Constructing Africa(ns) in International Relations Theory: Bridging a theoretical abyss

Rikus Oswald

B.A. (US)

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (International Studies) at the University of Stellenbosch

Supervisor: Dr. Karen Smith

March 2009

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature:……………………………

Date:……………………………..

ABSTRACT

Africa(ns) are currently marginalised within the discipline of International Relations. This thesis explores the possibility that employing a constructivist approach could facilitate the inclusion of Africa as *an object of study* and Africans *as potential agents of IR knowledge* within the discipline by bridging a theoretical abyss.

Two discourses, namely the rationalist and Africanist, are identified. They frame the sides of the theoretical abyss to which Africa(ns) have been marginalised within IR. These discourses adhere to the opposing analytical approaches which constitute the Third Debate, namely rationalism and reflectivism. This thesis proposes two theoretical reconstructions that can facilitate the bridging of this theoretical abyss. The theoretical reconstructions are explicated by employing different research stances. The researcher is situated within the intellectual space afforded by the boundaries of the discipline in order to propose the first reconstruction. The second theoretical reconstruction is proposed by problematising the boundaries the discipline of IR.

This study found that constructivism facilitates the process of establishing the middle ground between rationalism and reflectivism and in so doing could include Africa as an object of study. It also found that the intervention of constructivism facilitated a necessary change in the culture of the discipline to create the possibility of extending the notion of engaged pluralism and re-imagining the discipline as a disciplinary community of difference. This leads to the opening up of the necessary dialogical space to include Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge. Constructivism is therefore the mutually constituting link between the two proposed theoretical reconstructions as they are made possible by its intervention in the discipline.

OPSOMMING

Afrika(ne) word huidiglik gemarginaliseer binne die dissipline van Internasionale Betrekkinge. Hierdie tesis ondersoek die moontlikheid dat die gebruik van 'n konstruktiwistiese benadering die insluiting van Afrika *as 'n onderwerp van studie* of Afrikane *as potensiële agente van IB kennis* deur die oorbrugging van 'n teoretiese kloof kan fasiliteer.

Twee diskoerse, naamlik die rasionalistiese and die Afrikanistiese, word geïdentifiseer. Hierdie diskoerse stel die sye van die teoretiese kloof voor waarin Afrika(ne) gemarginaliseer word binne IB. Hulle hou verband met die twee opponerende analitiese benaderings van rasionalisme en reflektiwisme wat die Derde Debate uitmaak. Hierdie tesis stel twee teoretiese rekonstruksies voor wat die oorbrugging van die teoretiese kloof kan fasiliteer. Hierdie teoretiese rekonstruksies word ontvou deur verskillende navorsingsposisies in te neem. Die navorser plaas homself binne die intellektuele spasie wat deur die grense van die dissipline toegelaat word om sodoende die eerste rekonstruksie voor te stel. Die tweede rekonstruksie word voorgestel deur die problematisering van die grense van die dissipline.

Hierdie studie het gevind dat konstruktiwisme die proses van die opstelling van 'n middelgrond tussen rasionalisme en reflektiwisme fasiliteer en sodoende Afrika as 'n onderwerp van studie kan insluit. Die studie het ook gevind dat die toetrede van konstruktiwisme die nodige verandering aan die kultuur van die dissipline veroorsaak het wat die moontlikheid skep dat die begrip van 'engaged pluralism' uitgebrei en die hervoorstelling van die dissipline as a dissiplinêre gemeenskap van diversiteit kan word. Hierdie hervoorstelling lei tot die skepping van die nodige dialogale spasie om Afrikane as potensiële agente van IB kennis in te sluit. Konstruktiwisme is dus die onderliggende skakel wat die twee voorgestelde teoretiese rekonstruksies moontlik maak deur die benadering se toetrede tot die dissipline.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the contribution that various people made to the successful completion of this thesis and in so doing convey my gratitude for the love, guidance and support that they provided:

- To my supervisor, Dr. Karen Smith, for her willingness to push as hard as she did to help me complete my thesis and for her guidance and sublime editing skills.

- To my parents, Desmond and Marietjie Oswald, who supported me more than they could ever know during this difficult process and for their unconditional love to which I ascribe immense value.

- To my wonderful friend and companion, Larissa, who continued to support me even though I sometimes had to work for days on a trott and for unabatedly supplying the necessary nourishment and encouragement.

- To my wonderful friends, John, Jannie and Joubert, without whose telephonic support and encouragement everyting might have gone off track.

- To my sister, Susan, who had to hear me ramble on and on about my thesis and was willing to cut me off when I was not making sense.

- To the teaching and administrative staff of the Department of Political Science at the University of Stellenbosch for their friendship, encouragement and help during the last few years.

DEDICATION

Desmond and Marietjie Oswald

This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful and supportive parents who set me on the road to knowledge and was willing to support me along the way towards generating some of my own.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

FIGURES:

TABLES:

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCING THE STUDY

1.1 CONTEXTUALISING THE FOCUS OF THE STUDY

1.1.1 Why Africa(ns)?

I am an African! This seemingly innocuous statement has resounded on the African continent during two different eras. It was initially expounded by Kwameh Nkrumah, President of Ghana, after the initiation of the process of decolonisation on the African continent in 1958. It seemed to proclaim a break with the past whereby Africans were given a right to proclaim their own identity. This reclamation of our Africanness was repeated in 1996 when Thabo Mbeki, the Vice-President of South Africa, made it the central theme of his speech with the acceptance of the country's new Constitution. In this instance it seemed to proclaim a vision of the future of the continent, while remaining cognisant of the past. As part of the opening statement of this thesis I would like to acknowledge that I too am an African. The problem is that the adoption of this identity places you at the fringes of the discipline of International Relations.

Presently the continent of Africa and African scholars continue to occupy a marginalised position within the discipline of International Relations (IR) theory. Before explicating the specific nature of the study that will be undertaken it is necessary to understand how Africa(ns) are marginalised within IR and why it is worth exploring Africa(ns) within the discipline, as these questions frame the context of the problem which is the focus of this thesis.

It is argued in this thesis that Africa(ns) are currently marginalised by two discourses – one rationalist and one Africanist[1]. These discourses frame the edges of a theoretical abyss, a metaphor employed in this thesis to denote Africa(ns)' marginalised position. It is necessary to shortly introduce the two discourses in order to understand the use of this specific metaphor.

---

[1] The differences between the two discourses will be explicated in Chapter 2. In the context of this thesis these discourses are seen as mutually exclusive.

This first discourse is that of rationalism. Africa(ns)' marginalisation resulted from the homogenising framework imposed by the rise of neorealism in the late 1970s, but was initiated by the dominance of the rationalist theories, neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism, over the last few decades within the discipline (Buzan, 1998). The homogenising framework imposed itself on how Africa is studied, if studied at all, and also determined the type of questions that IR scholars, including African IR scholars, can ask in order to produce legitimate knowledge. The second discourse is that of the Africanist critiques which attack the neorealist discourse. These critiques are mostly reflectivist in orientation. Although they place the African context and African knowledge at the centre of their analyses their focus on an essentialised history of Africa continues to portray the continent as apart from the world (Mbembe & Nuttall, 2004: Brown, 2006). It is thus argued here that both of these discourses therefore place the African continent and African IR knowledge "in the hidden spaces of the European imagination … [and therefore Africa] remains the ghost of Europe's self-reflection" (Ashcroft, 2002:1).

Following the introduction of the discourses that frame Africa(ns)' marginalisation, the question becomes, why there is a need to include Africa as an object of study or Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge? This question needs to be answered; otherwise the justification of this thesis becomes a moot point.

Clapham (1996:4) provides one answer to this question by noting that "[a] view of international relations from the bottom up, [read the Third World or periphery], may … help, not only to illuminate the impact of the global system on those who are least able to resist it, but to provide a perspective on the system, and hence on the study of international relations as a whole, which may complement and even correct the perspective gained from looking from the top downwards". Although the imagery employed by Clapham (1996) implicitly relegates Africa to the bottom of world politics, the point he makes remains valid. A similar argument is made by Lavelle (2005:377) when she notes that including Africa does not "just add to the geographical diversity of case studies available". Nkiwane (2001:280) also argues in her article, like Clapham, that "African examples and African scholarship lend important insights and critiques to the various perspectives on international relations" and are not only important "in [their] disruptive potential".

The lack of theoretical studies making Africa their focal point and also introducing Africans as agents of IR knowledge further necessitates that Africa(ns) be placed at the centre of IR studies in order to create a less partial picture of IR. Weldon (2006), arguing from a feminist position, articulates that the perspectives of marginalised groups, such as Africans, must be included. She indicates that it "does not just add another set of experiences to existing accounts; it forces revision of the dominant accounts, since it reveals them as partial and limited", and thus "positions of political disadvantage can be turned into sites of analytical advantage" (Weldon, 2006:62, 64; LaMonica, 2008). The inclusion of Africa(ns) is therefore necessary in order to overcome the identified geographical or in some cases Western parochialism of the discipline of IR and also to make the discipline less partial in terms of the subjectivities it focuses on when constructing IR knowledge (Biersteker, 1999; LaMonica, 2008).

1.1.2 Problem Statement

Africa as an object of study and Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge are currently marginalised in the discipline of IR as a result of two discourses informed by a rationalist and a reflectivist position, respectively. These approaches frame the edges of the theoretical abyss in which Africa(ns) reside(s) within the discipline of IR. Neither of these approaches is effective in incorporating Africans as agents of IR knowledge and/or the African context as an object of study into the discipline of IR. The lack of African studies and African perspectives on IR means that the discipline currently only presents a partial/distorted view of world politics. The problem which this study will therefore seek to address can be framed as follows:

How can Africa as an *object* of study and Africans as potential *agents* of IR knowledge be included within the discipline without leading to their marginalisation?

1.1.3 Research Aim and Questions

The premise of this study is that employing a constructivist approach to study the African context and the discipline of IR can lead to the bridging of the theoretical abyss introduced above. In bridging this theoretical abyss a constructivist approach could thus facilitate the

inclusion of Africa as an object of study and Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge. This premise is derived from the apparent middle ground position that constructivism occupies between rationalism and reflectivism (Adler, 1997; Fierke & Jørgenson, 2001, Wiener, 2006) as well as the contention that constructivism, in establishing the middle ground, has changed the culture of IR, thus creating the necessary dialogical space to overcome the institutionalisation of the incommensurability thesis within the discipline (Wight, 1996; Wiener, 2006). The overarching research aim of this study is therefore to indicate that the research premise is justifiable.

Following on from the problem statement and the stated research premise the questions that will frame this study are:

- Can constructivism lead to the inclusion of Africa as an object of study within IR without leading to its further marginalisation?
- What methodological form should constructivism take in order to facilitate Africa's inclusion?
- Can constructivism facilitate the creation of the necessary dialogical space to include Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge?

These questions are related to specific subsidiary research aims which inform the individual chapters comprising this study. These research aims will be explicated in the outline of the structure of this thesis.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs a constructivist approach to conduct the research. As a result it views the discipline of IR and by extension also the boundaries of the discipline as social constructs. These boundaries frame the intellectual space afforded to scholars related to a specific topic or problem, for instance African international relations, and also determines who is allowed to produce legitimate theoretical IR knowledge.

Fearon and Wendt (2002) argue that rationalism and constructivism, and by extension reflectivism, are not actually theories of world politics, but should rather be pragmatically viewed as analytical tools. Ruggie (1998:34) similarly claims that constructivism is most effectively viewed as "a theoretically informed approach to the study of international

relations". In this study rationalism, constructivism, and reflectivism will be employed as theoretically informed analytical approaches and are therefore comparable. The ontological and epistemological foundations of the constructivist approach will be explicated in Chapter 3.

Following from the view of constructivism employed in this thesis it is argued that constructivism can be employed as either an analytical approach or a meta-analytical approach depending on where the scholar situates himself/herself in relation to the boundaries of the discipline. Constructivism is employed as an analytical approach when the scholar is situated within the current boundaries of the discipline. When the boundaries of the discipline themselves become the focus, constructivism can be employed as a meta-analytic approach. Both of these stances will be employed in the process of conducting this research.

1.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Both of the units of analyses that frame the focus of this study are situated in what Mouton (1996) calls World 2, referring to the world of science. This relates to what, according to Mouton (2001:140) comprises "a body of accumulated scholarship" which includes knowledge, research, and the disciplines from which they derive. Based on the research aims the units of analyses will be: 1) the body of scholarship within the discipline of IR, specifically the body of scholarship focusing on the study of the African context; and 2) the discipline of IR. As a result of the research aims and the units of analyses that are central to this study the research design will be non-empirical in nature.

This study will employ what Mouton (2001) calls a 'scholarship review', or more generally known as a "literature review", as its only research methodology. According to Henning (2004) one of the important roles that the scholarship review normally plays in research, except for helping to contextualise the study, is to help the researcher integrate, synthesise and critically engage with the literature around the stated research problem. Babbie and Mouton (2001) also argue that the scholarship covered in a study should be directly applicable to the stated research problem and research aims. In this study, the research problem and research aim relate to both Africa as an object of study and Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge.

The manner in which the scholarship review is conducted in this thesis closely relates to how Nieuwenhuis (2007) describes a conceptual study. He notes that the main characteristics of a conceptual study are "that it is largely based on secondary sources, that it critically engages with the understanding of concepts, and that it aims to add to our existing body of knowledge and understanding – it generates knowledge" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:71). The focus of this thesis is not on a concept, but rather on "Africa as a name, as an idea, and as an object of academic and public discourse" specifically in relation to the discipline of IR (Mbembe & Nuttall, 2004:348). The knowledge that is constructed in this thesis should be seen as part of the ongoing process of knowledge construction within the discipline (Tickner, 2005).

The author argues that the scholarship that this study engages with frame the boundaries of knowing and knowledge that create the intellectual space afforded to scholars within the discipline of International Relations[2]. The most important element of using the scholarship review is therefore to highlight these boundaries whilst leaving the researcher with the ability to critically engage with the scholarship which frame them and in so doing generate knowledge which could potentially lead to their transformation.

1.4 DELIMITATIONS

As a result of the lack of resources, especially with regard to the allocation of time and space, this study consciously needed to limit the scope of the scholarship covered. Therefore this study focuses explicitly on one specific rationalist IR theory, namely neorealism and will also advocate one form of constructivism which will inform the constructivist methodology explicated in this thesis.

1.4.1 Neorealism, as a Rationalist Theoretical Approach

This thesis focuses on neorealism as a rationalist informed approach. Neoliberal institutionalism is therefore excluded from the scholarship that is studied. This author advocates three reasons for limiting this study's scope to neorealism as an example of rationalist theorising in IR:

---

[2] See Ibert (2007) for a discussion about the differences between "knowledge" and "knowing".

- Realism is still recognised by many scholars as the dominant theoretical framework in IR. From the arguments of Walker and Morton (2005) and taking into account the findings of various studies indicating the preponderance of the realist perspective in IR research, it is quite clear that realism is still deemed by many scholars to be the best theory to explain the international system (Reus-Smit, 2002; LaMonica, 2008). This means that many scholars, also those working within the African IR community like Solomon (2001), still deem realism to be the best theory for understanding Africa in the international system.

- This dominance also exists within the South African IR community, which is the IR community within which I conduct my study. Taylor (2000), Smith (2006) and Moore (2008) argue that in the context of South African IR scholarship, realism and neorealism are still the predominant discourses framing most of the inquiries into international relations. Taylor (2000) laments this paradigmatic dominance of realism in South African IR when he states that "the curse of realism continues to blight the International Relations community both generally and in South Africa".

- The final reason for limiting the scope of rationalist theories covered in this study to realism is based on the claim made by Brown (2006). He argues that most of the Africanist critiques focusing on the inappropriateness of traditional IR theory to Africa are levelled against realism and more specifically neorealism. In trying to overcome the limitations of these critiques it is thus necessary to focus on the theoretical framework which bears the brunt of their criticism.

1.4.2 Explicating *a* Constructivist Methodology

Jørgenson (2001:37) argues that "constructivism is represented at four different levels of reasoning and, furthermore, that at each level we can identify *multiple versions of constructivism*" (author's emphasis). This argument will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, but it should be noted here that this thesis advocates one specific form of constructivism which, it is argued, is the most useful given the stated research premise and aim.

The form of constructivism that is advocated informs the constructivist methodology explicated in this thesis. This thesis is limited to explicating this methodology as the application thereof falls outside of its scope.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This first chapter provided a brief introduction to and contextualisation of the argument which will follow in the rest of the thesis. It has also posited the central research problem, the premise of the research and the related research questions which frame the study. This introduction has also indicated the non-empirical nature of the study and the use of a scholarship review as the research methodology. Lastly it also indicated the delimitations that frame the scope of the study.

Chapter 2: Exploring the Theoretical Abyss

The aim of this chapter is to conduct an exploratory journey into the theoretical abyss to which Africa as an object of study and African knowledge is resigned within the discipline of IR. It therefore expands on the arguments and the metaphor that were introduced in this chapter in order to extensively explore and explicate the theoretical abyss which this thesis focuses on bridging. It therefore identifies the boundaries and intellectual space afforded to scholars regarding Africa(ns) as research focus.

After the conclusion of Chapter 2 this study is divided into two parts. The first part, comprising Chapters 3 and 4, focuses on Africa as an object of study, whilst the second part, comprising Chapter 5, shifts the focus to Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge. In order to facilitate this distinction, the three world typology outlined by Mouton (1996) will be employed[3]. See Figure 1.1 for a visual representation of this distinction.

In the first part the researcher stands in World 2 as the focus is on how Africa as an object of study has been treated within the discipline of IR. It therefore employs constructivism as an analytical approach as the researcher is situated within the intellectual space of the discipline. It thus focuses on the first identified unit of analysis. In the second part the researcher stands in World 3 as the focus shifts to Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge. The boundaries of the discipline therefore become the focus of this second part and therefore constructivism is employed as a meta-analytic approach. The discipline of IR thus becomes the unit of analysis in the second part of this thesis.

---

[3] The distinction between these three worlds is merely analytical as there are numerous examples of the interrelationships which exist between them.

Figure 1.1: Mouton's Three World Typology

WORLD 3:
THE WORLD OF
METASCIENCE
(*the critical interest)*

WORLD 2:
THE WORLD OF
SCIENCE
(*the empirical
interest)*

WORLD 1:
THE WORLD OF
EVERYDAY LIFE
(*the pragmatic
interest)*
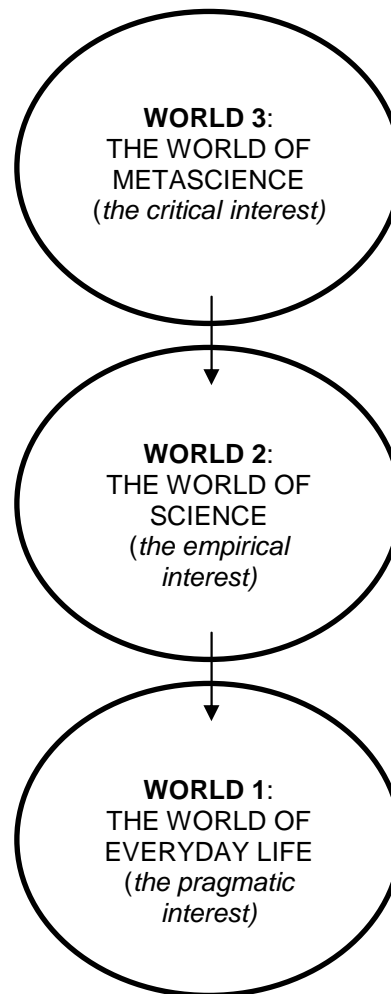
(Adapted from Mouton, 1996:10)

Part I: Africa as an Object of Study

Chapter 3: Constructing Africa in International Relations Theory:

Establishing the Middle Ground

The aim of this chapter is to show that the intervention of constructivism in IR by establishing the middle ground between rationalism and reflectivism allows it to facilitate the bridging of the theoretical abyss and include Africa as an object of study. This chapter introduces the constructivist approach to the study of IR by focusing on the ontological and epistemological positions from which it is derived. It then focuses on the middle ground position that constructivism is argued to occupy and critically interrogates both the so-called middle ground and the notion of bridge-building that is related to it in order to

facilitate their re-orientation along processual lines. This re-orientation entails that various middle ground positions exist.

Chapter 4: Constructing Africa in International Relations Theory: Africa and Constructivism

This chapter aims to explicate the methodological form that constructivism should take in order to effectively bridge the theoretical abyss. It firstly focuses on previous constructivist analyses that either directly or indirectly focus on the African continent. Secondly it critically engages with Wendtian constructivism from a position within the African geo-cultural context, as it is argued that his approach provides one of the most comprehensive attempts at bridge-building in the discipline. Based on the criticisms of Wendtian constructivism informed by the African context, the chapter provides the outline of a constructivist informed IR methodology which, it is argued, will be able to facilitate the inclusion of Africa as an object of study within the discipline.

Part II: Africans as Agents of IR Knowledge
Chapter 5: Constructing Africans in International Relations Theory

This chapter aims to problematise the current construction of the boundaries of the discipline and their normative underpinning in order to construct an argument for their re-imagination. By re-focusing the arguments for engaged pluralism on the importance of also bridging the gaps between Western and African IR communities, it makes an argument for the inclusion of African knowledge. It then provides an argument for the normative re-imagining of the discipline of IR as a disciplinary community of difference in order to imbue the discipline with the normative potentiality to include African scholars as agents of IR knowledge.

Chapter 6: Tying a Knot: Summarising, Limiting and Recommending

This chapter ties a knot in the ongoing research process in IR of which this thesis forms a part. It provides a summary of the theoretical reconstructions that were proposed in this thesis, both from within the intellectual space currently provided and by problematising the boundaries. It also concludes by noting the mutually constitutive link between these theoretical reconstructions and thus explicates the interrelationship between the three worlds within the context of this thesis. Lastly, it provides an explication of the limits of this research and recommends some possibilities for future research studies.

CHAPTER 2
EXPLORING THE THEORETICAL ABYSS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The theoretical abyss, in which the African context and African knowledge finds itself, was shortly introduced in Chapter 1. In the argument that follows, the author contends that the African context and African knowledge are presently doubly marginalised within the discipline of IR theory as a result of two discourses informing the study of Africa within IR. These two discourses - the rationalist and Africanist[4] - frame the edges of this theoretical abyss.

