administrative control over humans, so that political issues became questions of order and efficiency.

The positivist account of science at the base of Enlightenment thought is founded upon three empiricist assumptions. First, **epistemic realism**: the view that there is an external world, the existence and meaning of which is independent of anything the observer does. Second, the assumption of a *universal scientific language*: the belief that this external world can be described in a language that does not presuppose anything, thereby allowing the observer to remain detached and dispassionate. Third, the **correspondence theory of truth**: that the observer can capture the facts of the world in statements that are true if they correspond to the facts and false if they do not. We can see these assumptions in Hans Morgenthau's classic text when he writes that a theory must 'approach political reality with a kind of rational outline' and distinguish 'between what is true objectively and rationally, supported by evidence and illuminated by reason, and what is only a subjective judgement,

divorced from the facts as they are and informed by prejudice and wishful thinking' (Morgenthau 1978: 3–4).

Post-empiricism in science

A number of intellectual developments have demonstrated that the positivist understanding of scientific procedure that the social sciences have tried to model does not actually represent the conduct of scientific inquiry. The 'linguistic turn' in Anglo-American philosophy was a move away from the idea that language is a transparent medium through which the world can be comprehended – a view that suggested it was possible to get 'behind' language and 'ground' knowledge in the world itself – towards an account of language that understood it as embedded in social practice and inseparable from the world (Rorty 1967). Allied with the development of hermeneutic thought in continental philosophy – a tradition originally concerned with the reading of biblical, classical, and legal texts which developed into an account of the importance of interpretation to being human – these shifts contributed to a new understanding of the relationship between language and reality (see George 1994). Developments in the philosophy of science itself – especially what are called the **postpositivist** and **post-empiricist** debates (see Hesse 1980) – have also challenged the validity of the positivist account. These developments have also contributed to a reappraisal of science through social studies that question the value of 'facts' and the meaning of 'objectivity' for social inquiry (Megill 1994; Poovey 1998). Finally, the development of complexity science (including chaos theory and other new approaches to regularity) extends even further the challenge to 'common sense' assumptions of what counts as science and how it is conducted, and links contemporary understandings of science with poststructuralism (Dillon 2000). Given this, poststructuralism is in no sense anti-science.

In the philosophy of science, the post-empiricist debates focused on the core of the contention between positivists and anti-positivists: the Enlightenment conception of knowledge. For the Enlightenment the search for truth meant the search for foundations, facts that could 'ground' knowledge. The post-empiricist perspective is thus concerned with the rejection of such *foundational* thought (such as the claim that the state is the organizing principle of international relations, or that ethical theory requires established rules of justice as grounds for judging right from wrong), which it achieves through a new understanding of the subject/object relationship in theories of knowledge. Post-empiricists conceive of this relationship as one in which the two terms construct each other rather than the fundamental opposition of two pre-given entities. This undermining of the separation of subjects and objects means any claim to knowledge that relies on dichotomies analogous to the subject/object dualism (e.g. facts against values, objective knowledge versus subjective prejudice, or empirical observation in contrast to normative concerns) 'is . . . epistemologically unwarranted' (Bernstein 1979: 230; Bernstein 1983).

The end result is that in place of the basic assumptions of epistemic realism, a universal scientific language and the correspondence theory of truth that lay behind positivist understandings of science and the Enlightenment conception of knowledge, all inquiry – in *both* the human sciences and the natural sciences – has to be concerned with the social constitution of meaning, the linguistic construction of reality, and the

historicity of knowledge. This reaffirms the indispensability of interpretation, and suggests that all knowledge involves a relationship with power in its mapping of the world.

The reaction of International Relations to poststructuralism

Critical anxiety

As we shall see, these dimensions are present in and help make possible the poststructuralist accounts of politics and international relations introduced above, even as those accounts go beyond the priority given to language in the constitution of reality that marks constructivist approaches to international politics. We need to be clear, then, about the similarities and differences in the critical approaches to International Relations. An awareness of these distinctions, however, is something that has been absent from the responses the critical approaches have provoked in the field.

Those who have objected to the meta-theoretical critiques of realism, neorealism, and the like, particularly the way those critiques have called into question the reliance on external reality, foundations, objectivity, and the transparency of language, have often called those critiques 'postmodern', even though there are few if any scholars who use that label, and many who explicitly reject it (see Campbell 1992: 246–7).

In one of the first assessments of the meta-theoretical critiques, Robert Keohane (1988) dichotomized the field into 'rationalists' versus 'reflectivists' and castigated the critical approaches of the latter position for lacking social scientific rigour. Keohane faulted the critical approaches for failing to embrace the empiricist standards concerning research agendas, hypothesis construction, and testing that would (in his eyes) lend them credibility. However, in making his claims, Keohane failed to demonstrate an awareness or understanding of the challenge posed by post-empiricist developments in the philosophy of science for his supposedly objective criteria (see Bleiker 1997). Subsequently accused of 'self-righteousness' (Wallace 1996), lambasted as 'evil' and 'dangerous' (Krasner 1996), castigated for 'bad IR' and 'meta-babble' (Halliday 1996), misread as 'philosophical idealism' (Mearsheimer 1994/5), and considered congenitally irrational (Østerud 1996), those named as 'postmodernists' have been anything but welcomed by the mainstream of International Relations (see Devetak 2001 for the best review using this term). Aside from their unwillingness to engage ways of thinking they regarded as 'foreign', these critics reacted as if the questioning of critical approaches meant that the traditional containers of politics (especially the state) and the capacity to judge right from wrong were being rejected. In so doing, they mistook arguments about the historical production of foundations for the claim that all foundations had to be rejected.

When theoretical contests provoke such vehemence, it indicates that there is something larger at stake than different epistemologies. As Connolly (2004) has argued, different methodologies express in one way or another deep attachments – understood as

metaphysical commitments or existential faith – on behalf of those who advocate them. For those who take such intense objection to the critical perspectives they herd together and brand as 'postmodern', their faith is a particular understanding of science. Their attachment to that faith in science – despite the debates in the philosophy of science that demonstrate how their understanding of science cannot be supported through reason – in turn derives from an anxiety about what the absence of secure foundations means for ethics and politics. Bernstein (1983) has named this the 'Cartesian Anxiety', because in the philosophy of Descartes the quest was to find a secure ground for knowledge. The Cartesian Anxiety is the fear that, given the demise of objectivity, we are unable to make judgements that have been central to the understanding of modern life, namely distinguishing between true and false, good and bad. The challenge, though, is to escape from the straightjacket in which intellectual understanding and political life has to be organized by recourse to either one option or the other. The post-empiricist debates in the philosophy of science have demonstrated that dualistic or dichotomous frameworks are unstable. We need, in Bernstein's (1983) words, to move beyond objectivism and relativism. We need to develop modes of interpretation that allow judgements about social and political issues at home and abroad while accepting, first, that such judgements cannot be secured by claims about a pre-existing, external reality and, second, such arguments cannot be limited by invoking dichotomies such as fact/value or objective/subjective.

Poststructuralism misunderstood as postmodernism

By labelling the critical perspectives which deal with interpretation and representation in international politics as 'postmodern', the critics are suggesting that it is modernity which they believe to be under threat. If we are to understand what is meant by this label of postmodernism, we also have to be concerned with modernism. What is meant by this term?

'Modernism' refers to the predominant cultural style of the period from the 1890s to the outbreak of the Second World War, encompassing the ideas and values in the painting, sculpture, music, architecture, design, and literature of that period. Modernism was part of the great upheavals in political, sociological, scientific, sexual, and familial orders in Europe and the USA. It was also part of colonialism and imperialism, in which these aesthetic and technological transformations radically affected the political, sociological, scientific, sexual, and familial orders of non-Western societies. Modernism had much to do with large technological and scientific transformations which made the early twentieth century a time of both infectious optimism and unsettled fear. It was an era which saw the industrial revolution produce mass railways, the first aircraft, automobiles, light bulbs, photography, films, and a host of other mechanical inventions. These machines offered the hope of improved social conditions, increased wealth, and the possibility of overcoming human limitations. But their impact on pre-mechanized ways of life made people fear for the existing social order, at the same time as they compressed time and space in the global order. Modernism was the cultural response to this change, evident in the abstract art of the Cubists (like Picasso and Braque) whose work distorted perspectives and favoured manufactured objects over natural environments (see Hughes 1991; Kern 1983). Its aim was to represent, interpret, and provide critical commentary on modern life.

The faith in technology of the early modernists was soon extinguished in the First World War. The great machines of promise turned into technologies of mass slaughter. The future lost its allure, and art became full of irony, disgust, and protest. In the imperial domain of Europe the questioning of modernism fuelled anti-colonial nationalism. In this context, 'modernism' was a political intervention in a specific cultural context that had global affects. But, after fascism in Europe, another world war, the Holocaust, and the process of decolonization, the critical edge of modernism was spent. Modernist cultural forms lost any sense of newness and possibility.

It is against this background that 'postmodernism' emerged during the period after the Second World War, representing and interpreting the indeterminate, pluralistic, and ever more globalized culture of the Cold War world. In literature, art, architecture, and music the term 'postmodern' designated a particular, often eclectic, approach to this cultural context. (Examples here include the painting of Andy Warhol, the intermingling of styles in the architecture of Charles Jencks, and the music of Madonna.) In this context, 'postmodernism' refers to cultural forms inspired by the conditions of accelerated time and space and hyper-consumerism that we experience in the globalized era some call 'postmodernity'.

Many of the problems associated with the concept of 'postmodernism' come from the misleading periodization associated with the prefix 'post'. Many critics of postmodernism attack it by arguing that it assumes a temporal break with modernity. They argue that the term 'postmodernity' assumes that we live in an historical epoch that is quite distinct from, and in some way replaces, 'modernity'. However, as Jameson (1991) has argued, the structure of postmodernity that critical, interpretive approaches seek to engage historically is not a new order that has displaced modernity. It is, rather, a cultural, economic, social, and political problematic marked by the rearticulation of time and space in the modern world (see also Harvey 1989). It is evident in developments such as financial speculation and flexible accumulation that depart from the modern, industrial forms of capitalism rooted in the exploitation of labour in the production process.

Much of the confusion and hostility surrounding the concept of 'postmodernism' in International Relations stems from the mistaken idea that those deploying an interpretive analytic to critically understand the transformations in modernity are celebrating the apparently shallow and accelerated cultural context that has challenged many of modernity's certainties. While 'postmodernity' is the cultural, economic, social, and political formation *within* modernity that results from changes in time-space relations, poststructuralism is one of the interpretive analytics that critically engages with the production and implication of these transformations.

The critical attitude of poststructuralism

Political context

In philosophical terms a number of the scholars who resist the mistaken label of 'post-modernism' are more comfortable with the term 'poststructuralism'. 'Poststructuralism' is

a distinct philosophical domain which has a critical relation to structuralism, modernity, and postmodernity. The 'structuralist' philosophical movement is associated with 'modernist' cultural forces. Structuralism was a largely French philosophical perspective associated with linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and cultural critic Roland Barthes.² Structuralists aimed to study the social and cultural construction of the various structures that give meaning to our everyday lives. Poststructuralism is equally concerned to analyse such meaning-producing structures, but in a manner consistent with transformations in the social order of the late twentieth century.