Africa(ns) seems to have always been stuck at the outer margins of the discipline of IR theory, if not systematically excluded. Even with the continual development of the discipline the African context and African knowledge have been deemed unimportant and have therefore had very little influence on the theoretical development of IR. Croft (1997:608-609) states this position quite succinctly in his analysis of Africa's position in IR theory:

> *During these 'simple' times [when realism held sway over the discipline], IR's paradigms left no room for the study of Africa, for the key focus was on the 'great powers', how to prevent war between them, manage relations between them, or advance their national interests. But in the 1970s space seemed to open up for Africa through the concept of transnationalism and through dependency theory. But again, Africa was not brought in to IR. …From the early 1980s onwards, IR fragmented further. … The introduction of post-positivism brought about Yosef Lapid's definition of IR's third great debate (positivism versus post-positivism), but again did not allow for any concentration on Africa. The many paradigms have collectively and uniquely excluded Africa.*

---

[4] These two categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but in this thesis these labels, although potentially inadequate, are employed to distinguish between two discourses expounded about Africa in IR, informed by different epistemological positions. Both of these discourses include scholars from within the West and Africa within their ranks.

This specific point is taken even further by Croft (1997) as he, quite correctly it is argued, indicates that where Africa has been included the focus has been on its dependence on the North. Studies about African IR have therefore also been left devoid of theoretical content marginalising both Africa's role as an object of inquiry in IR and Africans as potential contributors to the theoretical development of the discipline. Engel and Olsen (2006a; 2006b) make the same argument as Croft in their analysis of Africa's position in and contribution to theoretical debates in IR. There is thus a continual cycle of dismissal of the African continent and African knowledge which, this chapter argues, has been the result of the theoretical abyss.

This chapter focuses on the two discourses framing the theoretical abyss and explores both in more detail. The first section of this chapter locates the elements of the rationalist discourse by focusing on (neo)realism[5]. It firstly interrogates realism's role within the sociology of the discipline of IR in order to show how the realist discourse has excluded African knowledge within IR theory by defining the boundaries of legitimate knowledge. The second part will critically assess the arguments advanced by realists about studying the world 'out there'. It will focus on the realists' assumption that the knowledge they produce is universally applicable even though it excludes small powers, and inevitably Africa, as an object of study. It will lastly focus on one attempt to reformulate realist arguments in order to account for the African context by looking at the realist state-making literature. The second section of this chapter provides an analysis of the Africanist critique of mainstream (read rationalist) IR theory. That section of the chapter initially provides the Africanist critique. The focus then shifts to the critical assessment of this discourse conducted by Brown (2006) in order to indicate how this discourse, which purports to place the African context and knowledge at the centre of its analysis of IR, ends up marginalising the continent further within IR theory.

2.2 REALISM AND AFRICA(NS) IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

> *Realism, like other philosophies, traditions, or research programs, is an aid to understanding. It is a tool that works well for certain purposes, and not at all for others. Our discipline clearly would be impoverished were it to be stripped of insights and understandings rooted in realism. But it is no less*

---

[5] The reasons for this focus were provided in Chapter 1.

impoverished when realists assert, as many have in recent decades, an
unjustified hegemony for their problems and visions.

(Donelly, 2000:197)

Realism, as a theoretical paradigm, has to a large extent defined the intellectual boundaries of the discipline of IR, both in terms of what can/should be studied and what constitutes IR knowledge. Boundaries are both meaning-making and meaning-carrying and therefore it is argued that realism has defined what constitutes meaning within the discipline and how it can be acquired. From the work on realism by Guzzini (1998) and Donelly (2000; 2005) this author notes that it is possible to identify several different ways in which realism is defined and constituted within IR[6]. This constitutive and denotative difficulty is the result of the continual uncritical usage and application of the concept of realism by scholars within the discipline of IR. Various scholars have used the concept of realism without due consideration of the context in which it is presented and with the inherent assumption of being understood by other scholars within the discipline. This uncritical employment of realism is, to some extent, the outcome of the homogenising framework imposed by realist theorising, the paradigm's intellectual predominance within IR and, as Hayman (2006:4) argues, the fact that realism has "acquired the impression of coherence, of a unified approach".

This section seeks to interrogate the intellectual boundaries of the discipline of IR as it is set by the discourse of the realist paradigm. This will be done in order to *critically* assess how these intellectual boundaries lead to the marginalisation of both Africans as agents of IR knowledge and Africa as an object of study within the discipline.

2.2.1 Realists and Africans: African IR knowledge

Several authors argue that realism has defined and dominated the discipline of IR since its inception and still continues its domination (Frankel, 1996; Solomon, 2001). Walker and Morton (2005) acknowledge that rationalist theories (the neo-neo synthesis) dominate the discipline. Vasquez (1998) and various realists assert that the realist paradigm still

---

[6] For a good exploration of the arguments regarding the different ways in which Realism has been constituted and defined within IR see Donelly (2000).

predominates the theoretical work that is being conducted in the discipline, especially within the US IR community.

The so-called birth of the discipline of IR and the appearance of realism within the American scholarly academy occurred concurrently. This has meant that realism had become "…inextricably linked to the self-conception of the scientific discipline [of IR] and its academic community" (Guzzini, 1998:11). This interaction of the realist paradigm and the IR community, specifically in America, has resulted in the theoretical dominance of this paradigm for most of the early forming years of the discipline. Theory-construction within the discipline, according to Vasquez (1998), has thus been conducted within the parameters or boundaries set by the realist paradigm. One of the most important elements of these parameters is the incorporation of the Lakatosian model of theory construction which is especially prominent in the theoretical work of Waltz (1979) (Vasquez, 1998). This entails that most of the efforts regarding concept creation and the hypotheses tested within the discipline has their origins within the realist paradigm (Vasquez, 1998; Walker & Morton, 2005). The inextricable link between realism and the identity of the discipline of IR has meant that criticisms of the intellectual borders of the discipline have been identified as attacks on realism, whilst attacks on realism have been viewed as attacks on the legitimate existence of the discipline (Guzzini & Leander, 2006).

Beer and Hariman (1996) note that the story realism purports about its role within the discipline is one of intellectual hegemony. They contend that the paradigm portrays itself "as the primary actor in the world of theory, with power greater than other theories" (Beer & Hariman, 1996:4). This argument is clearly visible in the works of various realists. Frankel (1996:ix) states that "[realism] has consistently provided the most reliable guidance for statecraft, and it has consistently offered the most compelling explanations of state behaviour", whilst Desch (1996:358) argues that "realism is the central paradigm of IR". Mearsheimer (1995) basically states that scholars are free to use alternative theories, but argues that they will lead to an inaccurate description of the world, as the world 'out there' looks just like it is described by realists. Two quotes cited in the work by Walker and Morton (2005:341-342) also indicate this sense of paradigmatic superiority that one finds in the work of some realists: "Michael Doyle has observed that realism is our dominant theory. Most IR scholars are either self-identified or readily identifiable Realists"; whilst

Kenneth Waltz answers a question regarding the possibility of alternative theories to neorealism as follows "I wish there were. I just don't know of any other theories".

This perception of superiority, Beer and Hariman (1996) assert, is the result of three different arguments advanced about the realist paradigm: 1) realism is intertwined with the creation and dominance of the nation-state as an actor in world politics; 2) it reduces the story told about the development of ideas in IR as one based on dominant thinkers all of whom are invariably realist in orientation; and 3) realists link the construction of their paradigm with the rise of scientific method within the discipline. Smith (2000) interrogates the last argument mentioned by Beer and Hariman when he assesses the foundational myths of the discipline of IR. Smith (2000:378-379), following the work of Schmidt on these foundational myths, argues that

> *…the dominance of realism within the US IR community … can be easily seen as vindication of a specific theoretical approach, one that is accurate regardless of time and space: realism is <u>the</u> theory of international relations…. The very fact that realism can be 'shown' to have replaced idealism, that it was a theory that more accurately captured the 'realities' of international politics, becomes a foundational myth in another sense: only realism can produce knowledge about the world of international relations that is scientific.*

Realists therefore claim that realism is and has remained the superior theoretical paradigm within IR, because it is the most reliable analytical framework for understanding and explaining world politics and the only paradigm that can therefore produce scientific knowledge. As a result realism developed into the orthodox theoretical position within IR. Steans (2003:432) indicates that "[to] speak of an 'orthodoxy' is to identify a dominance within the field to the degree that a particular perspective or paradigm has been treated as though it was a 'common sense' view of the world against which all other perspectives should be judged". Some scholars have therefore also related realism's longevity to its nature as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The intellectual hegemony of realism within the discipline of IR has resulted in its dominance within the South African IR community. The South African IR community is the community within which the author is situated and it is the African IR community which

predominates in scholars' analyses of national IR communities in Africa. This argument was already introduced in Chapter 1 with reference to the arguments posed by Taylor (2000), but similar arguments are identifiable in the work of Smith (2006) and Moore (2008). Smith (2006:7) contends that "during the previous century, the rest of the world, including the periphery, adopted American IR theory, and especially the dominant theory of Realism, just as it adopted – and embraced – American culture". It is specifically the Americanised nature of the discipline of IR that has fostered and cemented realism's secure position as the central theoretical paradigm (Rosenberg, 1990). Moore (2008:25) further argues that, although the South African IR community "has been captured by neo-realist ontologies, it has been underinfluenced, to the point of ignorance, by the debates that take place in the social sciences on the legitimacy or otherwise of positivist epistemologies".

By inferring from the state of the discipline in the South Africa IR community it is thus argued that the African IR community has become a mere consumer of the dominant realist paradigm and the knowledge which has been developed within this paradigm. This has resulted from the imposition of these discourses by intellectual, mostly realist, gatekeepers in the core, but also from the willingness of scholars in the periphery to accept these already constructed discourses (Tsygankov & Tsygankov, 2007; Smith, 2008). Tickner (2007:5) notes this acceptance of constructed theories by scholars in the periphery when she indicates that "[just] as members of an academic community accept its respective rules and power arrangements as a precondition for admission, academic elites in the south internalize and reproduce this hegemonic arrangement by favouring core knowledge as more authoritative and scientific in comparison to local variants".

The consumption of the realist paradigm by the African IR community is also a consequence of the various concomitant constraints derived from the dominance of realism, which inhibits the emergence of theoretical developments informed by African experiences or Africans as agents of IR knowledge. The most important of these constraints relates to questions regarding the boundaries of legitimate knowledge within the discipline. In order to engage in a dialogue with Western IR scholars, the neo-neo debate (read rationalist theories), and the knowledge which is created in this debate, is the only seemingly legitimate entry point for African experience, and the judge and jury of knowledge generated in Africa. This results from the Eurocentrism which informs the

debates about these boundaries. Thomas and Wilkin (2004:252) define Eurocentrism as "the assumption that western claims to knowledge are, *a priori*, the highest against which all others will be judged". The knowledge developed in the West is tied to connotations of 'good' or 'virtuous' and can therefore be promoted in non-Western countries as legitimate forms of knowledge (Tsygankov & Tsygankov, 2007). This argument is also made by Tickner (2003:300) when she indicates that "IR reinforces analytical categories and research programmes that are systematically defined by academic communities within the core [read West], and that [they] determine what can be said, how it can be said, and whether or not what is said constitutes a pertinent or important contribution to knowledge". Knowledge or theoretical moves that are based on African experience and created by African scholars can therefore only be deemed legitimate knowledge if it adheres to the measures of legitimate knowledge that was developed by the Western IR community and more specifically the realist paradigm. If theoretical knowledge is deemed to be illegitimate within the Eurocentric bounding of knowledge it is deemed to be devoid of theory or remains within the realm of what Moore (2008) calls 'pre-theory'.

This adoption of realism within the African IR community has also had some serious consequences for the development of African IR scholarship and its ability to inform practice. In Africa, policy-relevant research is deemed of greater importance as a result of the search for solutions to 'real' problems which persist on the continent. It is therefore argued that theory-generation should be subordinated under the rubric of the search for empirically relevant solutions to the problems facing the African continent. This type of argumentation can be easily countered by noting that the proffered solutions to Africa's 'real' problems are always informed by specific theoretical positions. The problems that are deemed important are themselves informed by the specific theoretical lens which is employed when analysing the context. African knowledge that therefore does not relate to the problems identified by the hegemonic realist paradigm is therefore marginalised as illegitimate IR knowledge and consequently cannot be incorporated into practice. The realist-informed intellectual framework of IR has resulted in

> [trapping] *the most innovative aspects of African scholarship in narrow theoretical frameworks that prioritise and reify conflict, want and poverty: precisely the conditions the periphery is attempting to extricate itself from, at the expense of thinking more extensively about social facts that perpetuate these circumstances, such as attitudes, cultures and discourses.*

The dominance of the realist paradigm in framing the boundaries of legitimate knowledge within the discipline of IR has led to the marginalisation of Africans who espouse viewpoints informed by different cultural and geographical contexts. The imposition/adoption of the realist paradigm by the African IR community has meant that theory generation by African scholars has been stunted in order to focus on solving the problems of the continent. Various constraints on the development of theory within Africa continue to keep this status quo in check. Not only have the voices of Africans been silenced within IR theory, but realism has also marginalised the continent as an object of study. This problem is the focus of the next part of this section.

2.2.2 Realism and Africa: Africa as an Object of Study

Realists have continually marginalised Africa as an object of study within the discipline of IR as a result of the assumption that their espoused theory, although based on Western cultural and historical experience, is universally applicable and through a built in great 'power' bias. This marginalisation is derived from various assumptions underlying realist thought regarding the nature of the international system and the actors that populate it. This section interrogates the assumptions underlying realism, and neorealism in particular, and shows how these assumptions contribute to the marginalisation of Africa as an object of study. This interrogation will be conducted by critically assessing the arguments advanced by realists regarding the necessity of focusing solely on great powers founded upon, this author argues, a limited conceptualisation of power; and the assumption of the universal relevance of the realist-informed theoretical results. The last part will assess one attempt at reformulating realism in order to incorporate the African context within the theoretical space accorded by realist theories.

2.2.2.1 The Assumptions of (Neo)Realism

Realists are not a homogenous group although they are perceived to be by many in the discipline. There is a significant amount of diversity among realists, but they do share certain assumptions about the nature of politics in the international realm. The basic shared realist assumptions are that all politics is power politics, and that there exists a

qualitative difference between politics in the domestic realm and politics in the international realm (Guzzini, 1998; Vasquez 1998). Power is therefore the dominant construct which underpins the focus of realist IR (Barkin, 2003). Both of the main realist streams, biological and structural/neorealism[7] focus on this idea of *Realpolitik*, but have different bases from which the necessity of power is derived (Pettman, 2000).

Donnelly (2000:6) highlights the position of both streams of realism when he identifies that "[realism] emphasizes the constraints on politics imposed by human nature ('egoism') and the absence of international government ('anarchy') [and that this makes] international relations largely a realm of power and interest". The main focus of biological realists, such as Morgenthau (1948/1978), is on the selfishness of human beings and how this informs the interaction of states in the international system. Morgenthau (1948/1978:4) states that "[political] realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their *roots in human nature*" (author's emphasis). Biological realists therefore emphasize the fixity of *their* conception of human nature and in so doing proclaim to be able to understand and predict events in world politics. Following from their anthropomorphic conception of states they believe that states, like human beings, have an innate desire to dominate and therefore the acquisition of power becomes a form of natural state instinct. As Rosenberg (1990:289) contends "the well-known core of Morgenthau's theory is that states are, [as a result of this aforementioned innate nature] power maximizers".

Neorealists on the other hand place their primary focus on the anarchical nature of the international system and the socializing pressure that it exerts on the nature of the states that occupy this system (Guzzini, 1998). Neorealists derive most of their assumptions from Waltz's (1979) attempt to construct a scientific and parsimonious positivist theory of international politics. This entails that the relationship between the subject and the object is left unproblematised as he argues that we, as researchers, have the ability to adopt a God-like perspective when researching world politics. Waltz's (1959, 1979) argument follows from the assumption that the social and natural worlds are similar in nature and

---

[7] The labels on which the distinction is based was borrowed from the work of Donnelly (2000). In order to understand the reasoning behind the use of these labels, rather than the more generally employed distinction between classical realists and neorealists see Donnelly (2000:11-13). Another useful way of describing this distinction is constructed by Spirtas (1996). He differentiates between tragedy (neorealist) and evil (biological) forms of realist theory.

that "there are significant things out there which exist independently of our thoughts and experience" (Frankel, 1996:xiii).

Waltz (1959, 1979) adopts a third image perspective in developing his theory. As a result he argues that the structure of the international system, as anarchic, should be starting point of analysis. Waltz (1979:66) contends that it is the enduring anarchic character of the international political realm that provides the theorist with the ability to analyse and predict as "[the] texture of international politics remains highly constant, patterns recur, and events repeat themselves endlessly". It is therefore noted that Waltz's conception of neorealism is based on a conservative logic as it is founded upon a cyclical theory of history which does not foresee the possibility of transformative change (Ruggie, 1986; Guzzini, 2004). Waltz (1979) explains the conservative logic by noting that his realist theory was not constructed to describe change within the international system, but to create a theoretical framework to study recurring patterns of behaviour. Change is not an important aspect for Waltz. The possibility for change in the international system is therefore limited in his theory to the potential changing distribution of abilities which, he argues, will ultimately not be able to transform the anarchic nature of the international system (Ruggie, 1986; Linklater, 1995).

Waltz (1979) employs a comparison between the domestic political structure and the international political structure in order to indicate the qualitative differences that exist between the two (See Figure 2.1). The anarchic character of the international system comprises its deep structure (Waltz, 1979; Linklater, 1995). This deep structure ultimately shapes the surface structure of world politics visible to the researcher. Waltz (1979) further argues that within the structure of the international system the second order structure can be effectively ignored as no functional differentiation exists between the units interacting in the international system. As a result of the present anarchical deep structure states only have one functional option and that is to try and survive. Functionally states are thus homogenous according to Waltz and can only be differentiated on the basis of their capabilities.

As Waltz (1979:93) indicates "structures are defined not by all of the actors that flourish within them but by the major ones". States are further defined as unitary actors which entails that the domestic realm is discounted in neorealist analyses of international politics (Vasquez, 1998). This ignorance of the domestic realm is also made possible by the

assumption of the similarity of state functions (Sørenson, 2008). Both of these arguments follow logically from Waltz's (1959, 1979) adoption of third image or systemic theorising. The foreign policy decisions made by states are ultimately constrained by the powerful forces of anarchy prevalent in the international system and therefore the domestic realm can be discounted (Gusterson, 1993). States are also conceptualised as rational actors and "consequently they calculate and compare benefits and costs of alternative policies and rank each according to their power" (Beer & Hariman, 1996:3). States, within the realist conception, approximate the Westphalian model of the territorially-bounded state born out of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648.

Figure 2.1: The International Political Structure as Conceptualised by Waltz (1979)
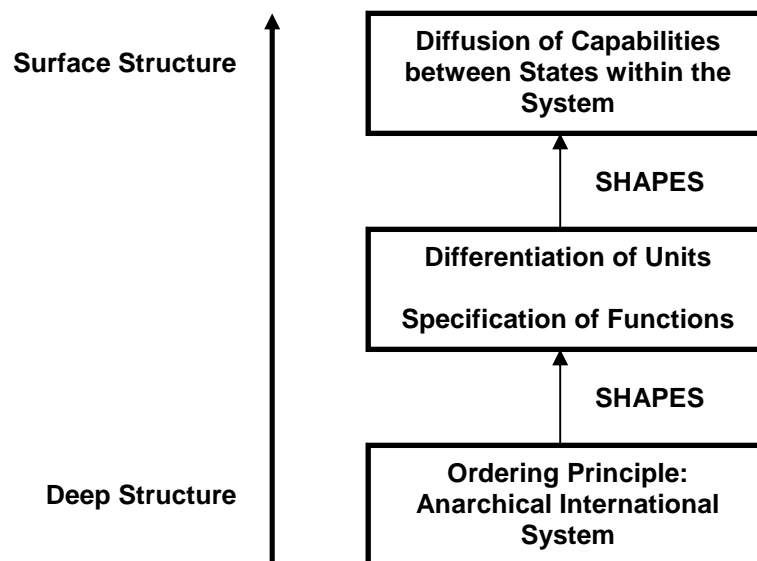
These are the basic assumptions which underpin the realist paradigm within IR. Realists assume that the results they generate about the workings of world politics, derived from these assumptions, have universal applicability. This, in turn, follows from their argument that they focus on the major few of the principal actors namely, states with great power. Both of these elements of the realist paradigm need to be more thoroughly interrogated as they relate to Africa as a potential object of study within the discipline.

2.2.2.2 The 'Universality' of (Neo)Realist Assumptions

The main problem with these realist assumptions, when focusing on the African context, is that their assertion of universality, which results from the paradigm's inextricable connection with the scientific method, seems to be unfounded. African IR does not fit the results developed from these assumptions and therefore cannot be effectively understood by employing a realist lens. This is a result of the historical development of the realist paradigm which was never informed by the African context during any phase of its construction. Lawson (2008:585) indicates that some scholars have argued that "both liberals and realists tend to project a homogeneous form of human subjectivity across time and place which ignores the contingency and diversity of human beliefs and practices". The realist paradigm is primarily founded upon Western historical experience and through its proffered claims of universality it is imposed on the African context without due consideration of the cultural or historical differences that might exists. Its static and conservative logic also does not allow the paradigm and the knowledge it produces to be contextually and historically adapted. Realists also assert that this is not necessary.

The inability of realists to contend with the potential functional dissimilarity of African states is informed by the argument espoused by Waltz (1979) that the deep anarchical structure makes states functional similar. It is on the basis of this assumption that Ruggie (1986, 1998) criticises Waltz (1979). Ruggie's problem is that the second order structure, of a specification of functions and differentiation of units, falls away in Waltz's ideas regarding the possibility of change. This, Ruggie believes, deprives the theory of an important aspect of change. As was noted earlier, Waltz employs a very limited conceptualisation of change in his realist theory. Furthermore Ruggie (1986:148) also argues that Waltzian systemic theory lacks a determinant of change, which he calls 'dynamic density' along Durkheimian lines. Dynamic density refers to the "aggregate quantity, velocity, and diversity of transactions that go on in society" (Ruggie, 1986:148). This lack of a determinant is the outcome of dropping the potential for the differentiation of units and the subsequent failure to achieve a generative structure of the international political structure (which Waltz sets out to do), and as a result of his rejection of the notion of reductionism. The last point means that unit-level processes lack viability at the system level in Waltz's theory (Ruggie, 1998:152-153). It is therefore Waltz's omission of differentiation and his commission

regarding the generative structure which leads to the dropping of the Durkheimian determinant of change in the system (Ruggie, 1998).

The *a priori* nature of states, bounded by the notion of sovereignty, and their interests/preferences within realist theory is also widely criticised. Realism does not take into account how states are constituted as they discount the domestic and subnational variables that are important aspects of the IR context on the African continent. Waltz (1959) argues that the third image is constitutive of the first and second image when discussing their potential interrelatedness and therefore his adherence to the importance of this third image makes him discount the domestic. Some authors also argue that the African context problematises the sovereign boundary on which the realist distinction between the anarchic international system and hierarchical domestic system is based. Niemann (2001) notes that within Southern Africa the politics of race actually led to the constitution of two inside/outside boundaries, one between states and one within South Africa. Sovereignty and boundaries are not the same across the world and therefore employing it as a central dividing line marginalises and ignores the differences of the African continent. By not being able to understand the constitution of African states as potentially functionally dissimilar and the inability to deal with potential changes of African states resulting from the processes of social and political transformations brought about by globalisation, realism continues to marginalise the continent (Linklater, 1995).