The events that influenced poststructuralism were associated with the resistance struggles against established and imperial power blocs, such as the Algerian and Vietnam wars, the Prague Spring of 1968, the May 1968 movement in France, cultural expression in Yugoslavia, demands for Third World economic justice and the civil rights, and environmental and women's movements in the USA and elsewhere. According to the French philosopher Giles Deleuze (1988: 150) these events were part of an international movement which 'linked the emergence of new forms of struggle to the production of a new subjectivity'. In other words, these struggles, unlike the revolutionary movements of the early twentieth century, were not concerned with freeing a universal 'mankind' from the chains imposed upon it by society, but with reworking political subjectivity given the globalizing forms of late capitalism. This context means poststructuralism has important things to say about the concept of identity in political life.

Michel Foucault: limits, ethos, and critique

The critical attitude of poststructuralism can be found in the writing of numerous thinkers.³ For the purposes of simplicity, this chapter will focus on the work of Michel Foucault. Thinking the present historically involves an ethos of what Foucault has called 'the limit attitude'. It involves considering the limits that give meaning to our thought and practice – for example reason and rationality is given meaning by the establishing of limits at which unreason and irrationality are said to begin. Moreover, a 'limit attitude' involves interrogating those limits, not by getting rid of, escaping, or transcending them, but by contesting and negotiating them through argumentation.

This critical attitude is consistent with the Enlightenment project to critically interrogate the conditions of human existence and is animated by an emancipatory ideal. The critical attitude is emancipatory insofar as it draws out the limits that shape existence and in so doing gives the conditions under which such limits – and the exclusions they entail – can be challenged. Although those dismissive of 'postmodernism' claim that it is an anti-modern and anti-Enlightenment position, to talk in those terms (anti- versus pro-Enlightenment) is to replicate the either/or exclusionary logic that Foucault terms the 'blackmail of the Enlightenment'. Rather than succumbing to such gestures of rejection, Foucault argues that the attitude of modernity has had from its beginnings an ongoing relationship with attitudes of 'counter-modernity'. This agonism is itself characteristic of and inherent in the Enlightenment, for, in Foucault's terms, what connects us with the Enlightenment 'is not faithfulness to doctrinal elements but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude – that is, of a philosophical ethos that could be described as

a permanent critique of our era' (Foucault 1984a: 42). Poststructuralism, then, is first and foremost an approach rather than a theory. As Foucault argues:

“ The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them. ”

Foucault 1984a: 50

As an approach, attitude, or ethos, poststructuralism is inherently critical. Critique, though, is a positive rather than negative attitude. It is about disclosing the assumptions and limits that have made things as they are, so that what appears natural and without alternative can be rethought and reworked. Critique is thus also inescapably ethical, because it is concerned with change. As Foucault writes:

“ A critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest. We must free ourselves from the sacralization of the social as the only reality and stop regarding as superfluous something so essential in human life and in human relations as thought . . . It is something that is often hidden, but which always animates everyday behavior. There is always a little thought even in the most stupid institutions; there is always thought even in silent habits. Criticism is a matter of flushing out that thought and trying to change it: to show that things are not as self-evident as one believed, to see what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such. Practicing criticism is a matter of making facile gestures difficult. ”

Foucault 1988: 154–5. See Campbell 1992: ch. 9

Taking these arguments into account, we can see that poststructuralism has a lot in common with the attitude of Frankfurt school critical theory (see Chapter 8). Indeed poststructuralism also has much in common with the post-empiricist debates outlined earlier. It has a similar disdain for foundationalism (ideas of grounding thought on universal rules that exist independently of the observer), shares the view that language is central to the constitution of social life, and agrees that the historicity of knowledge (the historical production of knowledge in socio-cultural structures and, hence, the refutation of the idea of universal/timeless knowledge) is a major concern.

Subjectivity, identity, and power

However, poststructuralism differs from Frankfurt school thought in ways that are important to the analysis of international relations. Most importantly, poststructuralism takes a different conception of the human subject. Whereas much of Frankfurt school critical theory takes critique to involve the uncovering or emancipation of a 'humanity' whose autonomy and freedom is bound by ideology, Foucault's work involves creating 'a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects'

(Foucault 1982: 208). For Foucault, the modern individual is an historical achievement. This is to say that there is no 'universal person' – a human-being that has been the unchanging basis for all history – on whom power has operated throughout all time. Rather, the individual human is an effect of the operations of power. Similarly, there is no 'human nature' shared by all members of the species – the nature of individuals, their humanity, is produced by certain power structures. Foucault's poststructuralism is thus offering the most thoroughgoing questioning of foundations around. That is because it is a questioning of foundations that includes the category of 'man' as well as the bases upon which social and political order is constructed. Foucault is thus concerned with forms of subjectivity. What are the subjects of politics? If they are 'humans', in what way is the 'human' subject constituted historically? How have the identities of women/men, Western/Eastern, North/South, civilized/uncivilized, developed/underdeveloped, mad/sane, domestic/foreign, rational/irrational, and so on, been constituted over time and in different places? All of which means that *identity*, *subjectivism*, and *power* are key concepts for poststructuralism.

Foucault's focus on the constitution of the subject is in accord with poststructuralism's concern with the dualisms which structure human experience. In particular, it is concerned with the interior/exterior (inside/outside) binary according to which that which is inside is deemed to be the self, good, primary, and original while the outside is the other, dangerous, secondary, and derivative. French philosopher Jacques Derrida has approached this issue through his strategy of deconstruction – reversing the original order of the binary pair of terms to demonstrate how the exclusion of the second term is central to the first (Culler 1982). In this argument, the outside is always central to the constitution of the inside; the insane is central to the constitution of what it is to be sane or rational; the criminal is central to the constitution of the law-abiding citizen; and the foreign is pivotal in understanding the domestic. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1979) demonstrates how what the prison confines is as much the identity of society outside the walls as it is the prisoners on the inside. The good, civilized society is constituted by the bad, barbaric prisoners it confines. When drug abuse and prostitution are made pathological by being criminalized, the effect is to normalize a moral order in which certain behaviours are excluded.

The critique of inside/outside dualisms leads poststructuralist thinkers to emphasize the importance of studying cultural practices. Instead of claiming that reality is understood by isolating the internal nature of the object studied (e.g. states and their desire to maximize power) poststructuralism studies the cultural practices through which the inclusions and exclusions that give meaning to binary pairs are established. This shift to cultural practices means that poststructuralist thinkers refuse to take any identity – individual or collective – as given and unproblematic. Rather, they see identity as culturally constructed through a series of exclusions. The particular events, problems, actors that are recognized in history are thereby understood as constituted by an order always dependent upon the marginalization and exclusion of other identities and histories. This means there are considerable affinities between poststructuralism and postcolonialism.

The emphasis on practices of exclusion in poststructural accounts involves a different understanding of power. For Foucault power is not simply *repressive* (i.e. imposing limits and constraints on the infinite possibilities of the world) but is *productive* because of the imposition of limits and constraints. Relations of power establish the limitations of

self/other, inside/relation to outside, but without those limitations those notions of self/inside, other/outside would not exist. The limitations are therefore productive: we know what that thing *is* by knowing what it is *not*. Foucault calls this productive power 'disciplinary power', power that disciplines in order to produce a certain political subject. The aim of poststructural analysis is, therefore, not to eliminate exclusion (since that is what makes meaning possible) but to understand the various forms of exclusion that constitute the world as we find it, understand how they come to be and how they continue to operate, and make possible interventions that can articulate alternatives.

Understanding discourse

Language, reality, and performance

The operations of disciplinary power, and the conceptions of subjectivity and identity to which it gives rise, takes place within discourse. Discourse refers to a specific series of representations and practices through which meanings are produced, identities constituted, social relations established, and political and ethical outcomes made more or less possible. Those employing the concept are often said to be claiming that 'everything is language', that 'there is no reality', and, because of their linguistic idealism, they are unable to take a political position and defend an ethical stance abounds.

These objections demonstrate how understandings of discourse are bedevilled by the view that interpretation involves only language in contrast to the external, the real, and the material. These dichotomies of idealism/materialism and realism/idealism remain powerful conceptions of understanding the world. In practice, however, a concern with discourse does not involve a denial of the world's existence or the significance of materiality. This is well articulated though Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 108): 'the fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has *nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition . . . What is denied is not that . . . objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside of any discursive condition of emergence.' This means that while nothing exists outside of discourse, there are important distinctions between linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena. There are also modes of representation which are ideational though strictly non-linguistic, such as the aesthetic and pictorial. It is just that there is no way of comprehending non-linguistic and extra-discursive phenomena except through discursive practices.

Understanding discourse as involving both the ideal and the material, the linguistic and the non-linguistic, means that discourses are performative. Performative means that discourses constitute the objects of which they speak. For example, states are made possible by a wide range of discursive practices that include immigration policies, military deployments and strategies, cultural debates about normal social behaviour, political speeches, and economic investments. The meanings, identities, social relations, and political assemblages that are enacted in these performances combine the ideal and the material. As a consequence, appreciating that discourses are performative moves us away

from a reliance on the idea of (social) *construction* towards *materialization*, whereby discourse 'stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface' (Butler 1993: 9, 12). Discourse is thus not something that subjects use in order to describe objects; it is that which constitutes both subjects and objects.

Discourse, materialism, and meaning

Within International Relations, there has been much misunderstanding of discourse in these terms. Even some constructivists (Wendt 1999) maintain a strict sense of the material world external to language as a determinant of social and political truth. When faced with poststructural arguments, they will maintain that no discursive understanding can help you when faced with something as material as a bullet in the head (Wendt 1999: 113; Krasner 1999: 51; cf. Zehfuss 2002). At first glance, this appears irrefutable. So how would a poststructuralist respond? First, they would say that the issue is not one of the materiality of the bullet or the reality of death for the individual when struck by the bullet in a particular way. The undeniable existence of that world external to thought is not the issue. Second, they would say that such a world – the body lying on the ground, the bullet in the head, and the shell casing lying not far away – tells us nothing itself about the meaning and significance of those elements. They would say that the constitution of the event and its elements is a product of its discursive condition of emergence, something that occurs via the contestation of competing narratives. Did the body and the bullet get to be as they are because of suicide, manslaughter, murder, ethnic cleansing, tribal war, genocide, a war of inter-state rivalry, or . . . ? Each of those terms signifies a larger discursive formation through which a whole set of identities, social relations, political possibilities, and ethical outcomes are made more or less possible. Whichever figuration emerges as the accepted or dominant one has little to do with the materiality of specific elements and much to do with power of particular discourses materializing elements into comprehensible forms with political effects. Therefore, focusing specifically on the bullets that riddled their bodies tells us very little about those circumstances beyond the fact people died, something that occurs in many other dissimilar circumstances. Not least it fails to tell us how people, knowing full well the likely futility of their actions in the face of overwhelming force, nonetheless sacrifice themselves. That is an explanation which is going to require, among other things, that attention be paid to discourses of loyalty, pride, and the nation. If in International Relations we limit ourselves to the immediate cause and context of material events we will be unable to understand the larger ethical and political issues.

Discourses of world politics

Theory as the object of analysis

Understanding discourse as performative materialization, rather than linguistic construction, takes us beyond the idea that it is just a practice employed by the subjects of international relations (be they states, institutions, or trans-national actors). We need to

consider not only the international relations discourse various actors are involved in but also the discourse of International Relations – the modes of representation that give rise to the subjects of international relations and constitute the domain to which International Relations theory is purportedly only responding.