The universal claims of realism falter in the face of the contextual and historical differences posed by the African context. As a result, the continent is rather marginalised or negated than included. This argument is made quite explicit by Nkiwane (2001:288) when she argues that "Eurocentric assertions are too often represented as fact, an assertion used to dismiss an entire continent as irrelevant to theories that expound a universal message" such as neorealism. The African context is further marginalised by the great power bias in realist thought which, it is argued, is informed by a narrow and limited conceptualisation of power.

2.2.2.3 Realism and the Focus on Great Powers

The sole focus on great powers in realist thought is, together with the claims of universality, the main contributing factor to the exclusion of the African continent. The

focus on great powers is to a large degree driven by the assumption of the universality of experiences between functionally similar states. Most realists argue that the focus in the study of IR should be on great powers. Waltz (1979:73) indicates that "a general theory of international politics is necessarily based on the great powers". Mearsheimer, quoted in Lemke (2003:114), contends that he "focuses mainly on great powers because these states dominate and shape international politics". Ofuhu (2003:156) argues that the "belief that history belongs to the Great Powers … is the offspring of the Realist age, with its emphasis on power politics".

Even before the rise of neorealism, realism already treated the African context with disdain. Morgenthau (1948/1978) argues that before the First World War Africa comprised nothing more than a politically empty space. It is as the balance of power shifted and expanded to include Africa that it gained a semblance of meaningful politics, but still only in the sense that it was acted upon by the great powers. Next, it is necessary that we investigate why Waltz (1979) decided to focus only on great powers in order to understand whether Africa's exclusion might be justified.

Waltz (1979) basis his argument that the focus should fall on great powers, like most of his treatise, on an analogy with microeconomic theory. Microeconomic theory became a major source of intellectual inspiration for both Waltz and rationalist theories as a whole (Fearon & Wendt, 2002; Reus-Smit, 2005). Waltz (1979:72) argues that his:

> *Theory, like the story of international politics, is written in terms of the great powers of an era. … In international politics, as in any self-help system, the units of greatest capability set the scene of action for others as well as for themselves. In systems theory, structure is a generative notion; and the structure of the system is generated by the interactions of its principal parts. … It would be as ridiculous to construct a theory of international politics based on Malaysia and Costa Rica as it would be to construct an economic theory of oligopolistic competition based on the minor firms in a sector of the economy. The fates of all the states and all the firms in a system are affected much more by the acts and the interactions of the major ones than the minor ones.*

Waltz then goes on to argue that once the theory is set up for the interaction between the major states it will also naturally apply to the interaction between smaller states insofar as

they are insulated from the great powers. If they are not insulated from great powers, as is the case in a globalised world, the smaller powers basically become agency-deprived units of the international system. The choices they face are already limited by the system itself and the choices of the great powers. Africa's agency-deprived nature is very visible in the article by Michael Desch (1996). He investigates the conditions under which the developing world matters enough to be acted upon by great powers.

Fearon and Wendt (2002) argue that although rationalism has borrowed heavily from the programme of microeconomic theory, in using this programme as analogous to what occurs in international politics, the rationalists have severed it from its philosophical foundations. Neorealists have therefore spent very little time and energy on reflecting on the philosophical roots of their own programme. The analogy between microeconomic theory and Waltz's theory of international politics is therefore built on weak foundations. Waltz (1979) employs the same argument to account for both the fact that *states*, as opposed to non-state actors and international organisations, are the principal actors in his theory and specifically *great powers*, as opposed to all states. As was quoted previously Waltz (1979:93) argues that "structures are defined not by all the actors that flourish within them but by the *major ones*" and that because structure is a generative notion, "the structure of the system is generated by the interactions of its *principal parts*" (Waltz, 1979:72, author's emphasis). The first quote refers to the focus on states, whilst the second quote refers to the necessity of abstracting from the actions of great powers. Africa is thus marginalised to a position of either lacking meaningful politics or only being important when acted upon by great powers.

The conceptualisation of power or capabilities employed by neorealists is primarily built on a materialistic foundation. Mearsheimer (1995) indicates that "[realists] believe that state behaviour is largely shaped by the material structure of the international system [and that] the distribution of material capabilities among states is the key factor for understanding world politics". Yordán (2003:90), discussing the arguments of Mearsheimer, notes that many realists argue that "military capabilities define a great power's strength" and that a state will become a great power if it has the ability to "project power outside its borders". Power, in realist terms, is therefore largely something focused on destruction rather than construction (Sørenson, 2008).

Sterling-Folker and Shinko (2005:637) indicate that "[for] realists power is something that is accumulated and possessed, usually by nation-states" and therefore comprises an element of quantity (Frankel, 1996; Locher & Prügl, 2001b). Power is largely based on military capabilities and the utility of these capabilities by states, although no comprehensive analysis of material forces is evident in realist literature (Sørenson, 2008). Power, in realist theory, works on the surface as it relates to the distribution of capabilities. It is on the basis of this narrow conceptualisation of power that they therefore differentiate the great powers from the smaller powers in the international system.

Sterling-Folker and Shinko (2005:642) argue that realism ignores the voices "that contest the disciplinary power of ostensibly given structures". These voices are also heard from within the African context. This is a result, this author would argue, of the fact that realism only deals with a limited conceptualisation of power focused on the surface structure. Power runs much deeper than that. Locher and Prügl (2001b:117) note that "understanding power as a quantity [as realists do], would take feminists no further than to say that women don't have it [as] it tells us little about how power is constructed and reproduced". The word 'women' could just be replaced by Africans in the context of this thesis. Sterling-Folker and Shinko (2005:642) argue that "realism focuses on the aftermath of power's exercise, because it is skeptical and fearful of structural disruption" which would occur if the notion of power is able to penetrate deeper than the surface structure. Realism therefore builds its arguments on a limited and unclarified conceptualisation of power and Waltz's argument for the focus on great powers is based on a philosophically uprooted analogy.

In light of the above, this author argues, following Tickner (2003:300), that mainstream IR theory, and specifically realism, is "autistic, in that it ignores problems and perspectives that fail to resonate with its own worldview". It is also a worldview that is solely informed by Western contexts and history (LaMonica, 2008). Some attempts have been made to reformulate realism in order to account for the African context. One of these attempts focuses on the centrality of the process of state-making.

2.2.2.4 Reformulating Realism: The Centrality of the Process of State-making

This last part looks at one approach of reformulating realism which has sought to bring some aspects of the African context into the fold of the realist paradigm. This reformulation is necessary to overcome some of the limitations of the realist paradigm with regards to the African context, whilst not losing the important insights which the paradigm has provided within the discipline. The attempt at reformulation which will be at the centre of the analysis is the use of the realist state-making literature in order to analyse conflict in the African context[8]. It is necessary to assess attempts at reformulating realism that aim to focus on the African context in order to determine whether the knowledge derived from realist theories could, to some extent, be applied outside of the European context as realists assert.

The first version of this attempted reformulation was made by Mohammed Ayoob (1998) when he argued for the use of 'subaltern realism' in the analysis of Africa as an alternative approach to the dominant rationalist approaches. It is his attempt to explain conflict within the Third World. Ayoob (1998:34) posits that subaltern realism "presents a coherent explanation for the large majority of conflicts in the international system by tracing their origins, both as beginnings and causes, to the premier ongoing political endeavor in the Third World, namely, that of *state-making*" (author's emphasis). His arguments with regard to state-making are largely drawn from the influential work of Charles Tilly on European state-making who postulated quite succinctly that "War makes states" (Quoted in Sørenson, 2001:341).

Ayoob's critique of the rationalist approaches is largely based on his argument that they have an inadequate and ahistorical theory of the state, which is a central realist concept. The state is seen as a unitary, unproblematic entity. This type of assumption does not fit with the empirical reality of the African continent. Ayoob (1998:39) therefore argues that realism should be reformulated by moving away from a theory that makes the state the focus of analysis to one that makes the "*process* of state-making and the building of political communities the centrepiece". This paradigm must incorporate domestic variables when analysing the process of state-making within the Third World whilst staying

---

[8] There are quite a few reformulations of realism that have been proposed, but the realist state-making literature is one of the few that have been applied to the African context.

cognisant of the global environment in which these processes take place (Ayoob, 1998; Lemke, 2007).

By incorporating the insights of Machiavelli and Hobbes, what he deems classical realism, he includes domestic factors into his suggested paradigm. He also asserts that the work on European state-making by Charles Tilly provides an adequate comparative starting point for the situation in Third World countries (Lemke, 2007). Ayoob (1998:43) argues that in order for a paradigm to come to grips with the majority of conflicts in the international system it must "[marry] the diagnoses for disorder and prescriptions for order provided by classical realists like Machiavelli and Hobbes with the perceived realities of political life within Third World states". His notion of subaltern realism thus incorporates domestic variables as well as their nexus of interaction with external variables into other realist's prescriptions of order to explain the conflicts which occur in the Third World[9].

Ayoob's (1998) arguments only require a small modification of the state-making arguments made by Tilly in order to incorporate the African context into a realist fold. Sørenson (2001) argues alternatively that Tilly's articulation of the process of state-making as it occurred in Europe, does not apply to the Third World and therefore cannot be applied in the way argued by Ayoob (1998). In his argument he discusses several reasons for the apparent failure of the application of Tilly's state-making arguments to the Third World. Sørenson (2001:341-342) states the premise of this assertion when he notes that "not only has [war] failed to produce any state-building worthy of the name, but also, in a large number of cases, it has led to state decay and failure". Lemke (2007) also attempts to reformulate realist arguments by focusing on state-making, rather than the state, as the centrepiece of his analysis. He goes further in his analysis than Ayoob by including actors other than the state. In doing so, it is argued, he provides a reformulation that could possibly overcome the weak fit between realist state-making theory and the African context noted by Sørenson.

The entry point of his argument is Africa's exceptionalism when it comes to already established variables predicting international conflict. He argues that these have very little explanatory power when it comes to the African context. The established datasets miss

---

[9] One area of Ayoob's work that has been frequently criticised is that he draws heavily on neorealism, a paradigm he sets out to critique, to inform his notion of subaltern Realism.

important actors in the state-making process in Africa. These actors are "all the 'unofficial states', the legally-unrecognized but nevertheless *autonomous political entities* (APEs) that control territory and people while possessing military capabilities" (Lemke, 2007:2). When incorporating these APEs as variables into the analysis of conflict in Africa the African context starts providing clear examples of realist activity, including efforts of self-interested actors trying to fight for their survival in an anarchical context.

Lemke (2007) also employs the realist inspired theoretical argument of Tilly. He takes note of the critiques of Sørenson (2001) and Herbst. He notes that several authors, including himself, differ from the critiques that are proffered. One of these authors is Larry Swatuk. Swatuk (2001:172) posits that, following Tilly, "states make wars and wars make states. This is no less so in Southern Africa". Swatuk (2001:172) further argues that "prior to the imposition of Western norms and social forms upon Southern Africa, indigenous peoples were engaged in both aggressive and defensive state and nation building". Following these and other similar arguments Lemke's own argument for reformulating realism is very similar to that of Ayoob's, except for his inclusion of APEs as extra state-making actors.

Ultimately, Lemke (2007:15) argues that by including these APEs in the analysis of efforts at state-making he can "conclude that similar war and state making experiences are evident in Africa as in Europe" as is explicated in the realist arguments. In his reformulation the realist theory of war and state-making therefore does seem to be consistent with the African context. He ultimately qualifies his conclusion by stipulating that his argument "does not deny the possibility that Africa could nevertheless have unique contextual characteristics that will affect the relationship between African war and African state making" (Lemke, 2007:16).

This type of reformulation of realist arguments could act as a starting point for including insights derived from the realist paradigm into analyses of the African context. It could, alternatively, as Legro and Moravcsik (1999) argue, stretch the realist paradigm to include assumptions which do not fit into the core set of realist assumptions. The focus on actors, other than rational, unitary states undermines one of the core ontological assumptions on which the realist paradigm rests. Legro and Moravcsik (1999:53) assert that, rather than reformulating the realist paradigm it should focus on "[accepting] assumptions that impose explicit constraints on the empirical domain [as it] would be a sign of theoretical maturity".

Undermining the state-as-rational-actor assumption of realists in order to account for African conflicts could thus lead to undermining realism as a theoretical paradigm. Trying to reformulate realism in order to include the African context into a realist fold would to some extent necessitate the inclusion of more classical realist texts, but their content could undermine the scientific status of realism (Guzzini, 2004). The link between realism and science is not one that realists will likely want to sever. Ultimately, realism can either marginalise the African context, but keep its core assumptions and scientific status, or it can try and include analyses of the African context by reformulating realist assumptions and potentially undermine its scientific status. This author argues that most realists would rather choose the former as it leaves the identity of the realist paradigm unscathed.

2.2.3 Summary of this Section

This section has focused on the first discourse which frames the theoretical abyss. This is the side framed by rationalism, of which the realist paradigm forms a part. The first part of this section focused on how realists, in defining the intellectual boundaries of IR, provide the measures of legitimate knowledge in the discipline and in so doing marginalise African knowledge and Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge. The second part focused on the position of the African context as an object of study within realist theories, mainly neorealism. It was argued that the untested assumption of universality amongst functionally similar states discounts the contextual and historical variation which realism is confronted with when applied to the African continent. Secondly it also indicated the fact that neorealism basis its theory of international politics on great powers. The fact is that this is informed by a limited and narrow conceptualisation of power further contributes to the marginalisation of the African continent. Lastly, it focused on one attempt to include the African context through reformulating realism. It was found that this attempted reformulation actually undermines the scientific status and ontological core of neorealism by stretching the assumptions that are included within the realist theoretical paradigm to breaking point. Africa as an object of study and as a site for IR knowledge production is therefore marginalised by the predominance of the realist informed discourse within the discipline.

The next section focuses on the second discourse framing the theoretical abyss as we continue our exploration. The Africanists focus their critiques on the dominant rationalist theories, but specifically target the (neo)realist paradigm.

2.3 AFRICANIST CRITIQUES: 'EXCEPT-AFRICA' REFLECTIVISM

Roe (1995) argues that two crisis narratives exist around the African continent within the development literature. The first crisis narrative relates a Doomsday Scenario to any country on the African continent, but not outside. The second of these crisis narratives denotes the continent of 'Except-Africa'. In this crisis narrative the story normally argues that "Everything works … except in Africa". This narrative still persists in the development literature today with the book *The African exception* edited by Ulf Engel and Gorm Rye Olsen (2005), this author argues, exemplifying the promulgation of this narrative. They argue, in the opening line of their book, that "[in] many respects sub-Saharan Africa is an *exception* to the general pattern of 'development' in the South" (Engel & Olsen, 2005:1, author's emphasis).

This thesis posits that the Except-Africa narrative is also promulgated within the discipline of IR. The advocates of this narrative contend that some of the 'most' important concepts within mainstream IR theory seem to be applicable to most of the world except to Africa where the *different* nature of the continent, whether through history or context, prohibits their effective application. Most of these Africanists, in founding their critiques on an essentialised notion of the difference of the African context and history, ultimately argue for the creation of distinct African IR theories. In proposing this line of argumentation, these Africanists exacerbate the marginalisation of the African continent in the world by marginalising it within the discipline of IR theory.

This section aims to interrogate the Except-Africa reflectivism on which the Africanist critiques are built. It relies heavily on the argument made by Brown (2006) in order to conduct a critique of this narrative. The first part of this section provides a short exploration of the relationship which exists between Africans and Africanists[10]. The second part

---

[10] In the first part of this section the Africanist label is employed in its general usage as referring to analysts of Africa. Although the author is aware of the potential confusion it is difficult to find an alternative for either usage and the relationship between African scholars and their Africanist counterparts does inform the marginalisation of African knowledge within the discipline.

focuses on the critiques posed by the Africanists[11] within the discipline of IR. The last part of this section focuses on the argument made by Brown (2006), which indicates that these Africanist critiques, based, as this thesis argues, on the foundation of the Except-Africa narrative, actually leads to the further marginalisation of Africa within the discipline of IR.

2.3.1 Africans and Africanists in IR

The relationship between Africans and Africanists has improved somewhat in recent years within the discipline of IR, but in most instances the relationship is still quite tenuous, with little interaction occurring on equal ground. Olukoshi (2006) argues that the rift between Africanist and African discourses seem to be widening in various disciplines, and this author would argue that IR is one of these disciplines. The binary thinking within the discipline has to some extent informed an 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy in the relationship between Africans and Africanists. Mkandawire (1997:26) notes that "the divide between area specialists and the indigenous scholars is [especially] sharp … between African scholars and their Africanist counterparts". This sharp division has fostered a specific division of labour within the social sciences that places African scholars in the position of only being seen as 'knowledgeable informants' of the local contextual spaces which they occupy. This division of labour marginalises African scholars to producers of localised data or 'raw materials', which some scholars argue, are then interpreted through the use of Eurocentric concepts by the Western scholars running the projects (Mkandawire, 1997; Tickner, 2007). The conceptual and theoretical work is therefore still being conducted and produced by theorists in the North, and therefore Mkandawire (1997) and Tickner (2007) assert that even the knowledge that African scholars produce about their local contexts is determined to a large extent by Western scholars. Mkandawire (1997:29) also begrudgingly notes that "[Africa is] probably the only part of the world about which it is still legitimate to publish without reference to local scholarship". This has impoverished innovative local African knowledge production (Olukoshi, 2006).

Some of the Africanists that produce knowledge about IR focused on the African continent have never even set foot on the continent. As Beckman and Adeoti (quoted in Smith, 2008:6) indicate, this entails that much of the knowledge that is produced about the

---

[11] In the rest of the section the label Africanist will refer to Brown's (2006) usage of the label in referring to a group of critics who loosely share some similar critical analyses of IR theory and Africa's position within it.

continent is produced by scholars who have had only "marginal exposure to African geo-cultural space". Olukoshi (2006:542) makes a very interesting argument with regard to this when he argues that:

> *Africa is the one region of the world in which ideas are dumped as freely as goods, and the mainstream Africanists feel comfortable pronouncing on local processes without any reference to the debates and outputs of the African scientific community. Instead of engaging the local research community, there is a growing culture among Africanists of a massive self-referencing and the cross-referencing of a close-knit network of professional friends….*

This author argues that this division of labour which exists between Africans and Africanists has to be blamed to some extent for the exoticisation of the African continent within IR. The author argues that this exoticisation has informed the creation of the Except-Africa narrative that is employed by various Africanists and helps to reproduce it in various social science disciplines including IR.

2.3.2 Reflecting on Africa and the Mainstream: Africanist Critiques

The so-labeled Africanist critiques seek to overcome the marginal position attributed to Africa within the discipline of IR, specifically IR theory[12]. Brown (2006) argues that the criticisms espoused by the Africanists operate on various levels. This author indicates that the Africanists have to some extent attacked what Olukoshi (2006) calls the scholarship of analogy within IR. In this type of scholarship Africa is seen as analogous to the West and can therefore be studied in a similar manner by employing the same concepts. This analogy produces the various levels, noted by Brown (2006), on which the Africanist critiques of traditional (read rationalist) IR theory focus. Olukoshi (2006:541) sets out the three different levels on which these critiques operate as follows:

> *1) Africa is read through the lenses of Europe and not on terms deriving from its own internal dynamics. Contemporary processes on the African continent are frequently considered as being subject to a unilinear evolutionism, replicating an earlier epoch in the history of Europe. … 2) Instead, in the culture of scholarship by analogy, many Africanists are*

---

[12] See footnote 11 for an explanation about the use of the label Africanist in this part of the section.

> *tempted to present the histories of Europe and America in a frozen form that*
> *is bereft of all contradictions. 3) Furthermore, as yet another consequence*
> *of scholarship by analogy, most of the concepts and conceptual frames that*
> *are applied to understanding the African continent are all too frequently*
> *borrowed from other regions of the world and applied uncritically and hastily*
> *to Africa, as if context and place do not matter.*

In this part of the section the various levels will be discussed as they are critiqued by Africanists in the discipline of IR in order to structure and fully comprehend their arguments.

The main assertion of the Africanists is that traditional IR theories, when applied to the African continent, fail to explain vital elements of African IR. These theories are also unable to help us, as scholars and potential informers of policy, to understand problems and issues that are argued to be central to African international politics. There is a lack of consonance between the empirical realities of African IR and traditional IR theory. One of the most common results within IR of this lack of consonance is that the African context is summarily dismissed or ignored as a source of theoretical knowledge or as an object worth studying. Nkiwane (2001) as well as Dunn (2001a) illuminate this dismissal. Ayoob (1998:37) goes as far as to argue that "… [rationalist theories] share a neocolonial epistemology that privileges the global North over the global South", which leaves states in the South in the position of acted upon entities. Dunn (2001a:3) indicates that "[within] IR theory, Africa is the voiceless space upon/into which the West can write and act".

The critiques assert that traditional IR theories do not take into account the contextual and historical specificity of the African continent. Africa, the critics posit, is investigated through lenses constructed out of European reality, whilst the internal dynamics of the African continent are ignored as a potential source of theoretical development for the discipline. Neuman (1998:2) indicates that "[mainstream] IR theory … is essentially a Eurocentric theory, originating largely in the US and founded, almost exclusively on what happened in the West". The claim of various Africanists is therefore, as Brown (2006:121) indicates, "that the conceptual basis of IR theory is the product of Western experience and is *therefore* inapplicable to Africa". These Africanist writings, it is argued, "set out, [to some extent], to 'correct' the old perceptions and images of Africa as a backward continent with

no history or great civilisation…" by placing the continent at the centre of their critiques of traditional IR theories (Ofuhu, 2003:161).

The main recurring argument that is propagated by the Africanists is that the African context is to some extent *different* from the context found in the rest of the world (LaMonica, 2008). By conducting their argument in this manner they implicitly employ the language of the Except-Africa narrative. Various Africanist critiques indicate the perception of the difference of the African context explicitly in their analyses. LaMonica (2008) argues that, within the recent IR literature, this focus on difference is exemplified by Dunn and Shaw's 2001 book. Lemke (2003:131) argues that "African international relations *differ* from international elsewhere (thus causing an Africa variable to be statistically significant) because who the actors are in Africa systematically *differs* from the situation prevailing in other regions". Lavelle (2005) also indicates that the nature of recent work on the African state focuses on the uniqueness of the state within the African continent. The most strident proposal of this uniqueness comes from Engel and Olsen (2006a:16) when they argue that

> *[the] lack of coherence [between African states and other states] could also be phrased by saying there are <u>two different logics within the current international system</u>. In the one, there is a modified Westphalian logic wherein security is still a predominant factor. In the other, there is a pre-Westphalian logic wherein there is no predominant social force or rationale basically due to a combination of domestic factors within the African states and the resulting external actions* (author's emphasis).

The two concepts that bear the brunt of Africanist criticism as a result of their unadapted application to the African continent are the state and sovereignty. Most of the Africanist critiques of traditional IR theory look specifically at these two concepts and their inappropriateness to the African context (LaMonica, 2008). The main reason, this thesis posits, that the Africanists focus on the inappropriateness of these two concepts is that the combined concept of sovereign statehood has a central position within the traditional IR theories that they critique. According to Vale (2001:18-19) "[the] idea that states are the cornerstones of international relationships is at the heart of conventional perspectives on the ways of Southern Africa [but also Africa as a whole, and] the framing idea [for this perspective] turns on the concept of sovereignty". The potential (in)applicability of these concepts will therefore be a source of concern for analysts of the African context.

The arguments espoused by the Africanists about these two concepts focus primarily on the differences which exist between the emergence of the Westphalian state-system in Europe and the emergence/imposition of the state system in Africa (Brown, 2006). By focusing on the differences and problematising sovereign statehood from within the African context, this author argues, the Africanists attempt to extricate Africa from the assumptions that African states are basically weakened, failed or quasi- versions of the transplanted Western-based Westphalian model. This argument appears to be valid when taking into consideration the argument posed by Dunn (2001b). He argues that "[what] needs to be recognized is that the African state is not failing as much as our understanding of the state" (Dunn, 2001b:49).

It is argued that, In Europe the state system evolved out of specific social and political processes. It congealed in a coherent form consisting of the physical boundedness of political authority, known legally as state sovereignty, and later also interlinked with other forms of social organisations, of which the most important is the nation. Some Africanists like Grovogui (2001) do focus on the problems and contradictions which informed the emergence of the state-system in Europe, but most of them leave this history unproblematised. The formation of the state in Africa occurred differently as sovereignty and the territorially-bounded nation-state was artificially imposed through the colonialisation process. Malaquias (2001:13) exemplifies this position when he argues that "African states did not emerge as a result of a long period of … development determined by Africans, [but] rather, the modern African state is a colonial imposition created to serve Western, not African, interests". MacLean (2001:155) also makes a similar argument when she contends that

> the Westphalian system and the orthodox IR theories which have described and supported it have erected conceptual, as well as legal, boundaries between states and societies and between civil societies and neighbouring states. However, in Southern Africa such borders did not necessarily correspond to the patterns of people's traditional behaviour nor the reality of citizen's security needs.

By focusing on the historical specificity of the African continent many of the Africanists argue that the political and spatial-organisational conditions of pre-colonial Africa should

form the foundations of African-informed conceptual developments. Africa's pre-colonial political organisational systems must be extricated from the ideas of modernisation informing many traditional IR theories which view them as backward or primordial entities (Dunn, 2001b). Warner (2001:65) argues that "to comprehend the novelty [of Africa's interaction with the sovereign state system] we need to know something about its pre-colonial political structures and organizations and about the imprint of empires on Africa". Malaquias (2001:12) articulates a similar argument when he notes that "… Africa's political development in the pre-colonial era differed from the European experience in important respects. Therefore, attempts to explain uniquely African phenomena by using essentially European models are inadequate".

These Africanist critiques attack what has been identified as the scholarship of analogy found in traditional IR theories. Ultimately the argument is that African contextual and historical specificity is ignored by traditional IR theories and that Africa is different from the rest of the world. IR therefore needs theories that are imbued with African subjectivities and knowledge derived from the African context and history. Some of these critics also engage with the contradictions found within European histories, especially with regard to the emergence of the state-system in Europe, but many still essentialise European histories (Brown, 2006). In this regard they have not completely removed the baggage imposed by the scholarship of analogy employed in traditional IR theories. Their focus on the essential difference of the African context and history leads to the invocation of the language derived from the Except-Africa narrative. The continual employment of some aspects of the scholarship of analogy and the aforementioned narrative lead to various problems associated with their critiques. These problems are exposed in an article by William Brown (2006) to which this chapter turns in the next part.

2.3.3 Brown's Response to the Africanist Critiques

Brown (2006) provides a very good exposition of the failings of the so-labeled Africanist critiques. Before outlining Brown's arguments we need to explicate the theoretical position of these critiques. Brown argues that these Africanists loosely share some similar critical analyses of IR theory and Africa's position within it. Their main theoretical target is the rationalist theory of neorealism. This author argues that these critiques are all informed by a post-positivist epistemological position from which the positivism informing the rationalist

theory of neorealism is challenged and subsequently Africa's marginal position in IR theory. Following from this epistemological position, this author argues, that the Africanist critics adhere to a reflectivist theoretical position[13].

One of Brown's (2006) main propositions is that the problematic theoretical and conceptual issues do not magically appear when the theorists shift their focus to the African continent. He thus argues that notions such as anarchy and sovereignty have been and are still continuously debated and challenged within IR theory as a whole, and therefore the African context does not really represent a new challenge to traditional IR theory as these critiques would like us to believe.

The Africanist critiques challenge the application of these concepts on the basis of the uniqueness or difference of the African continent, but the manner in which these differences are discussed and articulated within the critiques actually exoticise and essentialise the African context and history. By building their critiques on an essentialised foundation they cannot logically advocate for anything but the creation of *African* IR theories. This is something Dunn (2001a) specifically argues he does not set out to accomplish. Ultimately, by building their arguments on this foundation the Africanist critiques actually undermine their ultimate aim by further marginalising Africa within IR theory.

Brown's (2006) argument initially focuses on the view of theory that, he believes, is implicitly employed by the Africanists. He believes that they employ a view of theory that assumes that a useful theory must reflect the reality to which it is applied. Brown (2006:123) argues that the "key problem with this starting point is that it risks mistaking theories for exact descriptions of reality". As he indicates, using Waltz, the usefulness of theory does not lie with having the ability to capture the entirety of reality, but that it rather acts as a starting point of analysis. Although this author agrees with Brown (2006) that theories should not be exact descriptions of reality. he disagrees with some of the implicit assumptions underlying Brown's (2006) criticism of the Africanist critiques' view of theory. He seems to argue that the Africanist critiques employ the positivist correspondence view

---

[13] See Smith (2001) for an exposition of the reflectivist label, whilst Lapid (1989), George (1989), Neufeld (1995) and Vasquez (1998) provide good analyses of the post-positivist, epistemological position.

of truth[14], but this runs counter to the reflectivist and post-positivist nature of these critiques. Rather these critiques argue that theory participates in the constitution and construction of reality. They argue that traditional IR theories were derived from subjectivities in the Western context and history and therefore constructs and constitutes reality in this image. As a result African reality is constructed and read through Western experiences. This criticism does not undermine the validity of Brown's other arguments.

Brown (2006) then argues quite correctly that the Africanist critiques end up essentialising both European and African reality. In this manner they are still stuck within the traditional scholarship of analogy, but they take it a step further by also essentialising the African history. As a result, they undermine the position of the African context by setting up the essentialised African reality as the 'Other' to the 'Self' of the European reality, and therefore enforcing the very binary that they were trying to overcome within IR theory. Brown (2006:128) notes that

> *while European history is essentialised as fitting the ideal types offered by IR theory, African history is portrayed as essentially different from them. While it is unquestionably correct to point out that the African situation was and is different to Europe, this is hardly news. What is much more problematic is to argue that there is something so essentially different about Africa in the modern world as to make core concepts like the state irrelevant.*

Brown's argument is supported by the argument made by Pinar Bilgin (2008). Bilgin (2008) argues that is will be very difficult to indicate that there is something so essentially different about the African context that it requires the development of new IR theories in order to explain it. This line of argumentation rests on the myth of an imagined insularity between Western and non-Western thought. She contends that

> *while looking beyond the 'West' may not always involve discovering something that is radically 'different' from one's own ways of thinking about and doing world politics, such seeming absence of 'difference' cannot be explained away through invoking assumptions of 'teleological Westernisation' but requires becoming curious about the effects of the historical relationship between the 'West' and the 'non-West' in the*

---

[14] For a discussion about the positivist view of truth as correspondence see Neufeld (1995:33-34).

emergence of ways of thinking and doing that are 'almost the same but not quite'.

<div align="right">(Bilgin, 2008:5)</div>

This author argues that most of the Africanist critiques do fall into the traps identified by Brown (2006). The Africanist critics employ the language of the Except-Africa narrative by founding their arguments on an essentialised notion of African and European historical reality. Logically following their arguments through they actually end up arguing for the creation of *African* IR theories based purely on African subjectivities, or even more radically, for a theoretical divorce between Africa and Europe. This ultimately undermines the aim of the Africanist critiques to overcome the marginalisation of Africa within IR, as they actually end up marginalising Africa within IR theory. As a result of building their arguments on the apparent essentialised differences between Africa and Europe, this author would posit that, they argue for the replacement of Eurocentrism in IR theory with a form of Afrocentrism (Ofuhu, 2003). Mbembe and Nuttall (2004:348) argue that "the obstinacy with which scholars in particular (including African scholars) continue to describe Africa as an object *apart from the world*, or as a failed and incomplete example of something else, perpetually underplays the embeddedness in multiple elsewheres of which the continent actually speaks" (original emphasis). This line of argumentation employed by the Africanist critiques places Africa at the centre of isolated plane on the margins of IR theory and in so doing frames the other side of the theoretical abyss in which the African context and African knowledge finds itself.

2.4 CONCLUSION: AFRICA AND THE THIRD DEBATE

In this chapter Africa was explored in the theoretical abyss, and the nature of the discourses that, it is argued, frames this theoretical abyss in which Africa as an object of study and Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge resides within the discipline of IR, was investigated. Figure 2.2 provides a visual summary of the findings of this exploratory journey. These discourses - one informed by rationalism and one informed by reflectivism - adhere to the opposing positions found in the Third Debate in IR (Lapid, 1989). The theoretical abyss in which Africa resides is framed by these seemingly incommensurable epistemological and ontological positions.

The first section of this chapter explored the nature of the dominance of rationalist theories within IR theory as one of the discourses framing the theoretical abyss. The specific focus was on the realist paradigm. The section indicated how realism has come to define the boundaries of legitimate knowledge within the discipline of IR and how the perceived predominance and superiority of this theoretical framework inhibits the potential for Africans to become potential agents of IR knowledge. It also investigated the untested claims of the universality of realist knowledge espoused by the theorists themselves and the great power bias which informs their theoretical paradigm. Both of these aspects of the realist paradigm were critically investigated in order to illuminate the unfounded basis on which the marginalisation of Africa as an object of study by realism is built. This chapter also provided an analysis of one attempt to include the African context within the realm of realism, but it was found that this attempt ultimately undermines the scientific status and ontological core of realism and therefore realism itself.

Figure 2.2: Discourses Framing the Theoretical Abyss: Africa and the Third Debate
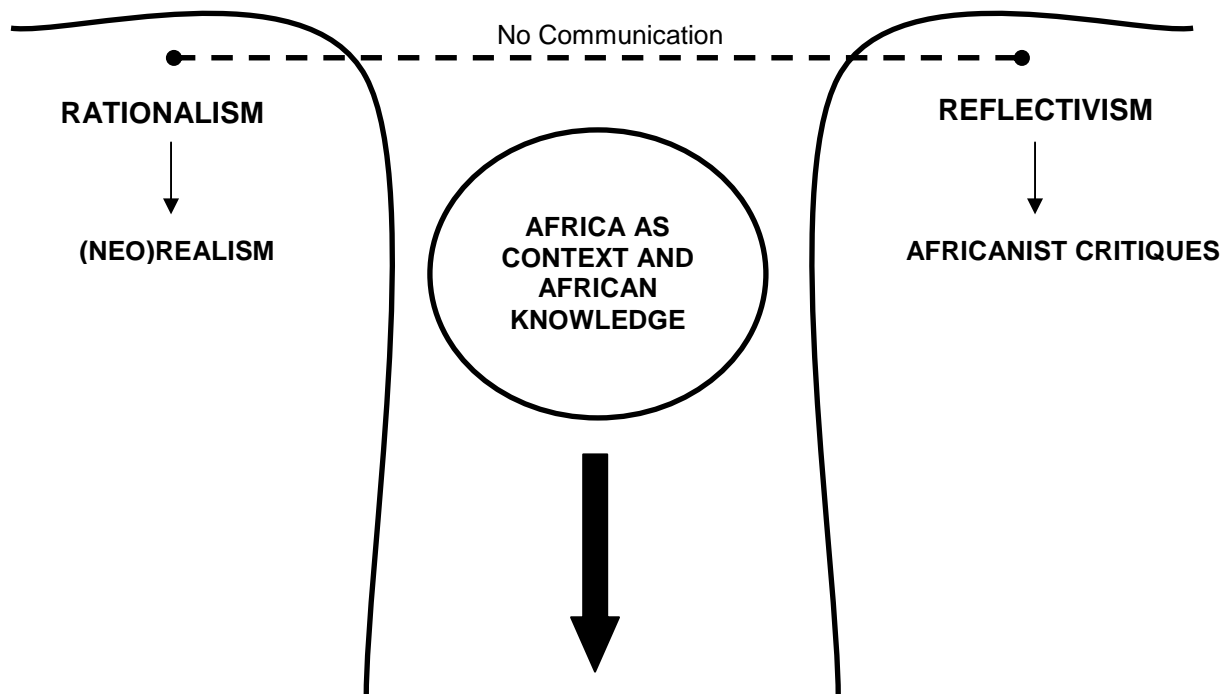
The second section of this chapter investigated the 'Africanist critiques' of the neorealist position. These critiques, informed by a reflectivist theoretical and post-positivist epistemological position, found their arguments on the notion that Africa is essentially

different from the rest of the world. In so doing, they adhere to the language of the Except-Africa narrative found in the development literature. These critiques place the African context and African knowledge at the centre of their analysis, but by essentialising both African and European history they set up Africa as the 'Other' to the European 'Self'. The potential that Africa is actually essentially different was also challenged by looking at the argument provided by Bilgin (2008). The exposition of the shortcomings of these Africanist critiques provided by Brown (2006) was used in order to show how these critiques actually end up undermining their own goal by further marginalising Africa in IR theory.

George (1989) takes a different view of the Third Debate than the positivist/post-positivist dichotomy employed by Lapid (1989). He argues that the critical thinkers in the Third Debate share a common purpose. This purpose, he argues, is

> *to help us understand more about contemporary global life by opening up for questioning dimensions of inquiry which have been previously closed off and suppressed; by listening closely to voices previously unheard; by examining 'realities' excluded from consideration under a traditional regime of unity and singularity. Its purpose, reiterated: the search for 'thinking space' within an International Relations discipline produced by and articulated through Western modernist discourse.*

(Lapid, 1989:269)

Although this thesis shares this view of the Third Debate and welcomes the critical imagination that it imbued in the discipline, the thinking space that was opened up still did not lead to the inclusion of the African context or African scholars as producers of IR knowledge. Africa, as an idea, remains marginalised within the discipline even though some reflectivist attempts aim to include it (Croft 1997, Engel & Olsen, 2006a, 2006b).

Brown (2006) makes a valid qualificatory point in his analysis. He argues that theoretical approaches, other than the neorealism, still need to be considered in the study of Africa as these theories are not entirely irrelevant as explanatory tools. As Smith (2006:2) indicates Brown therefore argues that not all Western IR theory is incommensurable with the African context and that "there have been important advances in some approaches (notably *constructivism*) in looking beyond neorealism's state-centric approach to include factors which critics maintain are essential to understanding IR in Africa". Moore (2008) also

argues that *constructivism*, with a few exceptions, has not been effectively tested on the African continent.

In response to Moore's challenge this thesis posits that employing a constructivist approach to studying the African context and the discipline of IR could bridge the theoretical abyss explored in this chapter and therefore include Africa as an object of study and Africans as agents of IR knowledge. The following chapter introduces constructivism and provides an analysis of the middle ground position which it is argued to occupy between the seemingly incommensurable positions of rationalism and reflectivism which frame the theoretical abyss.

PART 1: AFRICA AS AN OBJECT OF STUDY

WORLD 2: THE WORLD OF SCIENCE

Discipline: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Theoretical Approach: CONSTRUCTIVISM

*The world of science consists of those academic
discipline that makes the world(s) of everyday life
into object(s) of systematic inquiry*

WORLD 1: THE WORLD OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Object of Inquiry: AFRICAN CONTEXT
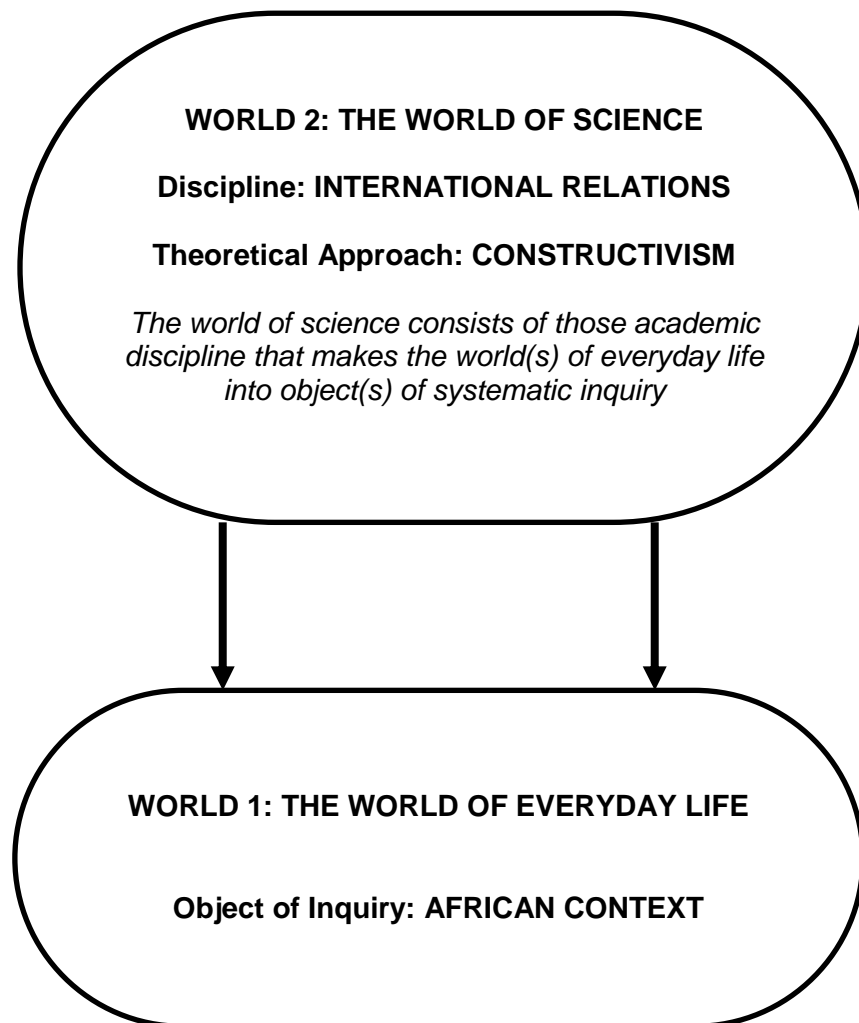
(Adapted from Mouton, 1996:10-11)

CHAPTER 3

CONSTRUCTING AFRICA IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY: ESTABLISHING THE MIDDLE GROUND[15]

3.1 INTRODUCTION

It was argued in Chapter 2 that the African context as on object of study within IR is currently finds itself in a theoretical abyss framed by two seemingly incommensurable discourses. Realism informs part of the first rationalist discourse. The predominance of realism, as a theoretical paradigm within IR, both in the West and in African scholarly communities, informs the marginalisation of the African context as realists continue to espouse the universalism of realist knowledge although it is derived primarily from the contextual position of great powers within the West. The second discourse is that of the Africanist critiques of realism, which can be typified as mainly reflectivist in orientation. The line of argumentation followed by these critiques lead to the further marginalisation of the continent as an object of study within IR theory as they end up framing Africa as the 'Other' to the European 'Self'. Both of these theoretical discourses fail to effectively include Africa as an object of study within the discipline of IR.

This chapter lays the groundwork for the proposal that employing constructivism as a theoretically informed analytical approach to studying the African context will be able to bridge the theoretical abyss and lead to Africa's inclusion as an object of study. The first section of this chapter introduces constructivism within the discipline of IR by looking at its emergence and role within the discipline and subsequently also its ontological and epistemological roots. The next section introduces the metaphor of bridge-building derived from the apparent middle ground position that constructivism is argued to occupy. It reconceptualises the middle ground as a process of establish*ing*[16] rather than as a substantive end-goal. It then critically interrogates the common conceptualisation of bridge-building within IR which associates it with a search for synthesis. Based on this

---

[15] The notion of constructivism establishing a middle ground is drawn from the work of Wiener (2001, 2003, 2006). Constructivism's middle ground position was first introduced by Adler (1997).

[16] The emphasis added refers to the processual re-orientation as it relates to the idea of verbing. See Pettman (2000:22-23) for an exposition of the idea of verbing.

interrogation it is argued that the focus should rather fall on bridg*ing* within IR which aligns the metaphor with the processual re-orientation advocated for the middle ground.

3.2 INTRODUCING CONSTRUCTIVISM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Constructivism was introduced into IR as an attempt to incorporate the social into the previously undersocialised discipline (Wiener, 2003). It emerged within IR during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Its introduction was signaled by Wendt's (1987) introduction of the agent-structure problem, Ruggie's (1986) indication that traditional IR theory is unable to deal with epochal historical transformations and concretised in 1989 by Onuf's introduction of the term constructivism (Fierke & Jørgenson, 2001). In recent years it has overcome its initial marginal status and has become one of the main contenders in the so-called fourth debate (Katzenstein, Keohane & Krasner, 1999; Fierke & Jørgenson, 2001). IR can thus be said to have undergone a 'constructivist turn' (Checkel, 1998).

Wiener (2006:17) argues that the constructivist turn in IR occurred for three reasons:

> *First, the historical context in world politics (binary perspective of world politics was challenged by end of cold war); Secondly, the cultural environment (debating culture of the discipline); and Thirdly, in the wake of the third debate's critical questions about the value-added of positivist theorising….*

These changes constituted the creation of an opening in the post-Cold War era for revisiting sociology and philosophy within IR theory (Katzenstein, Keohane & Krasner, 1999). The constructivist turn was the result of scholars spotting this opening and introducing constructivist approaches to fill the social void.

The debate about the role of constructivism within IR is deeper than reflected in the discipline of IR. Ultimately the debates surrounding constructivism within IR echoes a debate at the centre of the social sciences between a naturalist and a social conception of science (Adler, 1997). As Guzzini (2000:149) indicates, the social sciences, like IR, "need to interpret an already interpreted world, and natural sciences do not". Constructivists therefore reject the unity of science thesis, adhered to by realists, that posits that the social and natural world can be studied using the same methods (Barnett, 2008). Constructivists "argue that the objects of the natural world and the social world are different in one crucial

respect: in the social world the subject knows herself through reflection upon her actions as a subject not simply of experience but of intentional action as well" (Barnett, 2008:166). Constructivists therefore argue that in researching a subject we can only reveal *a* reality, but not *the* reality (Pettman, 2000).