This means poststructural accounts – in addition to the concern with the representations invoked by the actors of world politics – investigate the practices that constitute entities called ‘actors’ capable of representation. This includes the cultural, economic, social, and political practices that produce particular actors (e.g. states, non-government organizations, and the like). It also includes investigating the role of theorists and theory in representing some actors as more significant than others. In this latter sense, this means that instead of theory being understood as simply a *tool for analysis* poststructuralism treats theory as an *object of analysis*. This reorientation, which derives from poststructuralism’s status as an approach to criticism rather than a critical theory *per se*, is no less practical in its implications. It asks, for both theorists and practitioners of international relations, how do analytic approaches privilege certain understandings of global politics and marginalize or exclude others?

This approach is evident in arguments that offer historical, theoretical, and political rereadings of the traditional concerns of International Relations. For example, Walker (1993) has investigated the way that many realist questions and answers have been produced via a particular reading of Machiavelli. His conclusion is that the dominant tradition in International Relations has endorsed a narrow ahistorical reading of the paradigmatic realist which has given us the slogans of power over ethics, ends justifying means, and the necessity of violence. Similarly, in identifying anarchy as integral to realist thought, Ashley (1984, 1988) demonstrated that its status as a ‘given’ is a matter not of factual observation but part of a particular discursive strategy which disciplines our understanding of the multiple and ambiguous events of world politics through hierarchies such as sovereign/anarchic, domestic/international, objective/subjective, real/ideal, is/ought, and masculine/feminine. This means that the problematization of ‘reality’ offers two possible solutions of which only one can be chosen: e.g. sovereignty or anarchy. The operation of this ‘anarchy problematique’ results in world politics being mapped into zones of sovereignty and zones of anarchy with sovereignty being normatively superior to anarchy.

From subjects to subjectivity

One of the most important functions of these historical and theoretical critiques has been to demonstrate that what we take to be real, timeless, and universal in both the domain of international relations and field of International Relations is produced through the imposition of a form of order. A poststructural approach seeks, therefore, to make strange and denaturalize taken-for-granted perspectives. Important here are the discourses of danger we consume as citizens of a modern state. In an argument examining US foreign policy towards Central America, Shapiro (1988: ch. 3) shows that foreign policy can be understood as the process of making ‘strange’ the object under consideration in order to differentiate it from ‘us’. In the case of the construction of the ‘Central American Other’, the moral and geopolitical codes of US foreign policy discourse make US intervention in the

region seem necessary, both in terms of US interests and the subject state’s own good. Campbell (1992) developed this account to show that US foreign policy generally should be seen as a series of political practices which locate danger in the external realm – threats to ‘individuality’, ‘freedom’, and ‘civilization’ – thereby constructing the boundary between the domestic and the international, which brings the identity of the USA into existence. Together these arguments examine the practices of statecraft that produce ‘the state’ as an actor in international relations and the practices of statecraft that produce the identity of particular states. As such, these arguments are directly concerned with the state so they cannot be understood as being against the state or its importance. They focus on the production and meaning of the state rather than simply assuming or asserting that states exist naturally as particular identities.

These examples build upon poststructuralism’s concern with subjectivity, identity, and power. In general, they shift analysis from assumptions about pre-given subjects to the problematic of subjectivity and its political enactment. This is achieved through three methodological precepts, which can be understood by contrasting them to the basic assumptions of the traditional approaches to International Relations.

Methodological precepts: interpretation, representation, politics

The most common meta-theoretical discourse among mainstream theories is committed to an epistemic realism, whereby the world comprises objects the existence of which is independent of ideas or beliefs about them. This commitment sanctions two other analytic forms common to the field: a narrativizing historiography in which things have a self-evident quality that allows them to speak for themselves; and a logic of explanation in which the purpose of analysis is to identify those self-evident things and material causes so that actors can accommodate themselves to the realm of necessity they create.

Contrary to the claims of epistemic realism, a poststructural approach maintains that because understanding involves rendering the unfamiliar in the terms of the familiar, interpretation is unavoidable and such that there is nothing outside discourse, even though there is a material world external to thought. Contrary to a narrativizing historiography, a poststructural approach employs a mode of historical representation which self-consciously adopts a perspective, a perspective grounded in the view that identity is always constituted in relationship to difference. Because of this, poststructural approaches need to be understood as interventions in conventional understandings or established practices. And, contrary to the logic of causal explanation, a poststructural approach works with a logic of interpretation that acknowledges the improbability of cataloguing, calculating, and specifying the ‘real causes’, and concerns itself instead with considering the manifest political consequences of adopting one mode of representation over another. As such, poststructural approaches identify and explain how actors, events, or issues have been problematized. This means poststructuralism examines the ‘problematizations’ which make it possible to think of contemporary problems, and then examines how that discourse has emerged historically to frame an understanding of problems and solutions (Campbell 1998a: preface).



Case study: images of humanitarian crises

As an approach that adopts a critical stance in relation to its objects of concern, poststructuralism differs from other theoretical perspectives in International Relations. Because it does not seek to formulate a theory of international relations, it does not outline a detailed scheme of international politics in which some actors, issues, and relations are privileged at the expense of others. As such, poststructuralism can therefore concern itself with an almost boundless array of actors, issues, and events. The choice of actor, issue, or event is up to the analyst undertaking a poststructural analysis. Because of this, there is no one set of actors, issues, or events that would illustrate poststructuralism better than others.

The case study chosen to illustrate poststructuralism here concerns visual images of humanitarian disaster, especially famine. Visual imagery can be approached from a range of theoretical positions, but in the way it calls attention to questions of interpretation, perspective, and their political effects, it is well suited to demonstrate aspects of a poststructural account. It also reminds us that discourse should not be confined to the linguistic (Rose 2001: chs 6, 7).

Visual imagery is of particular importance for international politics because it is one of the principal ways in which news from distant places is brought home. Indeed, ever since early explorers made a habit of taking cameras on their travels, photographs have provided much basic information about the people and places encountered on those travels. Much like cartography, these images contributed to the development of an 'imagined geography' in which the dichotomies of West/East, civilized/barbaric, North/South, and developed/underdeveloped have been prominent (Said 1979; Gregory 1995). Since the advent of technology for moving images (i.e. film, television, and video), much of the news from abroad centred on disaster, with stories about disease, famine, war, and death prominent (Moeller 1999). In the post-Cold War era, news about humanitarian emergencies has become increasingly prominent.

Humanitarian emergencies are matters of life and death. But they do not exist for the majority of the people in the world unless they are constructed as an event. This construction, which materializes these issues of life and death in particular ways, is achieved in large part through media coverage. These media materializations create a range of identities – us/them, victim/saviour – and are necessary for a response to be organized. This argument is consistent with poststructuralism's reorientation of analysis from the assumption of pre-given subjects to the problematic of subjectivity because it maintains that the event (the emergency or disaster) and the identities of those involved are the effects of discursive practices through which they are brought into being. As the development consultant Jonathan Benthall argues (thereby illustrating that one does not have to cite Foucault *et al.* to formulate a poststructural analysis):

“ the coverage of disasters by the press and the media is so selective and arbitrary that . . . they 'create' a disaster when they decide to recognise it. To be more precise, they give institutional endorsement or attestation to bad events which otherwise have a reality restricted to a local circle of victims. Such endorsement is a prerequisite for the marshalling of external relief and reconstructive effort. ”

Benthall 1993:11

Pictures, especially those imprinted as photographs or frames of film, are especially apt for a poststructural analysis because they foreground questions of representation. Such pictures have been culturally produced as authoritative documents that witness atrocity and injustice, in large part because they are accepted as transparent windows on an already existing world. Through the photograph we are said to be able to view things as they are. However, technologically generated images are anything but objective records of an external reality. They are necessarily constructions in which the location of the photographer, the choice of the subject, the framing of the content, the exclusion of context, and limitations on publication and circulation unavoidably create a particular sense of place populated by a particular kind of people.

Famine images remain powerful and salient in modernity because they recall a precarious pre-modern existence industrialized society has allegedly overcome. Understood as a natural disaster in which there is a crisis of food supply, famine is seen as a symptom of the lack of progress that results in the death of the innocent (Edkins 2000). It is for this reason that famine images are more often than not of women and children, barely clothed, staring passively into the lens, flies flitting across their faces (Figure 11.3). Content analyses of newspaper photos during the Ethiopian famine of 1984 (which gave rise to the Live Aid phenomenon) found that mothers and children featured more than any other subject (Figure 11.4). As one study noted:

“ All these pictures overwhelmingly showed people as needing our pity – as passive victims. This was through a de-contextualised concentration on mid- and close-up shots emphasising body language and facial expressions. The photos seemed mainly to be taken from a high angle with no eye-contact, thus reinforcing the viewer's sense of power compared with their apathy and hopelessness. The 'Madonna and Child' image was particularly emotively used, echoing the biblical imagery. Women were at the same time patronised and exalted. ”

van der Gaag and Nash 1987: 41

Content analyses of news images through time reveals that regardless of the context, time, or place in which famine has been observed, the same images recur (Moeller 1999: ch. 3) (Figure 11.5). They recur because they are the icons of a disaster narrative, in which complex political circumstances are interpreted through an established journalistic frame of reference. In this discursive formation, outsiders come from afar to dispense charity to victims of a natural disaster who are too weak to help themselves (Benthall 1993: ch. 5). Instead of this discursive formation having to be explained in full each time, the recurrence of the iconic image of the starving child triggers this general and established understanding of famine, thereby disciplining any ambiguity about what is occurring in famine zones.

This discursive formation has effects on 'us' at the same time as it gives meaning to 'them'. Indeed, it establishes a series of identity relations that reproduce and confirm notions of self/other, developed/underdeveloped, North/South, masculine/feminine, sovereignty/anarchy, and the like. Given that most contemporary famine imagery comes from one continent, it reproduces the imagined geography of 'Africa', so that a continent of 900 million people in fifty-seven countries is homogenized into a single entity represented by a starving child (Figure 11.6). In doing this, a stereotypical famine image is not creating

Figure 11.3 Famine victims with aid workers, Idaga Hamus, Northern Ethiopia, 1984.