It is important to note that constructivism is not a substantive, explanatory theory of world politics and therefore cannot be contrasted with other substantive theories such as realism and liberalism. Hopf (1998) argues that if it is a theory, it should be conceptualised as a theory of *process*, not one that has a specific substantive outcome. This results from the view of the world as "a project under construction, as becoming rather than being" that a constructivist lens provides (Adler, 2002:95). Constructivism therefore adheres to what Locher and Prügl (2001a, 2001b) call an 'ontology of becoming'. As was argued in Chapter 1, constructivism is more pragmatically viewed as a theoretically informed analytical approach founded on certain ontological and epistemological grounds (Checkel, 1998, Ruggie, 1998; Jørgenson, 2001; Fearon & Wendt, 2002). By employing this view of constructivism it can be contrasted with rationalism and reflectivism, the positions that frame the Third Debate.

In this introduction to constructivism in IR it is therefore necessary to provide an introduction to the ontology and epistemology which underlies the constructivist approach. Although constructivism, like most other approaches within IR theory, does not comprise a coherent whole, we are still able to identify certain shared characteristics.

3.2.1 Ontology[17]

> *Constructivism is about human consciousness and its role in international life.*
>
> (Barnett, 2008:162)

The main ontological agreements among the different proponents of constructivism, as it is understood within this thesis, are threefold. The first is that social reality is constructed; secondly that meaning (and, as a result, knowledge) is also a social construct; and lastly, knowledge and reality are mutually constitutive (Guzzini, 2000; Adler, 2002; Pouliot, 2007). Constructivists specifically stress the intersubjective or collectively held aspects of the

---

[17] Refers to what it is that we can know.

social construction of reality and. therefore agree on an intersubjective ontology. Taking this ontology seriously means that constructivists stress "that knowledge claims [and actor's identities and interests] are context-bound and historically contingent" and therefore knowledge and intersubjective beliefs are shaped by the social environment in which they are constructed (Klotz, 2001:232; Checkel, 1998; Hopf, 1998; Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001; Pouliot, 2007). Unlike rationalists who conceive of a natural reality 'out there' where things such as the state, anarchy etc. are inevitable, natural givens and therefore accessible through observation, constructivists hold that these are socially constructed and therefore open to change. Constructivism therefore seeks to denaturalise the social world (Fearon & Wendt, 2002).

The main focus for constructivists in the study of world politics is therefore on social facts rather than brute facts (Adler, 2002). Social facts are facts only by human agreement. As Searle (1995) argues these things only become facts because we, collectively, attribute a certain meaning or function to them. Searle (1995) also identifies a subclass of social facts which he calls institutional facts. These depend on intersubjectively shared meanings for their very existence and not just their observation (Guzzini, 2000)[18]. Searle (1995) depends largely on money as an example of one such an institutional fact. Institutional facts sometimes present themselves as objective reality to people as they acquire a reified structure through continual social reproduction. These facts are then to some extent taken for granted (Checkel, 1998). Adler (1997:322) indicates that "even our most enduring institutions are based on collective understandings; that they are reified structures that were once upon a time conceived *ex nihilo* by *human consciousness*; and that these understandings were subsequently diffused and consolidated until they were taken for granted" (author's emphasis). Social structures are therefore "nothing more than routinized discursive and physical practices that persist over an extended temporal and spatial domain (Price & Reus-Smit, 1998:267).

Out of these ontological agreements three common ontological positions can be determined. The first of these positions is that constructivists emphasise normative and ideational structures in shaping human interaction, not only material factors as realists assert (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001; Reus-Smit, 2005; Hayman, 2006). Secondly, these normative and ideational structures, comprised of intersubjective beliefs and meanings,

---

[18] See Searle (1995:121) for his exposition of the hierarchical taxonomy of facts.

constitute the identities, interests and actions of agents (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001; Reus-Smit, 2005 Hayman, 2006). Constructivists do differ with regard to the specific intersubjective beliefs that they focus on. The third ontological position is the reflexive nature of the interaction between the self and society. Agents and structures are seen as mutually constitutive and therefore neither has ontologically primacy (Checkel, 1998; Hopf, 1998; Adler, 2002; Zehfuβ, 2002; Hayman, 2006).

Constructivists do not deny that a physical (mainly natural) world exists independent of thought, but they do "reject notions of an objective reality that can be explained by universal law-like generalizations" (Klotz, 2001:226; Sterling-Folker, 2002). Constructivists do make certain contingent generalisations about world politics (Price & Reus-Smit, 1998). Guzzini (2000:159) indicates that constructivism does, like Klotz (2001) argues, "oppose that phenomena can constitute themselves as objects of knowledge independently of discursive practice". Therefore brute facts "only acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded" (Reus-Smit, 2005:196; Adler, 2002). According to Adler (2002:100) the world is therefore comprised of "intersubjective understandings, subjective knowledge and material objects".

3.2.2 Epistemology[19]

Constructivism does not represent a coherent whole as it is inherently complex and constituted by diversity, especially on epistemological grounds. Following Wendt (1999), Wiener (2006:5) argues that constructivists "usually produce more agreement with regard to ontological issues … than with regard to the epistemological basis of respective research questions which needs to be asked" (Klotz, 2001). Guzzini (2000) notes that several scholars have attempted to instill more coherence into constructivism through various means. Adler (1997, 2002) emphasises an interpretivist epistemological view to which, he argues, all constructivists, except the most radical, at least partially adhere. Checkel (1998), alternatively, picks out only a few approaches to cover in his survey article.

In trying to come to grips with the epistemological differences, most scholars, following Hopf (1998), have tried to create typologies which differentiate between constructivists

---

[19] Refers to how we are able to know what we can know.

approaches on epistemological grounds. Hopf (1998) distinguishes between critical and conventional constructivists. Price and Reus-Smit (1998) differentiate between modern and postmodern constructivists. Ruggie (1998) differentiates between neo-classical, postmodern and naturalistic approaches. Adler (1997) initially distinguished between modern, legal, narrative and genealogical constructivisms, but in his more recent survey article in 2002 distinguishes between modernist, modernist linguistic, radical and critical.

This author would argue that we have to accept that constructivists differ on epistemological grounds (Klotz, 2001). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed explication of the epistemological differences which exist between constructivists. Wiener (2006) notes that these differences have not hampered the constructivist turn in IR as constructivism has not really focused on the differences regarding epistemology. Instead, they have given preference to ontology. In doing so, they have enriched the analytical tool-kit available to IR scholars. Wiener (2006) argues that constructivism is in the process of establishing the middle ground between the seemingly incommensurable positions occupied by rationalism and reflectivism. This author would argue that the epistemological differences which exist within constructivism actually help to facilitate this process as will be discussed in the next section.

The next section will focus on constructivism's middle ground position and the subsequent attempts at bridge-building found in the constructivist literature. The section provides an argument for the processual re-orientation of both the middle ground and the metaphor of bridge-building based on a critical reading of the incommensurability thesis and the current attempts at bridge-building found in the literature. It is argued that this re-orientation fits better with the ontology of becoming to which constructivists and some other middle ground approaches, like feminism, adhere.

3.3 CONSTRUCTING BRIDGES IN IR: A METAPHORICAL EXPLORATION

It has been contended in this thesis that Africa as an object of study in IR currently resides in a theoretical abyss. This section interrogates the notion/metaphor of bridge-building which is currently quite trendy within discussions of constructivism in IR. This author argues, like Wiener (2006:5), that constructivism has "led to enhanced theorizing of the middle ground even though bridge-building is not generally welcomed". Several scholars

have expressed reservations about the notion of 'friendly debates' inculcated by the constructivist focus on establishing the middle ground and some scholars have gone as far as to argue that IR should return to the 'fault-line politics' of the previous debates (Katzenstein, Keohane & Krasner, 1999; Risse & Wiener, 1999; Wiener, 2006). Notwithstanding the criticisms focused on bridge-building Zuern and Checkel (2005) have indicated that the references to bridge-building have been a marker of the constructivist turn. In this section it is argued that the re-orientation must take place along processual lines in order to accommodate the variegated nature of constructivism as well as other approaches like i.e. feminism which can share the middle ground (Guzzini, 2000; Locher & Prügl, 2001a, 2001b)..

3.3.1 Establishing the Middle Ground: A Processual Re-orientation

The constructivist turn created a third position rising above the so-called incommensurable epistemological positions which inform rationalism and reflectivism. Wiener (2006:3) argues that by taking this third position constructivism "allowed for a web of communications to emerge" between these positions. If we take the incommensurability thesis seriously this web of communications is not able to emerge, as positivism and post-positivism would be insular and hermetic positions with no ability to communicate. In order for this web of communications to have emerged, as a result of an intervention of constructivism, the seemingly incommensurable nature of the positivist/post-positivist dichotomy needs to be challenged. It should also be indicated how constructivism overcomes the problems with the institutionalisation of the incommensurability thesis within IR.

Accepting the incommensurability thesis precludes the possibility of communication or meaningful dialogue between positions that are deemed to be incommensurable. Taking the incommensurability thesis seriously therefore means that we have to agree that the inhabitants of different paradigms view the world in such radically different ways that they cannot open the spaces for dialogue (Neufeld, 1995; Wight, 1996). This leads to the acceptance of what Wight (1996) calls the 'foundational fallacy' which means that we, as scholars, are forced to choose between the two incommensurable positions. Therefore no middle ground exists.

The proposals of Neufeld (1995) and Wight (1996) to overcome the problems associated with the institutionalisation of the incommensurability thesis in IR resonates with the position occupied by constructivism. Neufeld (1995) argues for imbuement of theoretical reflexivity into the discipline by accepting that incommensurable positions are potentially comparable. He also stresses the importance of human consciousness in this process. Both the notions of theoretical reflexivity and human consciousness resonate with the constructivist approach (Guzzini, 2000; Barnett, 2008). Wight (1996) argues that Neufeld (1995) does not overcome the dichotomous thinking of the incommensurability thesis as he simply argues for the removal of the object in the subject-object divide. Wight (1996) alternatively argues for a transcendence of the dichotomous view of incommensurability. He argues for a position where the process of the mutual constitution of agents and structures are accepted, resonating with the ontological position argued for by constructivism. Wight (1996:318) concludes by stating that within IR "a unified body of knowledge, drawn from diverse perspectives may well be tenable, where unification is taken to entail the ability to grasp differences, silences, similarities, and inter-relationships among multiple approaches, without recourse to a set of common standards". The middle ground position of constructivism resonates with the argument of Wight (1996). This author argues that constructivism provides the metatheoretical grounding which Wight (1996) searches for in his article as part of his attempt to overcome the institutionalisation of the incommensurability thesis.

Wiener (2003) argues that constructivists have different rationales for moving towards this middle ground. Some constructivists like Adler (1997) claim to be "seizing the middle ground" whilst others like Wiener (2003, 2006) prefer to focus on the idea of "establishing the middle ground". This thesis argues that the notion of establish*ing* the middle ground is more useful, as it is imbued with a processual orientation. It should thus "[reflect] the process of arguing about different positions as a key feature of the constructivist turn" (Wiener, 2001). A processual orientation will also fit better with the notion of an ontology of becoming which constructivists advocate.

Taking this argument further, the result of the processual view of establishing the middle ground adopted within this thesis is that scholars will have to accept that the middle ground will never be substantively established, but that the process of establishing it and the discussions and dialogue between positions that arise from this process should be

seen as an end in itself (Wiener, 2006). The middle ground is therefore always open to scrutiny and debate and as a result opens up the possibility of cross-paradigm dialogue and the subsequent creation of a unified body of knowledge which Wight (1996) argues is important within IR. This re-orientation also entails that constructivism will be able to hold onto its critical roots and potentiality as it imbues the notion of the middle ground with the capacity for critical reflection and continual transformation (Owen, 2002). It also overcomes the static, incommensurable and binary thinking previously exemplified in the debating culture of the IR community (Risse & Wiener, 1999; Wiener, 2003; Reus-Smit, 2005). This re-orientation of the middle ground also relates to Kratochwil's (2003) argument about the search for criteria with which to prioritise conflicting evidence or positions. He uses an analogy with law when he argues "that which is held to be the truth is the result of the legal *process*" (Kratochwil, 2003:127).

Following from this re-orientation an investigation of the notion of bridge-building which has been related to the middle ground position of constructivism needs to be conducted. This author argues that the present conflation of the notion of bridge-building with the search for synthesised positions needs to be critically investigated.

3.3.2 Bridge-building in IR: The Search for Synthesis

The notion of the middle ground which constructivism is establishing is also related and sometimes seen as interchangeable with an interest in bridge-building within IR. Wiener (2001:24) argues that engaging in bridge-building allows scholars "to embrace a hybrid approach which, while lacking the elegance of a theory (which may, however prove of little use in empirical research), offers the advantage of being open towards conceptual innovation as the result of discussion". See Figure 3.1 for a visual representation of how constructivism facilitates this in the context of the purpose of this thesis.

Zehfuβ (2002:5) argues that "the rhetoric of the middle has normative overtones which are not addressed [as] it is portrayed, at least implicitly, as more reasonable than the position of those who, as they are not in the middle ground, must be on the fringe". The idea of establishing the middle ground is specifically not related to the creation of new marginalised theoretical positions as the notion of 'fringe' entails, but following pragmatic arguments some positions are more useful than others for specific purposes. In the case

of trying to include the African context within IR, the two epistemological positions that frame the 'fringe' *are* less useful as both are ineffectual in their attempts to include the African context as an object of study in IR (Checkel, 2004).

Figure 3.1: Constructivism: Bridg*ing* the Theoretical Abyss
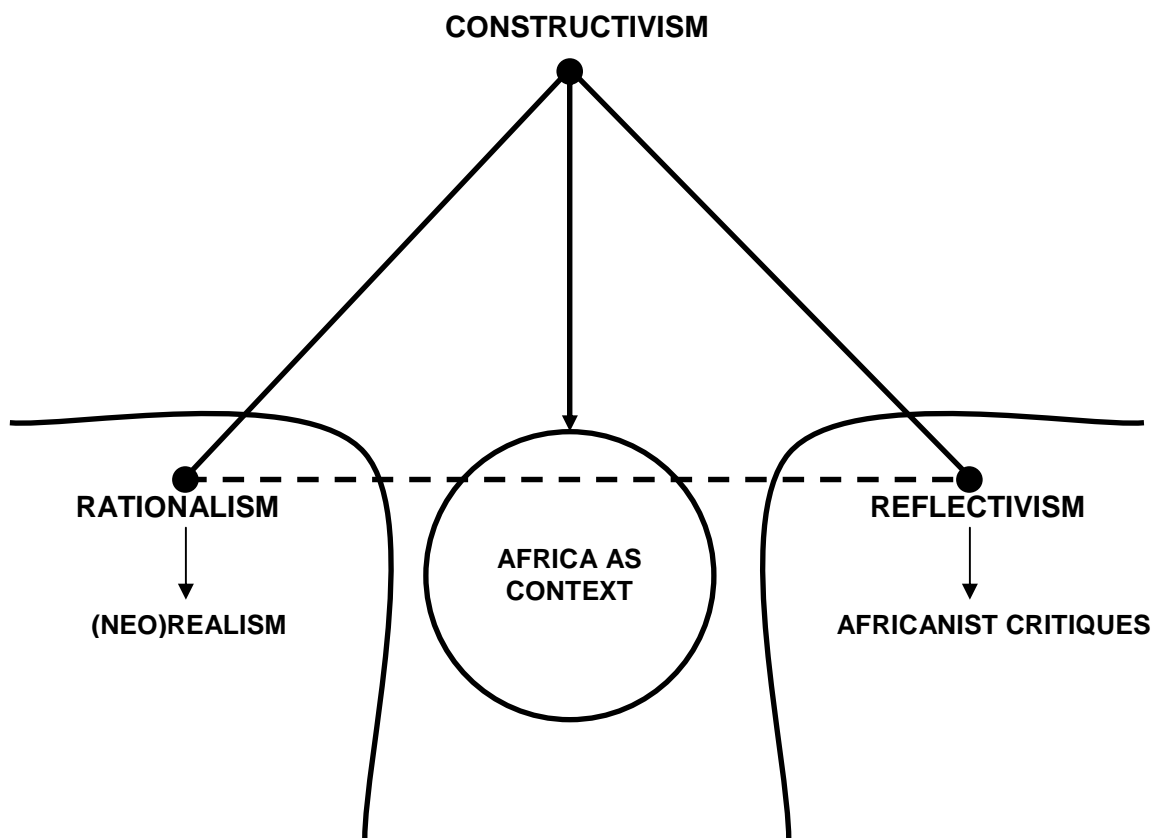
CONSTRUCTIVISM

(Adapted from Wiener, 2003, 2006)

Several scholars are quite skeptical about the efforts at bridge-building that currently mark the constructivist argument (Reus-Smit, 2005). Zehfuβ (2002) specifically denies any possibility of bridge-building in her critique of constructivism (Checkel, 2004). Zehfuβ (2002:5) argues that

> *[even if bridge-building] is [possible], the notion of 'middle ground' envisages constructivists as situated between, and able to engage in conversation with, rationalists and those deemed more radical than the constructivists. The emphasis on the constructivist-rationalist debate as the centre of attention, however, is more appropriate insofar as constructivists seem*

> *markedly more interested in conducting a conversation with one side than the other.*

This criticism is quite valid given the state of recent attempts at bridge-building within the discipline. Recently, the fact that bridges only seem to have one lane, moving from constructivism to rationalism, has become a point of controversy (Checkel, 2004). See Figure 3.2 for a visual representation. This author argues that this results from the manner in which the fourth debate was framed by the scholars who initially drew our attention to it, namely, Katzenstein, Keohane and Krasner (1999). Framing the debate in this manner marginalises the more reflectivist and critical approaches by, in some cases, subsuming them under the constructivist label (Wendt, 1995; Zehfuβ, 2002). This results in bridges only comprising of one lane (Checkel, 2004).

Several authors have attempted to build bridges between realism and constructivism (Sterling-Folker, 2002; Barkin, 2003; Checkel, 2004). Guzzini (2000) indicates that it is as a result of this focus on bridge-building in one direction that constructivism sometimes seems to suffer from a form of redundancy. In some forms its analysis is so close to that of rationalist theories that it could just as easily have been ignored. The binary thinking that characterised the previous great debates as well as the uncritical adoption of the incommensurability thesis discussed earlier also informs much of the criticism about the possibility of bridge-building. This form of binary thinking is visible in the article by Smith discussed in Risse and Wiener (1999). Smith argues that constructivism will at some point split into a rationalist and a reflectivist form.

Figure 3.2: Constructivism and Current Lanes of Attempted Synthesis within IR
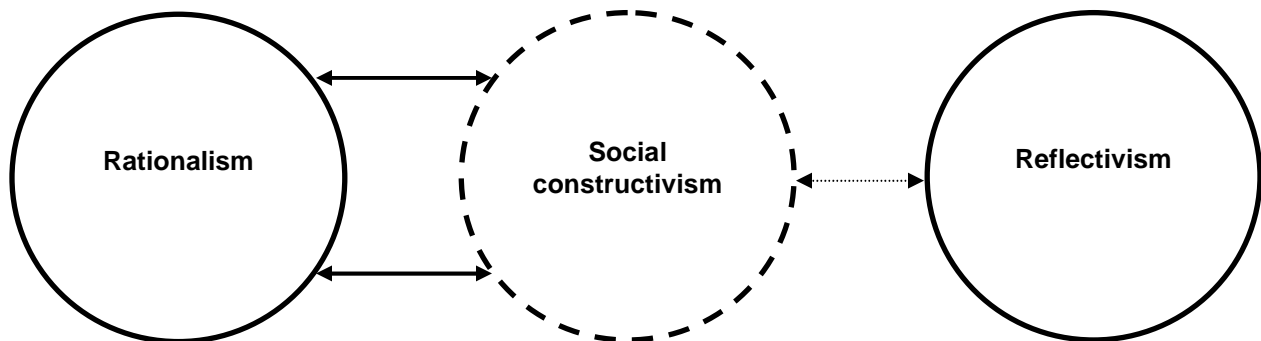
This author argues that Zehfuβ's and other scholars' criticism is based on a notion of bridge-building which equates it with the search for synthesised positions (Checkel, 2004). Some scholars argue for the importance of the search for synthesised positions, but in most cases they employ the notion of synthesis in a positivist manner (Moravcsik, 2003). Smith (2003:143) argues that this "call for synthesis is mistaken because it assumes that we can find out the truth about the world out there by combining theories and approaches". The continual search for paradigm synthesis is therefore derived from a positivist orientation that sees competing paradigms as "commensurable and therefore comparable" (Neufeld, 1995:51-54).

This type of argument is to a large extent derived from the work of Wendt (1999) who, in search for a *via media* through the Third Debate, actually argues for a synthesised position between rationalism and constructivism. Various scholars who seek to build bridges implicitly adopt this notion of bridge-building (Barkin, 2003). As Palan (2000:589) argues this approach to bridge-building is rather costly as "soon enough, no one is truly a nonconstructivist". In adopting this notion of bridge-building the position that will be derived will always be a compromised one as the scholars will always hold onto one side of the bridge, determined by their dominant theoretical constructions or starting points. This hinders the process of establishing the middle ground within IR.

This is not the notion of bridge-building that we employ in this thesis. The focus should rather fall on a different notion of bridge-building which is able to tie into the processual re-orientation of the middle ground developed earlier.

3.3.3 Bridg*ing* in IR: (Re)Constituting Stations

The notion of bridge-building employed in this thesis, which, it is argued, will be able to move away from the focus on the positivist search for synthesised positions, is drawn primarily from the work of Antje Wiener (2001, 2003, 2006). She argues that the move towards the third position "allowed constructivists to develop positions in distance to yet in conversation with both of these incommensurable theoretical standpoints" (Wiener, 2006:14, See Figure 3.1). This author does not agree with her uncritical use of the idea that the positions of rationalism and reflectivism are incommensurable. The reasoning behind this was discussed earlier. The argument is that the focus should fall on the idea of

bridging rather than bridge-building as it ties into the processual re-orientation of the middle ground discussed earlier.