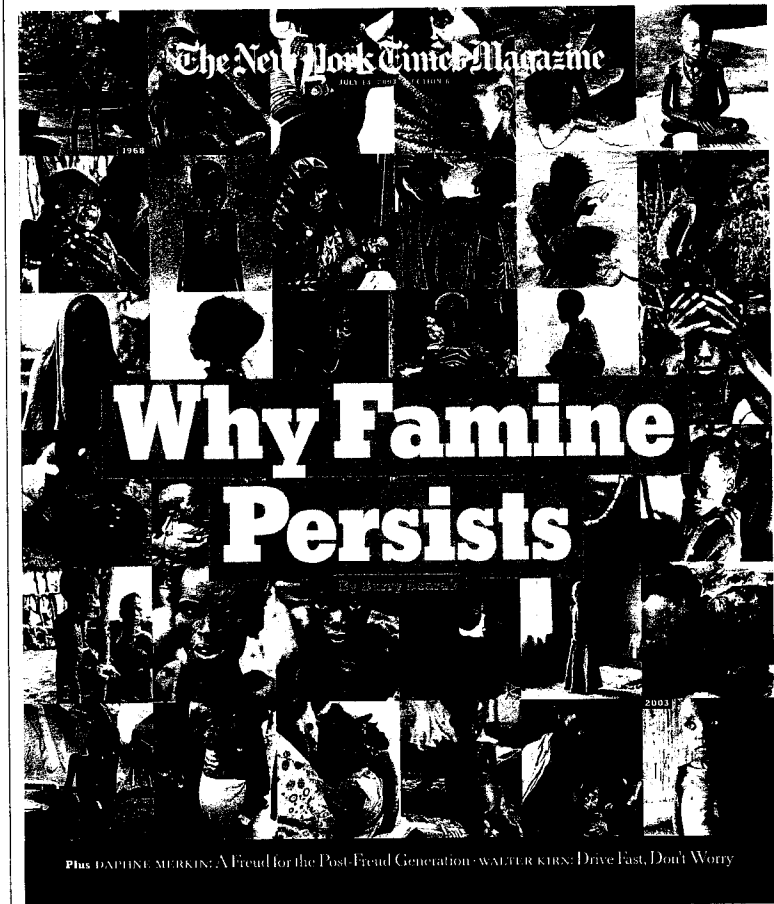
Source: Camerapix.

Figure 11.4 Mohamed Amin and Michael Buerk filming in Ethiopia, 1984.



Source: Camerapix.

Figure 11.5 *New York Times* magazine cover, July 2003.



Source: New York Times.

something from nothing. It is drawing upon established modes of representation, bringing into the present something that has been historically significant for European identity – that since the first colonial encounters ‘Africa’ has been understood as a site of cultural, moral, and spatial difference populated by ‘barbarians’, ‘heathens’, ‘primitives’, and ‘savages’. This attention to the historical emergence of particular modes of representation is a feature of poststructural analysis. Understood as genealogy, this concern with history

Figure 11.6 Daily Mirror cover image, 21 May 2002, 'Africa's Dying Again'.



Source: Mirrorpix.

dispenses with the search for origins and deals with how dominant understandings have come to work in the present (see Foucault 1977; Ashley 1987).

As detailed above, the logic of interpretation that marks a poststructural analysis is concerned with the manifest political consequences of adopting one mode of representation over another. In terms of this case study, this focus would note two impacts. First, that the discursive production of 'Africa' means the majority of outsiders (more than 80 per cent of UK respondents in one survey) view the continent in wholly negative terms as a place of disease, distress, and instability.⁴ Second, such representations establish the conditions of possibility for state and non-state action with regard to humanitarian crises, especially as they depoliticize the issues and render them best dealt with by humanitarian aid. Significantly, this logic of interpretation encompasses a notion of causality. But, rather than claiming a direct cause-effect relationship between pictures and policy (as in some

arguments about the 'CNN effect' in international politics), this focus on the conditions of possibility posits an 'emergent causality' in which elements infuse and resonate across cultural and social domains, creating real effects without being able to specify a direct, causal link (see Connolly 2004).

The overall purpose of a poststructural analysis is ethical and political. Its emphasis on how things have been produced over time seeks to denaturalize conventional representations so as to argue that they could have been different. By repoliticizing dominant representations, poststructural analyses call attention to the inclusions and exclusions involved in producing that which appears to be natural, fixed, and timeless, and argue that the political action which follows from naturalized understandings could be pursued differently. In the context of humanitarian crises, especially famines, this would establish the following: the modern understanding of famine as starvation has been secured by visual representations of women and children as innocent victims, marginalizing in the process indigenous notions of famine as social catastrophe (Edkins 2000). Understanding famine as starvation leads to international action as humanitarian aid, directed towards the condition of individuals, whereas understanding famine as social catastrophe could lead to international action as conflict resolution, directed towards the state of the community. If followed, the consequence of this would be a complete overhaul of humanitarian action in the post-Cold War world.

Conclusion

From a poststructural perspective, interpretation and representation are indispensable and unavoidable when it comes to engaging both the domain of international politics and the field of International Relations. This claim is supported by the developments in philosophy and science which have undermined empiricist and positivist accounts of knowledge and theory. With its emphasis on the importance of language, culture, and history, the interdisciplinary context that has made critical perspectives like poststructuralism possible has challenged the 'common sense' and 'taken for granted' assumptions about reality which many traditional theories of International Relations have relied upon.

In assessing poststructuralism, it is important to be clear about the purpose of this body of thought. Poststructuralism is different from most other approaches to international politics because it does not see itself as a theory, school, or paradigm which produces a single account of its subject matter. Instead, poststructuralism is an approach, attitude, or ethos that pursues critique in particular ways. Because it understands critique as an operation that flushes out the assumptions through which conventional and dominant understandings have come to be (suppressing or marginalizing alternative accounts in the process), poststructuralism sees critique as an inherently positive exercise that establishes the conditions of possibility for pursuing alternatives. It is in this context that poststructuralism makes other theories of International Relations one of its objects of analysis, and approaches those paradigms with meta-theoretical questions designed to expose how they are structured.

Although it does not outline a specific theory of international relations, poststructuralism nonetheless offers a number of general and constructive arguments that can be used to approach the study of international politics in a different manner. Poststructuralism reorients analysis away from the prior assumption of pre-given subjects to the problematic of subjectivity. This involves rethinking the question of power and identity, such that all identities are understood as effects of the operation of power and materialized through discourse. While poststructuralism rejects empiricist understandings of knowledge, its critical approach is often empirical, using archives, images, survey data, content analysis, and the like as evidence in understanding the relationship between power and knowledge. The result of a poststructuralist analysis is itself an interpretation of international politics, and as such can (and should) be subject to the same ethos of critique that gave rise to it.

Poststructuralism has often found itself marginalized within International Relations. That is largely because those critical of it have misunderstood many of its central claims (especially with regard to the relationship between language and reality) and have been anxious about the effect of following its meta-theoretical questioning to its logical conclusion. Others have sought to confront poststructuralism with criticisms founded on positions that poststructuralism has questioned – arguing, for example, poststructuralism fails to accept the existence of material reality when it has questioned the idealism/materialism dualism on which that objection depends (Laffey 2000; cf. de Goede 2003). Poststructuralism is, like all perspectives, certainly open to question. But, to be effective, critiques need to engage poststructuralism in its own terms. The starting point for an effective critique of poststructuralism involves recognizing that, instead of seeking to establish a social science, it embodies an ethical and political attitude driven by the desire to make all facile gestures difficult.

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to say that abstraction, interpretation, and representation are indispensable and unavoidable?
2. How does the discipline of International Relations 'map' the world?
3. How are power and knowledge related? What does it mean to say they are related rather than synonymous with each other?
4. What are the key features of the positivist meta-theoretical discourse which have underpinned traditional approaches to international politics, and how have developments in the philosophy of science challenged these features?
5. What are some examples of foundational thought in International Relations, and what critiques have been directed at foundational thought generally?
6. What is the relationship between modernity and postmodernity, modernism and postmodernism, and why do many scholars express an anxiety about what they (mistakenly) call 'postmodernity' in International Relations?

7. What is the critical attitude of poststructuralism as expressed in the work of Michel Foucault, and how does it differ from traditional conceptions of social scientific theory?
8. What is meant by the claim that poststructuralism reorients analysis from pre-given subjects to the problematic of subjectivity?
9. What are the main features of Foucault's conception of power and how does it differ from traditional perspectives in International Relations?
10. If there is 'nothing outside discourse', does this mean that language is all there is and reality is only a product of the imagination?
11. How can poststructuralism's concern with subjectivity, identity, power, and discourse be connected to the categories and concerns of International Relations?
12. Should poststructuralism be viewed as a paradigm in International Relations? How can we assess its impact on the discipline?



FURTHER READING

- Bleiker, R. (2000), *Popular Dissent, Human Agency and Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Theoretically and empirically sophisticated demonstration of how exploring questions of identity, agency, and subjectivity widens the understanding of politics and permits a conception of resistance.
- Campbell, D. (1998a), *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, revised edn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press). One of the first book-length studies that works with a poststructural attitude to rethink international politics, with an epilogue in the revised edition reviewing the discipline's debates around identity.
- Der Derian, J. and M. J. Shapiro (1989) (eds), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics* (Lexington KY: Lexington Books). The first collection of poststructural work, for which the publisher insisted on having 'postmodern' in the title.
- Der Derian, J. (2001), *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network* (Boulder CO: Westview). Based on theoretical readings and empirical fieldwork, this monograph, written before 9/11, offers a prescient recasting of the nature of contemporary war.
- Edkins, J. (1999), *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In* (Boulder CO: Lynne Reinner). Provides a good introduction to the work of Derrida and Foucault, amongst others, emphasizing questions of subjectivity and politics.
- Edkins, J., Pin-Fat, V., and Shapiro, M. J. (2004) (eds), *Sovereign Lives: Power in Global Politics* (New York: Routledge). Offers recent work focusing on the issue of sovereignty, and introduces the idea of biopolitics to International Relations.
- George, J. (1994), *Discourses of Global Politics* (Boulder CO: Lynne Reinner). Important discussion of the interdisciplinary debates in the social sciences that make a poststructural account possible.
- Shapiro, M.J. and Alker, H. R. (eds), *Challenging Boundaries: Global Flows, Territorial Identities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press). A collection that demonstrates the wide range of events, issues, and topics involving the concept of identity that can be examined with a critical ethos.

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■ Walker, R. B. J. (1993), *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Seminal discussion that critically examines International Relations as political theory, thereby establishing the possibility for poststructural analyses.



IMPORTANT WEBSITES

Although neither of these sites is self-consciously poststructuralist, the critical approaches to their objects of concern embodies the ethos of critique described above:

- The Imaging Famine project. Examines media coverage of famine from the nineteenth century to the present day. Focusing on photographic images, it contains background documents, reports as well as historic and contemporary photo essays.
www.imaging-famine.org
- The Information Technology, War and Peace project. At Brown University's Watson Institute, it covers the impact of information technology on statecraft and new forms of networked global politics.
www.watsoninstitute.org/infopeace/index2.cfm



Visit the Online Resource Centre that accompanies this book for lots of interesting additional material. www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/dunne/

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Postcolonialism

SIBA N. GROVOGUI



Chapter contents

- Introduction
- International morality and ethics
- Orientalism and identities
- Power and legitimacy in the international order
- Case study
- Conclusion



Reader's guide

Without impugning the eloquence and character of our precursors, any student of international relations may legitimately ask whether the likes of Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Kant give accurate accounts of the complex, varied, and unpredictable events that characterized their times. One may also ask whether their maxims of war-making and peace-making hold lessons for the present; and, importantly, whether their representations of human nature, power, and interest correspond to the experiences of societies conquered by Europe. Postcolonialism highlights that the views of politics held by these figures may not correspond to the experiences of non-Western societies. It offers new ways of knowing and thinking about the complex and fluid events that have shaped relations around the world by stressing the varying contexts of power, identity, and value across time and space. This chapter will, first, explore the morality and ethics in postcolonialism before moving on to discuss Said's work on 'Orientalism'. The chapter will then discuss notions of power and legitimacy in reference to the issue of nuclear proliferation. Finally, the case-study section discusses the issue of the nationalization of the Suez Canal from a postcolonial perspective.