Following Wendt (1999) she argues that metatheoretical issues are more ontological than epistemological in nature, although some scholars like Checkel (2004) note that this preference is difficult to hold when confronted with empirical studies. Wiener (2003:256) argues that "[the] focus is on ontology, leading the bridge across the epistemological abyss between the two rationalist and reflectivist poles on the base line". Unlike Wendt (1999), Wiener (2001, 2003, 2006) does not argue that the different constructivist positions converge on one specific third theoretical point, but rather that they "form stations on a semi-circle over the two incommensurable poles on the baseline" (Wiener, 2001:24). This is what is entailed by the notion of bridg*ing* in this thesis. This processual approach to bridge- building overcomes the binary thinking that informed the ideas of the inter-paradigm debates and the focus on the process also does not close down the space for constructivist theoretical exploration deemed important for its continual development as an approach within the discipline (Checkel, 2004). This approach is also able and willing to confront the dilemma identified by Sterling-Folker (2002:74) when she contends that "a reconstruction acceptable to one approach may not be acceptable to the other".

Constructivists vary according to their ontological positions, specifically with regard to what they believe holds the intersubjective knowledge that constructs the social reality or rather the specific social facts on which they focus. Each of the individual constructivist positions is formed according to four aspects:
1) a preference for ontology over epistemology;
2) a distinction from the pole positions, framed epistemologically, yet an ability
   to engage in talk with both;
3) a variation in preferences for methodological tools;
4) and a focus on social facts.

(Wiener, 2001, 2006).

Figure 3.3: The Different Constructivist Positions on the Bridge Establishing the Middle Ground

(Wiener, 2006:18).
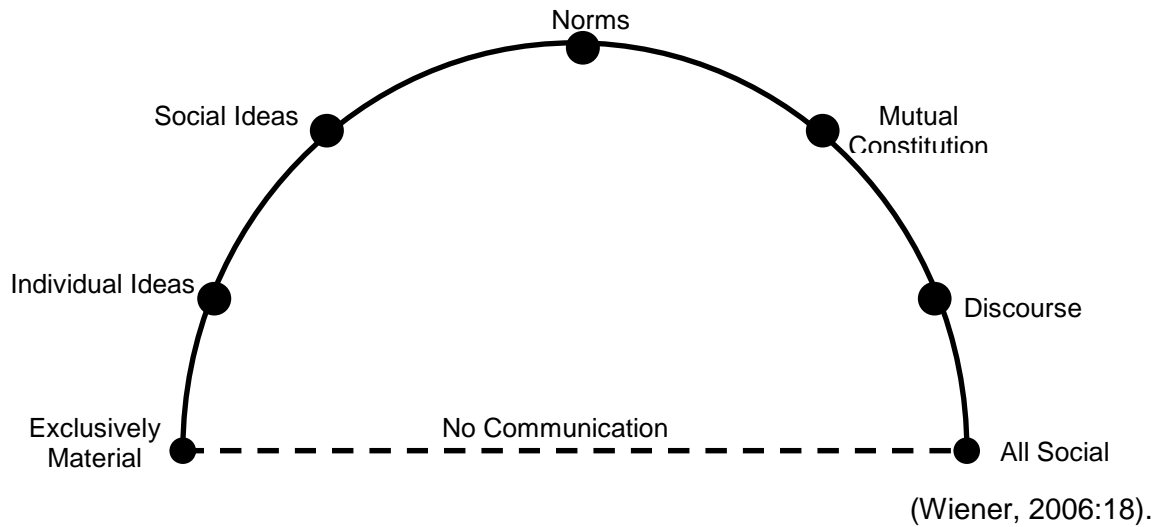
Table 3.1: Conversing Stations: Constructivisms and Bridging

Station	All material	Individual Ideas	Social Ideas	Norms	Mutual Constitution	Discourse	All Social
Tool	Material capabilities	Individual ideas	Ideas, beliefs, world views	Dual quality of norms	Structuration	Speech acts, language games	Text
Conversation	Ideas station	Materialist & Social ideas station	Ideas station & Mutual constitution station	Social ideas station & Mutual constitution	Norms station & Discourse station	Mutual constitution & All social	Discourse
Debate	First, Second, Third	Fourth	Fourth	Fourth	Fourth	Fourth	Third

(Adapted from Wiener, 2006:18)

As can be seen in Table 1, the different stations that are formed in the process of bridging are continually in conversation with other stations on the bridge. Through these conversations and dialogue the middle ground is continually expanded. It also does not foreclose the possibility of other theoretical standpoints informing the dialogue in the process of bridging the epistemological abyss. Locher and Prügl (2001a, 2001b) specifically argue that the different feminist positions which can be identified also fit into various stations and can inform this conceptualisation of bridging. The stations are also not static categories as new ones can emerge in this process. This process of continual

dialogue, it is argued, overcomes the positivist view of the search for synthesis which informed previous discussions on bridge-building. The focus is therefore shifted to bridg*ing* rather than the substantive search for bridges.

These different constructivist moves to position themselves at a distance from rationalism and reflectivism, whilst not completed isolated from them, have resulted in not just one, but various middle ground positions (Wiener, 2006). This captures, this author argues, the variegated nature of the process of bridg*ing* the abyss and establish*ing* the middle ground. This plurality of constructivist positions has been identified by various scholars (Palan, 2000; Zehfuβ, 2001; Hayman 2006). This plurality entails that certain constructivist positions might be better positioned or useful in their attempts to bridge the theoretical abyss and to include the African context.

3.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has laid the groundwork for the argument that a specific form of constructivism can include Africa as an object of study in IR. In order to lay this foundation it firstly introduced constructivism as an approach within IR by focusing on its ontology of becoming and the introduction of social facts as the main unit of analysis of constructivist IR scholars. It has also indicated that constructivists, although they do differ with regard to the type of social facts that they study, have more in common ontologically than epistemologically.

The next section looked at the apparent middle ground position that constructivism occupies between rationalism and reflectivism. This chapter has argued that the notion of establish*ing* the middle ground is more useful as it is imbued with a processual orientation. It was argued that as a result of the processual re-orientation of the middle ground, which is adopted within this thesis, scholars will have to accept that the middle ground is an asymptote which will never be substantively established. The focus should rather be on the process of establishing the middle ground and the conversations and dialogue which facilitates the rise of different positions. Wiener (2006), and this author, argues that the intervention of constructivism in IR has initiated this process. This view of the middle ground imbues the discipline with a form of theoretical reflexivity that is able to overcome the institutionalisation of the incommensurability thesis within IR (Neufeld, 1995; Wight,

1996; Price & Reus-Smit, 1998). This formulation also opens up the middle ground for the introduction of approaches other than constructivism.

Following from this was a critique of the notion of bridge-building that is currently espoused in the discipline which conceptualises it as a search for synthesised positions. By employing the notion of bridg*ing* rather than bridge-building, this chapter was able to tie the notion of bridg*ing* to the processual re-orientation of the middle ground. It was argued that it does not lead to the constitution of only one constructivist middle ground but captures the variegated nature of the middle ground. This entails that certain constructivist positions might be more useful for inclusion of the African context as an object of study. It is to this aspect that we turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

CONSTRUCTING AFRICA IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY: AFRICA AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 introduced constructivism, as it is employed in IR, by outlining the shared ontological core whilst noting the differences which exist on epistemological grounds. It was argued that constructivism could bridge the theoretical abyss that was explicated in Chapter 2. This possibility is due to the fact that the intervention of constructivism in IR initiated and partakes in the dialogue which is establishing the middle ground between the rationalist and reflectivist approaches that structure this abyss. By focusing on the ontological differences between constructivists the variegated nature of the middle ground was illuminated. Various constructivist middle ground positions are thus created in the process of bridging. This entails that certain constructivist positions might be more useful than others at potentially including Africa as an object of study. As a result of the variegated nature of constructivism in IR this chapter seeks to determine what form constructivism will need to take in order to effectively include the African context

In this chapter the object of inquiry lies between World 1 and World 2, as the focus falls on the study of the African context within IR. Constructivism is thus applied as an analytical approach. The first section looks at previous analyses that have employed a constructivist approach to focus, either directly or indirectly, on the African context. It identifies and assesses two studies, one by Klotz (1995) and one by Schoeman (1998). The next section introduces Wendtian constructivism as one possible form of constructivism that could potentially facilitate the inclusion of the African context. Wendtian constructivism was chosen for various reasons: 1) many scholars conflate it with constructivism in general; 2) Wendt's work went a long way towards popularising constructivism as an approach within IR; and 3) his form of constructivism includes one of the most comprehensive attempts to create a *via media* between rationalism and reflectivism within IR theory (Reus-Smit, 2002; Zehfuβ, 2001, 2002). After introducing Wendt's constructivist position, this chapter employs the African context as a tool to criticise his form of constructivism. It is argued that it is unable to effectively include the African continent as an object of study. The last

section builds on the criticisms of the work of Wendt and introduces a constructivist methodology, labeled Standpoint SObjectivism, which, it is argued, is able to facilitate the inclusion of the African context.

4.2 EXISTING CONSTRUCTIVIST ANALYSES FOCUSING ON AFRICA

As was noted in Chapter 2, there are very few existing constructivist analyses that focus on the African context within the IR literature (Brown, 2006; Moore, 2008). This author could identify only two previous constructivist studies focusing, either directly or indirectly, on Africa. The first of these is Audie Klotz's 1995 study on the effect of norms in the international struggle against apartheid in South Africa and the second is Maxi Schoeman's 1998 article on the social construction of the state in Southern Africa. This section will briefly introduce and assess both of these studies.

In her study, Klotz (1995) focuses on the increasing importance placed on the norm of racial equality within multinational institutions and the effect that this had on the imposition of multilateral sanctions against the apartheid government in South Africa. She criticises the conventional rationalist approaches to multilateral sanctions that purely focus on material interests and unitary states, and asserts that multinational institutions do not merely reflect the interests and goals of great powers. Klotz (1995:9) alternatively argues that "institutions can empower weak and nonstate actors, by setting agendas and defining group identities [and that] the constitutive norms and decision-making procedures of these multilateral organizations explain the varying success of anti-apartheid activists in generating sanctions". She also focuses to some extent on the role that the transnational anti-apartheid movement played in the rising importance of the norm of racial equality. Klotz's argument therefore highlights the potential effects the increasing awareness and importance of certain norms can have on world politics by using the international anti-apartheid movement as a case study. She argues that the institutionalisation of the norm of racial equality on an international scale affected a change in the identity and interests of the South African state.

Several problems persist with Klotz's approach in the context of including the African context as an object of inquiry. Although she focuses on South Africa as her case study, the arguments are presented more from the perspective of great powers and their role

within the anti-apartheid movement. Therefore her argument, although focusing on an African state, is not in actuality about that African state and its international relations. Like a lot of literature which focuses on the African context, Klotz's (1995) argument is rather "about Africa's role in North-South relations [where the] emphasis is on the North" (Croft, 1997:609). She does to some extent focus on African countries when looking at the role of the Organization of African Unity as a multilateral institution and Zimbabwe as an African state, and their adoption of anti-apartheid positions. Ultimately, though, it should be conceded that her constructivist argument is framed in terms of the effect that certain norms can have on world politics and subsequently the identity and interests of states. The focal point of her study is therefore not the African context.

The second study is Schoeman's (1998). She initiates her argument from the position that the African state is a social construct and that it is therefore subject to change. Schoeman (1998:16) concludes her article by noting that:

> the existence of the African 'Westphalian' state is a contradiction in terms, because the Westphalian state was the outcome of a historical process which did not involve the African continent. The concept and construct have, after their initial external imposition on African societies, evolved slowly to exhibit a distinctly African character, both in their interaction with other states in the international system, and with regard to the state's internal functioning.

By employing a constructivist analysis of the state in Southern Africa, her argument therefore takes into account the historical and contextual variation that the state, as a construct, underwent after its colonial imposition on the African continent. By using a constructivist approach she is able to identify those characteristics of the state which have changed and adapted to the Southern Africa context. This type of constructivist argument therefore effectively includes the African context and history by making it the explicit focus of the study.

It is thus clear that very few constructivist analyses of the African context exist within the IR literature at present. The next section introduces the constructivist approach developed by Alexander Wendt in order to determine whether his approach can lead to the potential inclusion of the African context.

4.3 WENDTIAN CONSTRUCTIVISM: *VIA MEDIA* TOWARDS AFRICAN INCLUSION?

Alexander Wendt's work has done much to influence the popularisation of constructivism within IR (Zehfuβ, 2002). He was one of the originators of the drive to socialise the discipline and his work continues to contribute to various debates within IR. Many scholars, who wish to engage with constructivism, initiate their engagement by focusing on the work of Wendt. This sometimes leads to scholars conflating his ideas with that of constructivism as a whole. Reus-Smit (2002) shows that members of the English School, in their engagement with constructivism, focus primarily on the work of Wendt. He argues that "there is a tendency to conflate Wendt's writings with constructivism more generally and to treat other constructivists as a chorus amplifying Wendt's central themes" (Reus-Smit, 2002:491). Palan (2000) also notes that Wendt unfortunately represents to some extent what people believe constructivism entails within IR. As a result of the popularity of Wendt, this thesis also foregrounds his constructivist position in order to assess whether it could provide a *via media* towards the inclusion of the African context as an object of study within IR.

The main stated aim of Wendt's work is to "build a bridge between [the realist-liberal and rationalist-reflectivist debates] by developing a constructivist argument" (Wendt, 1992:394). In order to achieve his goal of finding a "*via media* through the Third Debate", he combines an intersubjective ontology with a positivist epistemology (Wiener, 2006).This entails a different epistemological choice from the more pragmatic approaches favoured by some other constructivists like Ruggie (1998). Wendt (1999:39-40) sums up his position as follows:

> *Given my idealist ontological commitments, therefore, one might think that I should be firmly on the post-positivist side of this divide…. Yet, in fact, when it comes to the epistemology of social inquiry I am a strong believer in science – a pluralistic science to be sure, in which there is a significant role for 'Understanding', but a science just the same. I am a 'positivist'. In some sense this puts me in the middle of the Third Debate, … because I do not think an idealist ontology implies a post-positivist epistemology.*

In order to construct this *via media* Wendt grounds his argument in scientific realism. As a result of this philosophical grounding he can argue that 'social kinds' are like 'natural kinds'

and can therefore be studied in an objective and scientific manner (Wendt, 1999; Wylie, 2000). He conceptualises scientific realism as "a philosophy of science which assumes that the world exists independent of human beings, that mature scientific theories typically refer to this world, and they do so even when the objects of science are unobservable" (Wendt, 1999:47). Social kinds are therefore argued to exist independent of our thought. This is a tenuous position to hold as it seems to contradict his intersubjective ontology. It is as a result of this philosophical grounding that Ruggie (1998) calls Wendt a naturalistic constructivist.

The primary actors in Wendt's constructivism are states. He argues that "states are real actors to which we can legitimately attribute anthropomorphic qualities like desires, beliefs, and intentionality" (Wendt, 1999:197). As Copeland (2000:198) indicates, Wendt "demonstrates that the state is a real self-organizing entity that, being held in the collective memories of many individuals, is dependent for existence on no particular actor". Wendt employs Meadian symbolic interactionism in order to distinguish between the 'I' of states, relating to the state's corporate identity and type identity, and the 'Me' which is defined by role and collective identities (Wendt, 1999; Kratochwil, 2006). For Wendt the interests of the state are rooted in these identities, but he brackets the corporate and type identities and mainly focuses on the collective identities of states (which he terms culture). This bracketing results, just like for Waltz, from his adherence to systemic or third image theorising (Hopf, 2005). The state is therefore a unitary and transhistorical actor within Wendt's constructivist position (Wylie, 2000). As a result he only highlights the constitutive relationship which exists between the state-as-actor and the international system.

With this conceptual grounding in place Wendt is able to attack the logic of anarchy that is employed by neorealists. Wendt argues that anarchy is an 'empty vessel' or rather a 'nothing' that can be filled with different logics depending on how actors construct and give meaning to it. Wendt (1999) differentiates between three cultures of anarchy, namely Hobbesian, Lockean or Kantian depending on whether states construct the 'generalized other' as enemies, rivals or friends. He argues that the conception of self and other only occurs in the interaction process as states acquire identities as a result of participating in the creation and reproduction of collective meanings (Zehfuβ, 2001). Zehfuβ (2001:57) argues that in Wendt's conceptualisation "[identities] provide the basis for interests, and these are defined in the process of defining situations". The reproduction of the initial

interactional process creates typifications which leads to structures of identities and interests, cultures of anarchy, which are very difficult to transform "because the social system becomes a objective social fact to the actors, and they may have a stake in maintaining stable identities" (Zehfuβ, 2001:58). Out of this reproduction of collective meanings in the interaction process between states, a specific culture of anarchy emerges, which in turn constrains the potential identity of states in future interactions (Wendt, 1999).

This, in a very small nutshell, is the constructivist position proposed by Wendt. It has been both criticised and applauded by scholars. Wendt's constructivism would be positioned at the social ideas station on the bridge described in Chapter 3. In the next section the African context will be employed as a tool to critically assess whether the constructivist position advocated by Wendt is able to include it as an object of study within IR.

4.3 CRITIQUING WENDTIAN CONSTRUCTIVISM FROM AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

This section engages with Wendt's constructivism from a position within the African context. It looks at several criticisms which have been leveled at Wendt's position and will indicate the validity of these criticisms in the context of the attempt to include Africa as an object of study. It focuses on four main criticisms. The first is his reliance on positivism; the second, his historical agnosticism; the third, his essentialised and unitary conceptualisation of the state; and the last, his subsequent bracketing of the domestic processes of state identity formation.

4.3.1 Wendt and Positivist Epistemology

Wendt's adherence to a positivist epistemology is problematic for various reasons. His proposed *via media* through the Third Debate is hampered by this choice. Firstly, the Third Debate was framed in terms of a distinction between positivism and post-positivism (Lapid, 1989). Wendt, in choosing positivism, roots his constructivist position in one side of the dichotomy and not in the middle as he claims. Secondly, the chosen epistemology also clashes with his ontology (Wylie, 2000). Lapid (2001) indicates quite succinctly that a positivist epistemology is built on a strong ontological commitment to a reality that already has a fixed and permanent constitution. He further indicates that "[the] axioms of this static ontology postulate that reality is made up of discrete, self-identical things; that these things

and entities are primary to process; and that the state of rest, stability, and equilibrium is a natural state, with movement occurring only when things are disturbed or perturbed" (Wylie, 2001:3). Wendt seems to be aware of this tension between his ontology and epistemology when he argues that "human beings do not have direct unmediated access to the world. All observation is theory laden" (Wendt, 1999:370).

Zuern and Checkel (2005) argue that the choice of a positivist epistemology creates further problems for Wendt with regard to his posited solution to the agent-structure problem. They argue that by adopting a positivist epistemology it forces a theorist to make an ontological choice between prioritising either agents or structures. This undermines the idea of the mutual constitution of agents and structures which forms part of the constructivism's ontological core. Price and Reus-Smit (1998:268) contend that, as a result of the choice that Wendt makes in favour of a systemic constructivism, he "offers an overly static conception of the state and the international system, providing no clue as to how agents or structures change". This author would thus argue that Wendt's constructivism, like most rationalist approaches, does not have a transformational logic.

This static and statist view that results from Wendt's penchant for systemic theorising and positivist epistemology is problematic when one views his constructivist position from the African context. The African context, like IR in general, is comprised of and constructed through an ongoing process and thus the static nature of Wendt's position is untenable when trying to incorporate the African context (Pettman, 2000; Mbembe & Nuttall, 2004). Next, his essentialised notion of the state and its application to the African continent is explored.

4.3.2 Africa and the Essentialised State: Enter the Failed African

In accepting disciplinary orthodoxy to frame his critique, Wendt chooses the state as the main actor in his analysis (Guzzini & Leander, 2006). Wendt's (1999:201-215) definition of the state draws heavily on the Weberian definition of the state-as-actor and therefore, like rationalists, essentialises the state as unitary and Westphalian. The state is therefore treated as a part of the objective reality, although it actually reflects the organisational demands of a specific context and time (Dunn, 2001b). Hill (2005:148) indicates that "African states, failed and non-failed alike, are compared with a model of statehood that is

based upon strictly European values, customs, practices, organisation and structures". Secondly, Wendt (1999:215) anthropomorphises the state when he argues that "states are people too". This is a tenuous position to hold given his ontology (Wylie, 2000). Niemann (2001:61) argues that "the anthropomorphic conception of the state [employed by Wendt] robs it of any spatial quality…. The despatialized state then becomes a common sense entity, something no longer questioned and analyzed". The notion of selfhood that is attributed to the African state is also based on a European conception of the self (Nwoye, 2006)[20]. Wendt's treatment of the state is therefore problematic within the context of the Africa since it places *African* states at the margins of analysis (Vale, 2001).

Proponents of the failed state thesis like Jackson (1990), Clapham (1996, 1998), Warner (2000, 2001) and Hopkins (2000) all note the inability of some African states to perform the basic functions of statehood. Jackson (1990) initially introduced IR to this notion when he made the analytical distinction between positive and negative sovereignty. A successful state must not only have legal sovereignty, but must also be able to project and protect this sovereignty internally and externally (Hill, 2005). Biersteker and Weber (1996:10) argue that "Jackson (1990) posits a basic dualism in contemporary IR, a distinction between the world of Great Power balance-of-power politics …, and the world of quasi-states…". This type of dualistic thinking, which frames the African state as the deviant and different other, is also prevalent in some of the Africanist literature discussed in Chapter 2. Clapham (1998) argues that, rather than positing this dualism, the differences between states are rather a matter of 'degree', but the degrees are still measured against the same conceptualisation of a successful state noted above.

The view engendered of African states by the failed state thesis is also prevalent in the work of Wendt. From the essentialised, unitary view of the state employed by Wendt, most African states can only be deemed to be either 'collapsed' or 'failed' (Nkiwane, 2001). Even states in Africa that do not seem to be failing are still identified as inauthentic or "ramshackle" (Warner, 2000:322). It is argued that African states do not adhere to the Western norm of statehood and are therefore labelled as deviant. Morton (2005:371) calls this conception of the "identity of states, in the postcolonial world as instances of deviancy, aberration and breakdown" a Eurocentric pathology. States in Africa are therefore

---

[20] See Nwoye (2006) for a good explication of the differences which exist between the European and African conceptions of self.

described as African people were described during the colonial period. Muiu (2008:76) indicates that during the colonial period the image of Africa was of a continent where "'creatures' less than human survived in an order less than civilized".

Within the theoretical abyss, the African state is either seen as failed, using the conceptualisation of Wendt, or dismissed as a potential unit of analysis altogether (Palan, 2000; Brown, 2006). The state, as a concept, needs to be problematised rather than adjectified as the general tendency has been in the past within IR (Dunn, 2001b). Morton (2005:377) argues in his article that scholars must problematise the signs of sovereign statehood within the African condition "in order to highlight the 'failed universalisation of the imported state'". Unlike the Africanist critiques which, according to Brown (2006), dismiss the concept of the state as a building block of African IR theories, the focus should rather be on reconceptualising the state and studying it as a specific form of social relation which varies depending on history and social context. Although Wendt (1999) is right in arguing that the state must feature quite prominently, he does not problematise his conceptualisation of the state. As Wendt does not contextualise or historicise the state in his analysis his constructivist approach ultimately marginalises the state in Africa to the position of the deviant Other.

Nkiwane (2001:287) argues correctly that the "the concept of the state in Africa cannot be separated from its colonial baggage" (Thomas & Wilkin, 2004). Inayatullah (1996) similarly indicates that the analyses of failed state theorists, especially that of Jackson (1990), severs their analysis from social history and thus ignore the possibility of change. Quasi-states must also be seen as social constructs. Wendt's treatment of history should therefore also be investigated since the notion of historicism and Africa's treatment within history should play an important part in approaches employed to study African IR.

4.3.3 Wendt's Treatment of History and Africa's (pre-)Colonial Legacy

Following from his reliance on a positivist epistemology, history, as a concept, is absent in Wendt's form of constructivism. Palan (2000:588) argues that in IR constructivism a gap exists "between theory and human history". This is a worrying state of affairs as Adler (2002) specifically notes the historicity of constructivism. Agnew (1994) argues that it is the

geographical assumptions of IR, or rather 'the territorial trap', which puts IR theories, including Wendt's, at some point beyond history.

Wendt's treatment of history is problematic when looking at the African continent since many commentators argue that the continent's history of colonial subjugation plays an important part in the IR of the continent. The effect of the colonial past is especially visible in the interaction between states and between state and society. This means that historicity should not be discounted in analyses of African social relations (Englebert, 1997). Malaquias (2001:27) argues that "Africa's historical realities must be at the centre of theoretical models which attempt to explain and predict African international relations". Weber and Biersteker (1996:285) also argue that a primary focus of ongoing constructivist research must be "to weave into our understandings of IR forgotten histories of colonial territories and postcolonial states…".

It is not only colonial history which should form an integral part of historicising African IR. As Young (2004:48) indicates "the colonial period itself was but a moment in the larger sweep of African history". The focus should therefore also fall on the potential effects of the pre-colonial period. Some scholars like Warner (2001) and Malaquias (2001) look at Africa's pre-colonial forms of political organisation to determine how the state system emerged in Africa and how this influences Africa's current IR. Mbembe (2000), when looking at African boundaries, argues that they had multiple geneses, not only colonialism. He notes that "[far] from being simple products of colonialism, current boundaries thus reflect commercial, religious, and military realities, the rivalries, power relationships, and alliances that prevailed among the various imperial powers and between them and Africans through the centuries preceding colonization proper. From this point of view, their constitution depends on a relatively long-term social and cultural process" (Mbembe, 2000:265).

Wendt focuses on those aspects of the state's identity which are formed in the interaction process between states, but brackets the state's corporate identity as he pushes it into the pre-social realm (Cederman & Daase, 2003). Guzzini and Leander (2006:90) argue that Wendt assumes that state identity formation and corporate identity are unconnected, but "this has been shown to be false for Waltz's theory and is arguably so for Wendt". Authors like Cederman and Daase (2003) have therefore asked Wendt to endogenise corporate

identity in his theory. In bracketing the domestic Wendt's theory is unable to account for potential future changes in the state, conceptualised as a specific form of social relation (Copeland, 2000). The next part investigates Wendt's bracketing of the domestic society position and the effect that this has on potentially including Africa within IR.

4.3.4 Wendt, [Domestic] Society, and Africa

Several reasons for Wendt's choice to bracket the domestic realm have already been mentioned, but it is also determined by his narrow definition of politics, which comes very close to that of (neo)realists (Kratochwil, 2006). Guzzini and Leander (2006:90) indicate that

> *Wendt, like Waltz, tends to start from agents to define their practices. Having settled on states, and unitary ones, Wendt's theory necessarily reduces the nature of politics to what states think of it…. For it is not states that define 'politics', but political processes that define their agents (and structures).*

As a result of this narrow definition of politics and his positivist epistemology, Wendt brackets the state-society relations and places it prior to the social interaction that establishes states' collective identities. Reus-Smit (2005:199) argues this form of theorising "confines the processes that shape international societies within an unnecessarily and unproductively narrow realm". Wendt therefore has "no concrete conceptualization of identity formation that engages the actually social levels of states' sociality" (Pasic, 1996:89).

A missing element in the systemic constructivism of Wendt is therefore society, conceptualised as the public at large (Pasic, 1996; Hopf, 2005). Brown (2006) argues that once we study the state in Africa as a Janus-faced social relation, looking both inwards and outwards, our understanding of its stability and changes will be considerably improved. Hopf (2005:18) also indicates that the social identities of states are "created through interaction with both external Others and domestic society". Cederman and Daase (2003:27) therefore argue that by endogenising corporate identities and seeing them as processes it "allows the analyst to capture real actors' efforts to create and reshape political space, most notably states and nations' boundaries". These elements are important aspects of the African context. Corporate identities, and therefore also the

relationship between a state and society, cannot be seen as fixed. Hopf (2005) therefore argues that the discourses comprising the "societies in tow" are a necessary component that must be incorporated in constructivist accounts of both identity and its relationship to world politics.

In his analysis of the changes that statehood is undergoing in Africa, Young (2004) indicates that the causes of these changes are both internal and external to the state. It is the interaction of these factors that has led to the changes in African statehood from colonial to post-colonial and also potentially beyond. He argues that "[in] ground-level politics, a multiplicity of contradictory processes were at work" that effected and constituted these changes (Young, 2004:25). Even during the colonial period the "colonial power was constantly forced to negotiate with local particularities…" (Geschiere, 2007:129-130). Schoeman (1998) also indicates that the state continues to survive in Africa, even despite the exogenous imposition thereof, as a result of both external and internal factors[21].

These arguments indicate that both processes at domestic and international level lead to changes in statehood and therefore state identity on the African continent. The focus in this part of the section has been on the state as social relation, largely as a result of Wendt's focus on the state. It is argued that the interaction between domestic and international factors also influence potential changes in other forms of social relations on the African continent.

Taking into account the criticisms leveled at Wendt by employing the African context as an analytical tool, it is contended here that his constructivist position will not be able to effectively include the African context as an object of study within IR. The next section proposes a constructivist methodology which, it is argued, can overcome the problems related to Wendt's constructivism noted in this section, and in so doing include Africa as an object of study.

4.4 A CONSTRUCTIVIST METHODOLOGY: STANDPOINT SOBJECTIVISM

The last section of this chapter outlines a constructivist methodology which, it is argued, will be able to include the currently marginalised African context as an object of study

---

[21] See section 4.2 for a discussion of Schoeman's (1998) article.

within IR. The methodological approach that is advocated draws heavily on the constructivist methodology of Vincent Pouliot (2007) called 'SObjectivism'. Further insights are garnered from constructivists such as John Ruggie (1998), Ralph Pettman (2000) and Ted Hopf (2005) and the feminist approaches of Birgit Locher and Elisabeth Prügl (2001a, 2001b), Ann Tickner (2005) and Laurel Weldon (2006). The author has termed this methodology Standpoint SObjectivism as it combines the ideas of SObjectivism with the notion of an African standpoint borrowed from feminist theory.

Wang (2007) and Amoore *et al.* (2000) indicate that IR, as a social science, has its roots in both art and science as it searches for meaning and attempts to understand social life. As a result of this constructivism must be able to develop both subjective and objective knowledge about the social world that is continually (re)constituting the international society or making world affairs in the words of Pettman (2000). Bourdieu, quoted in Pouliot (2007:359) argues that "both forms of knowledge 'are equally indispensable to a science of the social world that cannot be reduced either to a social phenomenology or to a social physics'". Pettman (2000:215) also contends that IR scholars need to "augment rationalism with other ways of knowing. This would mean subjectifying as well as objectifying. It would require the consistent pursuit of experientially proximal as well as distal research". Weldon (2006:81) notes that it is central to standpoint feminism that "the subject and object of research be placed on the same critical plane". Pouliot (2007) employs Geertz's distinction between 'experience-near' and 'experience-distant' knowledge. It warrants quoting him at length as he distinguishes between the two:

> *Experience-near concepts are developed through phenomenological inquiry*
> *with the goal of grasping as accurately as possible a reality that is known by*
> *the agents under study. By contrast, an experience-distant concept is*
> *constructed by the scientist in order to break with commonsensical*
> *experience and provide an outsider viewpoint, different from the ones that*
> *are practically engaged in the situation at hand.*

(Pouliot, 2007:368)

The methodology that is proposed in this section, following Pouliot (2007), focuses on endogenising both subjective and objective forms of knowledge as this author contends that both are necessary to include the African context.

Adler (2002:109) argues that "[methodology] is the major missing link in constructivist theory and research". In this thesis methodology is conceptualised similarly to its usage by Ackerly, Stern and True (2006). They view methodology as referring "to the intellectual process … guiding self-conscious reflections on epistemological assumptions, ontological perspective, ethical responsibilities, and method choices" as well as their interrelationships (Stern & True, 2006:6). More specifically it relates to the idea posited by Weldon (2006:63) that "methodologies are *epistemologies in action*". These conceptions of methodology are closely related to the one advocated by Pouliot (2007). Taking this into consideration it means that the epistemological assumptions which underlie this methodology will need to be provided before outlining the specific methodology.

Before explicating the constructivist methodology it is necessary to raise a qualification. The constructivist methodology provided in this section is also a construction, but it is argued that it is a more useful construction, than for instance Wendtian constructivism, given the purpose of this thesis which is to include the African context as an object of study (Palan, 2000). This should thus be seen as one potential constructivist methodology and not an explication of *the* constructivist methodology.

The first part of this section will provide an explication of the epistemology which underlies the methodology. This explication is necessary in order to place this methodology on the bridge identified by Wiener. After that, the methodology is outlined by employing the three steps developed by Pouliot. It moves from an inductive methodology to recover subjective meanings, to an interpretative methodology to contextualise meanings, and lastly to a historical methodology, which places the meanings in motion. The importance of each of these steps to the purpose of this thesis will be highlighted.

4.2.1 Explicating the Epistemology

The epistemology which underlies the methodology of Standpoint SObjectivism is postfoundationalist, in the manner described by Pouliot (2007), as it occupies a middle ground between the foundationalist and anti-foundationalist positions. It incorporates ideas from both feminist standpoint epistemology and the pragmatist epistemology employed by various constructivists (Haas & Haas, 2002). The epistemology is therefore distanced from the positivist epistemology employed by Wendt and moves towards the reflectivist side of

the bridge[22]. In taking a step away from the positivism of Wendt this epistemology incorporates the call for "greater reflectivism in approaches to the developing non-West in IR theory" that was articulated by Moore (2008:4).

Pouliot (2007) argues that people cannot have unmediated access to the world 'out there' (Guzzini, 2000)[23]. He qualifies this point by noting that this does not entail that constructivism embraces a form of epistemological relativism which discounts the existence of any foundations of knowledge[24]. This is to some extent the view proposed by post-colonial IR theorists like Mignolo (Tickner, 2007). Weldon (2006) argues that approaches arguing for this form of epistemological relativism are not beneficial for the inclusion of marginalised groups as they deconstruct without constructing. Zalewski, quoted in Weldon (2006:82), contends that "[if] we are to believe that all is contingent and we have no base on which we can ground claims to truth, then 'power alone will determine the outcome of competing truth claims'". If this is the case then, this author argues, it will lead to the further marginalisation of the African context and also African knowledge. How does this epistemology therefore occupy the middle ground?

Pouliot (2007) aligns his explication of postfoundationalism with a pragmatist epistemology which means that any conception of truth is situated, perspectival and discursive (Locher & Prügl, 2001b). This entails that knowledge is only temporarily deemed to be 'true', and for a restricted purpose (Haas & Haas, 2002). Other constructivists also align themselves along these pragmatist lines (Ruggie, 1998; Adler, 2002). Price and Reus-Smit (1998), for example, argue that constructivism does make certain unavoidable 'small-t' claims about the world. By aligning themselves in this manner, constructivists come to share the epistemological middle ground with feminism. As Tickner (2005:4) indicates a feminist epistemology is built on the idea that knowledge-generation is "an ongoing process, tentative and emergent; feminists frequently describe knowledge-building as emerging through conversation with texts, research subjects, or data" (Weldon, 2006).

As a constructivist, Pouliot's (2007) primary focus is on social facts. The focus falls on what social agents, as a collective, rather than the analyst, deem to be real. This ties in

---

[22] See Figure 3.3 for a visual representation of the bridging of the epistemological abyss.

[23] See Section 3.2.1 which provides an explication of the ontological core of constructivism.

[24] Wight (1996:309) employs another description of epistemological relativism which only entails that scholars should recognise the "relativity of our knowledge, not that we cease the work of knowledge production or the attempt to differentiate between differing knowledge claims".

with the consensus theory of truth that is derived from a pragmatist epistemology. Locher and Prügl (2001b:122) indicate that "[feminist] epistemology points away from the solitary human mind toward constituted and politically legitimized groups of knowers". Weldon (2006:65) also notes the fact that standpoints are always collective perspectives as "standpoint epistemology … rather [focuses] on issues, values, or styles of discourse, that inform a group perspective". In making this epistemological move Pouliot (2007) also rejects the "privileging of scholarly communities as the only potential source of insight", much the same as feminism does (Locher & Prügl, 2001b:84). Pouliot (2007:364) indicates that "to know whether a social fact is ''really real'' makes no analytical difference; the whole point is to observe whether agents take it to be real and to draw the *social* and *political* implications that follow" (author's emphasis).

Following a pragmatist epistemology, Pouliot (2007:379) argues that "validation is a deliberative activity whereby judgements evolve in combination with their own criteria". Validity always comprises shades of grey as something is never the *only* valid interpretation. Pouliot (2007) argues for the use of the notion of incisiveness as a guide to the validity of knowledge claims. The notion of incisiveness entails that the generated knowledge forces us, as a community of scholars, to 'see further' than previous attempts at interpretation. This notion of validity is both historically and context dependant as Geertz, quoted in Pouliot (2007:379) argues that "[a] study is an advance if it is more incisive - whatever that may mean - than those that preceded it; but it less stands on their shoulders than, challenged and challenging, runs by their side.'' The notion of incisiveness is closely related to the idea of the scientific method postulated by Dewey (Weldon, 2006).

This notion of validity is combined with feminist attempts at reconceptualising the notion of objectivity. Objectivity is understood in this thesis not as the absence of values, but as Weldon (2006:80) argues, "objectivity implies less partiality, less distortion". Tickner (2007:8) describes this feminist reconceptualisation of objectivity very well:

> *The fact that subordinate subjects [like Africans] are 'outsiders' to the established order of knowledge production, that they have nothing to gain in maintaining the status quo, and that they bring with them distinct accounts of reality emerging from their everyday lives, maximizes the 'objectivity' of scientific inquiry.*

Starting from the marginalised position therefore leads to a more robust objectivity as it potentially foregrounds those aspects of reality that orthodox approaches obscure (Tickner, 2005).

The author argues for the combination of the pragmatist notion of validity as incisiveness and the feminist conceptualisation of objectivity as meaning less partiality and distortion in accounts of world politics. By combining these two elements it implies that interpreting the world from the subjective starting point of the marginalised group will enable scholars to see further than previous dominant attempts and will thus necessarily be more incisive. The argument can potentially be criticised for implying that, as a result of their marginalised position, an African standpoint is a better starting point for analyses than other positions. This is not a valid criticism as the argument rather suggests that by not attending to the African context in this manner, the discipline as a whole is blocked from acquiring a fuller and less distorted understanding of international politics (Weldon, 2006).

4.4.2 Outlining the Methodology

Following the argument of Pouliot (2007), the epistemological grounding implies that a three-step methodology, which moves from the subjective or experience-near knowledge to objective or experience-distant knowledge, is necessary. Pouliot (2007) argues that this is achievable through the combination of an inductive, interpretive and historical methodology. This part of the section describes the necessity of each of these methodologies in the context of the purpose of this study.

4.4.2.1 Recovering Subjective Meanings: An African Standpoint

An inductive methodology, moving from the local to the more general, is the necessary starting point when focusing on the marginalised position of Africa, as standpoint theory notes that knowledge is rooted in concrete experiences (Weldon, 2006). Nkiwane (2001) indicates that orthodox IR theories, mainly rationalism, were developed during the time when Africa was still under the sway of colonialism. Therefore the African context and the lived experiences of Africans have had very little influence on the development of IR theory It is therefore important to ground a methodology, which needs to be able to include African experiences, in the subjective experiences of Africans.

According to Weldon (2006:64) "[standpoint] theory holds that members of dominant and subordinate groups have systematically different experiences deriving from their different social positions". Tickner (2003:302-308) provides a useful conceptual framework for exploring the differences which exist between Western and non-Western contexts including Africa. She identifies three factors, namely 'culture', 'hybridity' and 'everyday life', each of which will shortly be explicated. 'Culture' refers to the idea that "different cultures ask different questions about their environment due to their respective worldviews and the varying places that they occupy in the world" (Tickner, 2003:303). The notion of 'hybridity' is related to Bhabha's idea of the existence of a 'third space'. It relates to the space occupied by postcolonial subjects "at the fringes of dominant knowledge but not completely outside of it" (Tickner, 2007:9). The last concept is that of 'everyday life' which is basically the idea that, the world is, to a large extent, the product of everyday experiences.

Tickner's conceptualisation of the importance of everyday life ties in with the arguments made by various constructivists, including Pettman (2000). Pettman (2000:21) notes that

> *if we are prepared to concern ourselves with 'what people know' as reality in their everyday, non or pre-theoretical lives; if we are prepared to recognize precisely this commonsense knowledge as constituting the fabric of meanings without which no society could exist; then we have a better chance of finding out what constitutes world affairs today.*

Checkel (2004:237) indicates that the notion of "constructivism [starting] at home" relates to an important lesson that constructivists must take seriously. Ruggie (1998:38) similarly contends that analysts, following Weber, must "begin with the actual social construction of meanings and significance from the ground up, showing how they came to be 'historically so and not otherwise'".

Induction is an approach that runs counter to most of the dominant forms of IR theory, and even practitioners of constructivism have stayed away from it (Pouliot, 2007). Employing induction as the starting point for this methodology also facilitates the removal of the brackets from domestic society imposed by Wendt. As previously argued, these brackets hamper the effective inclusion of the African context into IR theory as the domestic realm has important constitutive effects on various forms of social relations, including the state.

As Hopf (2005:19) indicates, in his approach he aims "to recover a large part of social constructivism, the dead hand, if you will, of mundane naturalizing daily practice and habit, that has been neglected in its constitutive power in constructing intersubjective reality". This is exactly what this starting point of the methodology sets out to incorporate.

The second methodological reason for employing induction is based on the recognition that through theorising the meanings which exist for individual social agents are destroyed in the process. Pouliot (2007:364) therefore argues

> *It has been said that constructivism's foundations of knowledge rest not on a set of a priori assumptions but on agents' taken-for-granted realities. In order to recover such meanings, the analyst must avoid superseding them with theoretical constructs. In addition, as the construction of social reality hinges on the social construction of knowledge, analysts also need to refrain (within the realms of possibility) from imposing their own taken-for-granted world onto their object of study [which is done when employing deductive methods].*

The inductive approach therefore reduces the potential impact of certain fallacies, such as that of 'prenotions', borne out of the power differentials especially visible in the relationship between Africans and Africanists (Pouliot, 2007). Using this methodological point could thus be a way to undermine the perception of Africa derived from the use of rationalist lenses which leaves context and history unproblematised.

Exclusively utilising subjective knowledge is not sufficient. It is necessary to combine induction with the processes of contextualisation (how meanings relate to others and to patterns of domination) and historicisation (where meanings come from and how they came to be). As Pouliot (2007:365) indicates "[interpretation] also requires objectification".

4.4.2.2 Putting Meanings in Context: Contextualisation

Contextualisation implies putting the subjective meanings derived from the inductive method within the larger context of intersubjectivity. This is a very important step as it was noted earlier that the focus should fall on collectively held beliefs. Pouliot (2007) indicates that contextualisation is achieved through a process of interpretation. He founds his argument primarily on the philosophical work of Ricoeur. In constructivism, the

interpretivist moment is double as "a constructivist social science develops meanings about meanings" (Pouliot, 2007:365)[25]. Using an interpretive methodology therefore implies that scholars should not just add context and stir.

Various constructivists have noted the important role that interpretation plays in constructivist research. Adler (2002:101), for example, indicates that "constructivists share an epistemology that makes interpretation an intrinsic part of social science and that stresses contingent generalisations". Reus-Smit (2005) also highlights the importance placed on interpretative methodologies by early constructivists. These constructivists insisted "that the study of ideas, norms and other meanings requires an interpretive methodology, one that seeks to grasp the relationship between 'intersubjective meanings' which derive from self-interpretation and self-definition, and the social practices in which they are embedded and which they constitute". Ackerly *et al.* (2006) note that several constructivist scholars are currently realising the importance of interpretivist methodologies, which feminism has been developing (Checkel, 2004).

Lawson (2008) argues that IR scholars should venture away from radical contextualism which emphasises the apparent incommensurability between different cultural and historical contexts. She notes that some scholars, like Dahlberg (1983), although not as radical, argue that focusing on context acts as a corrective for the concomitant Western bias in IR. She indicates that "as soon as one denounces something called 'Western theory' or 'Western epistemology', and awards it a cultural and/or historical 'specificity', one must assume the existence of a radically different 'non-West' underpinned by 'its' own specificities" (Lawson, 2008:593). This is to a large extent the argument employed by the Africanist critiques and post-colonial theorists (Tickner, 2007). This type of argument just inverts the dichotomous hierarchies by advocating a form of Afrocentrism as a corrective to the Eurocentrism of IR. This type of contextual analysis is not tenable as it assumes a contextual and historical insularity and incommensurability which does not exist (Bilgin, 2008)[26].

This author argues for a more critical form of contextualism. It ties in with the conceptualisation of contextualising that is proffered by Pouliot (2007) and also highlights

---

[25] See the quote from Guzzini (2000:149) used in Section 3.2.
[26] See Bilgin's argument (2008) highlighted in Section 2.3.3.

the role and conceptualisation of power which informs feminism (Locher & Prügl, 2001a, 2001b; Tickner, 2007). Lawson (2008:288) argues that "[by] drawing attention to the ways in which a concept (such as culture itself) is given a certain interpretation in a certain context, a more critical contextualism has the potential to highlight the ways in which power expresses itself – namely, through the interpretation of concepts in ways which both reflect and support power". This form of contextualising is very important when analysing a context that has been previously marginalised.

Meanings, like life, are continually in motion, and this entails that the making of international affairs is a continual process. Pettman (2000) argues that our everyday experience of world affairs has a Heraclitean quality and therefore a constructivist methodology must have a processual focus (Hopf, 1998). It is thus also necessary that constructivists imbue the web of meanings, or intersubjectivity, with historicity or as Pouliot (2007) argues, set them in motion.

4.4.2.3 Setting Meanings in Motion: Historicisation

The notion of historicisation is a very important aspect of any methodology that would be able to include the African context. Wendt's constructivist position provides a very static picture of reality. By providing such a semi-static picture of the world Wendt is unable to account for the impact of colonialism and other historically factors on the African continent, and specifically on state identities. Pouliot (2007:366) indicates that "meanings are never fixed or static but always part of a dialectical process between knowledge and reality [and therefore it is argued that] meanings constantly evolve over time". This entails that a constructivist methodology must also include an element of historicity.

Adler (2002:102) indicates that "rather than using history as a descriptive method, constructivism has history 'built in' as part of theories. Historicity, therefore, shows up as part of the contexts that make possible social reality, the path-dependent processes involving structural and agent change, and the mechanisms involved in the explanation of change". Amoore *et al.* (2000) also note that scholars should not only add history as another contextual signifier. They argue "that structures must be located in their historically concrete forms through an interpretative method which seeks to reveal the shared understandings of structure present among agents themselves" (Amoore *et al.*, 2000:60).

Amoore *et al* (2000) thus focus on human subjectivity and reflection as key elements in their attempt to historicise International Political Economy. Ultimately Amoore *et al.* (2000:60) propose a method that "recognizes the explicit connection between knowledge construction, human practice and interests, and therefore offers the potential to generate a transformative knowledge about human practice".

Pouliot (2007) indicates that historicisation actually ties in with the denaturalisation project conducted under the rubric of constructivism. The argument is that something called X, for instance, is socially constructed because it has a history. X need not be, because it has not always been. Pouliot (2007:367) argues that in Bourdieu's reflexive sociology, "historicization neutralizes, at least theoretically, the effects of naturalization and in particular the amnesia of the individual and collective genesis of a given world that presents itself under all the guises of nature". A historical methodology is focused on the genesis of the object under study as it is concerned with the social and political processes which constituted the object's current construction. Mbembe's (2000) study of boundaries in Africa is a very good example of the utilisation of such a historical methodology.

4.4.3 Bridging the Subject-Object Divide: Including an African Standpoint

This author argues that, if applied, the methodology set out in this section would be able to include the African context as an object of study within the discipline of IR[27]. It overcomes most of the problems associated with Wendt's constructivist position by proposing that both subjective and objective knowledge should be included. Pouliot (2007:367) ties these elements together in the following statement:

> *A constructivist methodology that is inductive, interpretive, and historical is able to develop both subjective knowledge and objectified knowledge. While inductive interpretation is necessary for recovering subjective meanings, contextual and historical interpretation is required for their objectification. A sobjectivist-with-an-O methodology aims at transcending the epistemological duality of subjectivism and objectivism; and by ontological ricochet, it also methodologically bridges agency and structure without having to bracket them in turn.*

---

[27] As indicated in Chapter 1, the practical application of this methodology unfortunately lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

In moving more to the reflectivist side of the middle ground this methodology is able to include the mutual constitution of agent and structures which is an element missing from the position advocated by Wendt.
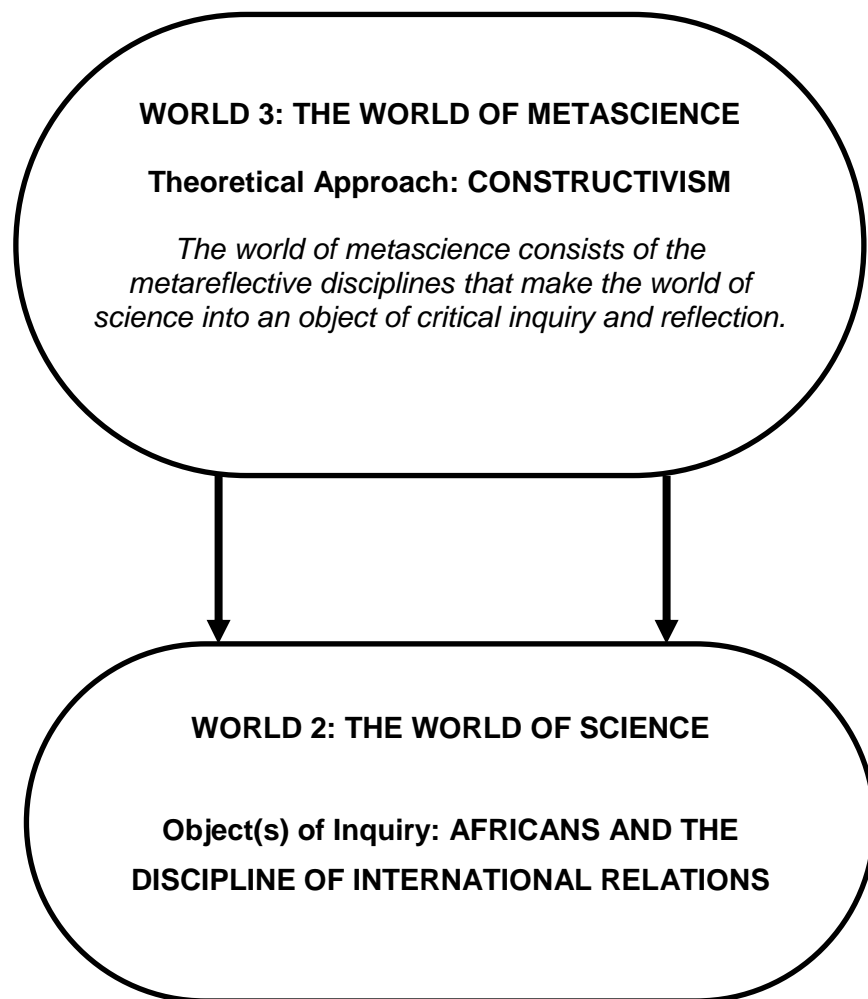
As outlined above, it is suggested that the methodology articulated by Pouliot (2007) also be combined with epistemological and methodological elements borrowed from feminism. This inclusion is necessary in order to focus the SObjectivist methodology on the marginal position of the African continent. Although the methodology focuses on both the political and social consequences of social agents it still ignores the power differentials at work within the discipline of IR. There is nothing inherent in the methodology which necessitates that scholars should use it to study marginalised positions and subjective experiences. The introduction of feminist elements therefore imbues the methodology with an epistemological proclivity to focus on the African continent and African lived experiences, as well as other marginalised positions in order to facilitate a less partial and distorted discipline.

4.5 SUMMARY

This chapter applied constructivism as a theoretically informed analytical approach in order to determine what form constructivism should take in order to effectively include Africa as an object of study within the discipline. This discussion was initiated by an assessment of the sparse constructivist literature that focuses, either directly or indirectly, on the African context. Only two studies could be identified. Following this assessment the constructivist position of Alexander Wendt was foregrounded in order to determine whether his form of constructivism could facilitate the inclusion of the African continent by finding a *via media* through the Third Debate. Wendt's position was found lacking on various grounds. The identification of the criticisms of Wendt's constructivism was facilitated by employing the African context as an analytical tool. The last section proposed a constructivist methodology termed Standpoint SObjectivism, which was argued could include the African context. It draws heavily on the constructivist methodology outlined by Vincent Pouliot, but also incorporates feminist elements in order to epistemologically force scholars to focus on the marginalised position of Africa by combining both subjective and objective forms of knowledge.

The arguments provided in this chapter, like those in Chapter 3, were proposed from an analytical position within the intellectual space offered by the discipline of IR. The object of inquiry was therefore situated in World 1, or rather in between World 1 and 2 as the focus fell on the study of the African context (World 1) within the discipline of IR (World 2). These two chapters have thus provided an argument and a constructivist method for the inclusion of Africa as an object of study within the discipline of IR. In the next part of the thesis the author shifts his analytical focus to the boundaries of the discipline, rather than the intellectual space that they provide, in order to argue for the inclusion of Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge.

PART 2: AFRICANS AS AGENTS OF IR KNOWLEDGE

WORLD 3: THE WORLD OF METASCIENCE

Theoretical Approach: CONSTRUCTIVISM

The world of metascience consists of the metareflective disciplines that make the world of science into an object of critical inquiry and reflection.

WORLD 2: THE WORLD OF SCIENCE

Object(s) of Inquiry: AFRICANS AND THE DISCIPLINE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

(Adapted from Mouton, 1996:10-11)

CHAPTER 5

CONSTRUCTING AFRICANS IN

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As was argued in Chapter 2, the intellectual boundaries of the discipline of IR, drawn up mostly by the dominant realists (and later rationalists) in America, have excluded non-Western knowledge and historical experience. These intellectual boundaries were unreflexively adopted by IR scholars within the African academic community and in so doing, African knowledge and Africans as agents of theoretical IR knowledge have at the most been negligible within the discipline if not, as many scholars argue, totally absent. LaMonica (2008) indicates that this Western foundation of "IR theory can and should be challenged – not solely on the basis of difference – but in terms of inclusion for purposes of future dialogue". Presently the discipline of IR, and the division of labour between Africanists and Africans within it, is constructed in such a way that African knowledge will not be able to penetrate and will continue to be judged as pre-theoretical at most. This chapter advocates one possible way of re-imagining the discipline of IR in order to open up the dialogical space necessary for the potential inclusion of African knowledge.

Unlike Chapters 3 and 4, where it was argued that Africa as an object of study within the discipline of IR could be included using constructivism as an analytical approach and a constructivist informed methodology, this chapter focuses on the second objective of this thesis. It proposes a way of reconstructing the boundaries of the discipline in order to make it possible to include Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge or, stating it differently, Africa as a potential site for the production of theoretical IR knowledge. In this chapter the object of inquiry lies in World 2, or rather the world of science, as the current construction of the discipline of IR is problematised. Constructivism is employed as a theoretically informed meta-analytical approach to conduct a meta-analysis of the discipline of IR.

This chapter proposes an argument for the normative re-imagining or reconstruction of the discipline of IR as a disciplinary community of difference. It advocates the adoption of this

normative framework for the discipline in order to affect the creation of the necessary dialogical space to potentially incorporate not only African knowledge, but all non-Western knowledge. By adopting a constructivist perspective it foregrounds the socially constructed nature of IR as a disciplinary community. A community is conceptualised, much like a state was in Chapter 3, as a Janus-faced social relation. Holsti already employed the notion of the discipline of IR as an international community of scholars in 1985. This metaphor of the discipline of IR as a disciplinary community is endorsed here as it allows for the extension of the metaphor to describing it as a disciplinary community of difference (Shields, 2006).

The first section focuses on the debate in IR regarding the benefits and pitfalls of pluralism as the inclusion of African knowledge will add to the plurality already prevalent in the discipline. The discussion exposes the good, the bad and the ugly of this debate. The next section focuses on African knowledge by firstly interrogating the notion of African knowledge and then illuminating the two pathways by which scholars have argued African knowledge can be included within the discipline. The last section provides the argument for the normative re-imagining of the discipline of IR as a disciplinary community of difference.

5.2 PLURALISM IN IR THEORY: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

Theoretical diversity has been an apt and fair description of the state of the discipline of IR for the last few decades. The debate regarding the potential benefits and pitfalls of the increasing theoretical pluralism within the discipline, has been raging since the explosion of theoretical work challenging the dominant realist framework emerged in the late 1970s. This debate within IR has also been influenced by debates in the wider social science (Owen, 2002). This section will explore the issues at the heart of this debate and will illuminate the arguments focusing on the good (benefits), the bad (pitfalls) and the ugly sides framing it.

5.2.1 The Bad

The arguments identifying the negative aspects of theoretical pluralism in IR theory focus on the fragmentation and incoherence of the discipline which is the result of the rising pluralism. Holsti (1985) laments the disappearance of what he deems to be the core of

academic IR, namely the state-centric paradigm, a paradigm which he calls the classical tradition. He argues that with the loss of its core problematic, the discipline has tended to focus its gaze on problems that are better covered by scholars within other academic disciplines (Schmidt, 2007). He asserts that having one line of inquiry or problematic is what defines a discipline and delineates it from other disciplines. Holsti further argues that the discipline should once again focus on what he contends is the main problematic for IR namely war, peace and security in the international realm.

Buzan and Little (2001) argue that IR has failed as an intellectual project and therefore as a discipline as a result of its semi-insulated nature within the social sciences. They argue that "[this] insulation takes the form of a semipermeable membrane that allows ideas from other disciplines to filter into IR, but seems to block substantial traffic in the other direction" (Buzan & Little, 2001:19). Kubálková, Onuf and Kowert (1998) also identify this trade deficit in IR. This dependence on other disciplines for ideas has weakened the idea of IR as a discipline in its own right and rather sees it being portrayed as a patchwork of various other disciplines.

Schmidt (2007) further notes that some scholars have argued that the cumulation of knowledge within a discipline is dependent on the sharing of epistemological roots. The scholars therefore propose that for a discipline to exist it must have a monist epistemology. Moravcsik (2003) and Harvey and Cobb (2003), for instance, argue for the necessity of theory synthesis in developing a progressive discipline that has the ability to accumulate knowledge. Smith (2006) indicates that another potential argument against the adoption of a pluralist approach is that it will reduce the explanatory power of theories in the discipline as good theories are supposed to be simple and parsimonious, as contended by Waltz (1979). Summing up this argument in a very simplistic manner, these scholars, when focusing on theoretical pluralism, assert that less is more.

Ultimately, so the argument goes, the increasing theoretical pluralism has divided the discipline into a multitude of voices all clamouring to speak on behalf of IR in whichever way they see fit. This has left the discipline disorientated, directionless and disputatious. Schmidt (2007:108) notes that the arguments against pluralism boils down to the fact that it "leaves us [as IR scholars] with a divided discipline that not only fails to speak with one voice, but cannot even agree on what we should be studying, focusing on, or seeking to

explain [and in so doing pluralism] masks the fact that we have an incoherent field". The pitfalls of pluralism, this author argues, is based on a positivist conception of science which entails that for a discipline to exist it must speak with one voice (Holsti, 1985; Moravscsik, 2003).

These scholars' criticisms are primarily focused on two forms of pluralism which are a legacy of the Third Debate. One is the notion of pluralism as 'flabby' or 'anything goes', whilst the other is the 'fortress-like' form based on the incommensurability thesis (Lapid, 2003). Neither of these forms of pluralism is advocated in this thesis. The focus should rather fall on the notion of 'engaged pluralism' discussed by Lapid (2003). By employing this conceptualisation, Kratochwil (2003:126) argues that pluralism "is actually the most promising strategy for further research and the production of knowledge". The next part therefore focuses on the benefits that scholars attribute to theoretical pluralism.

5.2.2 The Good

The counter-argument focuses on the benefits or the good of the rising theoretical pluralism in the discipline of IR. Smith (2000:399) argues that the theoretical pluralism found in the UK IR community results "in a far more lively, vital and exciting IR community, one that can offer a variety of responses to the major problems and features of the contemporary global political system". This ties into the argument proposed by Schmidt (2007) who contends that the main proprietors of the ideas regarding the beneficial nature of pluralism argue that the increasingly complexity of the world of international politics necessitates a variegation of theoretical positions (Walt, 1998).

Walker and Morton (2005) alternatively argue, quite convincingly, that the dominance of one specific paradigm in IR might lead to a lack of critical scholarship within the discipline and may lead to a limited realm of inquiry which will impoverish the whole discipline. Jervis (1998:971) also indicates that within a discipline that is functioning adequately "each school of thought enriches others as powerful research of one kind strengthens, not weakens, the alternatives [and that] no one approach consistently maintains a leading position".

Rather than indicating a symptom of disciplinary incoherence, as argued by Holsti and others, Wæver (1999:76) argues that the theoretical debates and pluralism which are currently descriptive of the discipline of IR "are also expressions of [a form of] coherence". Ackerly and True (2008:169) further contend that for IR to keep its dynamism as an intellectual discipline will depend on "its intellectual diversity and the capacity of IR scholars to engage in cross-cutting dialogue to understand better the nature of their disagreements". This ties into the idea of 'engaged pluralism' existing at the disciplinary level as the focus falls on how scholars in the discipline communicate (Lapid, 2003).

Schmidt (2007:108), in his review of the book *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, sums up Smith's position regarding the beneficial (good) aspects of theoretical pluralism in the following manner:

> *Smith views [the increase in theoretical pluralism] most favourably in that it has led to a fundamental questioning of some of the most basic assumptions about the field of IR. This includes rethinking what the field consists of, critiquing the traditional boundaries of the field, a consideration of new issues and concerns, and a questioning of the dominant assumptions about epistemology and ontology. All of these developments have helped to open more space in which to think about and debate international politics.*

5.2.3 The Ugly

There is an ugly side to this debate and this refers to those elements which are excluded from the debate regarding pluralism in IR. Aydinli and Mathews (2000) argue that there are two sets of boundaries that exist between scholars of IR. The first of these boundaries relate to the debate summarised above regarding the "fragmentation and cleavages of multiple perspectives and approaches" (Aydinli & Mathews, 2000:289). The second set of boundaries are said to be geographically determined and relate to the exclusion of certain areas of the world as potential sites of IR knowledge production. This second boundary is not problematised in the discussions of the potential benefits or pitfalls of theoretical pluralism.

This problem was recently highlighted by Moore (2008:9) as she notes that "[recent] debates on pluralism in IR have tended to focus mainly on the theoretical and methodological implications, emanating from within the West, and not on the representivity of knowledge production in the discipline in geographical and cultural terms". Smith (2006:5) also indicated the limited nature of the pluralism debate within IR when she notes that "[while] there may be a greater variety of contending IR theories than ever before, they all originate in and hence privilege the interests of a relatively small number of states and people". This debate is currently trapped in the Eurocentric character of the discipline itself and is therefore weakened, misinformed and hampered by a geographical and cultural parochialism (Biersteker, 1999).

The limited focus of this debate identified by Smith and Moore, is to a large extent the result of the intellectual framework that was created by rationalist theories, and more specifically realism, and the adoption of it by scholars within the Third World as was argued in Chapter 2 (LaMonica, 2008; Moore, 2008)[28]. The 'engaged pluralism' proposed by Lapid (2003) is a promising strategy as it advocates a middle ground position which relates to the proposal outlined in this thesis. The focus of the engagement must be extended to encompass not only middle grounds between theoretical perspectives, but must also focus on bridging the gap between different IR communities (Mkandawire, 1997; Smith, 2006).

For Wæver (1999), the ugly side of this debate inspires one of the most important questions remaining in the sociology of IR which is "when and to what extent [will] the increasing pluralism include sizable independent IR communities beyond the West?" This raises other questions that need to be answered regarding the origination of theoretical ideas within IR. How do you include knowledge from the periphery into IR theory? Can Africans and the African continent be recognised as potential sources and sites of theoretical IR knowledge? It is to these questions that we turn in the next section.

5.3 INCLUDING AFRICAN KNOWLEDGE IN IR THEORY

5.3.1 What is African Knowledge?

---

[28] Refer back to Section 2.2.1 for the full discussion.

Before exploring the paths that have been suggested for including African knowledge, it is necessary to interrogate what the notion 'African' entails in this thesis. This means that the debates that surround the notion of an African identity and who can or should legitimately speak on behalf of or for Africa(ns) need be discussed. By investigating these issues the notion of African knowledge as it is used in this thesis should become clearer.

Higgs (2008) argues that, within the debates surrounding the notion of 'African' philosophy, two criteria have been proposed to judge whether knowledge is African. The first criterion, presented by the philosophers Mudimbe and Hountondji, is geographical. They argue that any form of philosophical knowledge that is created or promoted in any manner by Africans should constitute an African contribution to philosophy. This entails that African scholars studying or working in England, for example, will still be seen as producing African knowledge whether the knowledge produced relates to the continent or not. A second criterion that has been advocated for judging whether knowledge is African is called the culture criterion. This criterion argues that knowledge is African "if it directs its attention to issues concerning the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of African culture" (Higgs, 2008:448). The argument posited by Kiros (2001) also relates to the culture criterion. He argues, also focusing on African philosophy, that it is "a set of written texts, when available, as well as orally transmitted texts, that deal with the human condition in Africa on which *Africans and non-Africans* reflect" (Kiros, 2001:1, author's emphasis).

> *The complexities of Africa's social and political experience continue to*
> *unfold. … Out of such tumult and anguish, out of the tension and tribulation,*
> *a new face of Africa is bound to emerge – bruised, but hopefully unbowed.*
>
> Mazrui (2001:175).

> *It is, of course, true that the African identity is still in the making. There isn't*
> *any final identity that is African. But, at the same time, there is an identity*
> *coming into existence. And it has a certain context and a certain meaning.*
>
> Achebe (quoted in Appiah, 2001:222).

Appiah (2001) uses the latter quote to introduce his discussion of African identity as an identity in the process of emerging. It ties into the idea of emergence identifiable in

Mazrui's quote. Appiah (2001) initiates his argument by noting that African identity, like all other identities, is constructed and historical in nature (Wright, 2002). He then debunks the myths that have been related to the notion of African identity in the past. He notes that "if an African identity is to empower us, what is required is not so much that we throw out falsehood but that we acknowledge first of all that race and history and metaphysics do not enforce an identity; that we can choose, within the limits set by ecological, political and economic relations, what it will mean in the coming years to be African" (Appiah, 2001:225-226). A similar argument is made by Wright (2002) in his interrogation of the potential constitution of a continental African identity. Appiah (2001) further argues, using the quotation from Achebe as a reference point, that we are Africans in that being an African already has a certain context and meaning, but that "[African] identity is one we must continue to reshape [and renegotiate]" (Appiah, 2001:226).

Mama (2007:15) comes to the same conclusion as Appiah (2001) regarding the current construction of African identity when she notes that "Africans now understand 'African-ness' as multiple, fluid, historically and institutionally constructed along various dimensions of difference, and as continuously contested and redefined in the social processes and struggles". Mama (2004:3) previously argued in a similar vein that African intellectual identities also comprise the complexities found in articulating African identity when she described their character as "contradictory in their diversity, peripatetic, multiply-constituted and cosmopolitan". Therefore as the quote by Achebe suggests the notion of being 'African' continues to be fluid and emergent.

Any decision regarding the most valuable criterion for deciding whether knowledge is African or not will also need to be informed by the continuing debates surrounding who can legitimately speak on Africans' behalf. In this debate various positions can be identified ranging from radical to more moderate views.

Carruthers (1996), in his review of a book by the philosopher Mudimbe, sets out a radical answer to the question. He argues that the repossession of African knowledge can only be conducted by Africans as all Europeans and Western trained scholars aim at dominance, "mastery of knowledge about and by Africans". In conclusion, he argues, quite radically, for the insulation of African knowledge from 'Western' disciplines. Carruthers (1996) argues

that the objective is neither to adapt African discourse to the parameters of a European discipline nor to modify the European discipline to include African content because both approaches are essentially intellectual versions of neocolonialism. Rather Africans should construct their own modern disciplines based upon the pillars of African traditions.

In Carruthers' view the potential role for non-Africans in contributing to African knowledge is limited if not totally absent. Kom (2000) makes a similar argument although he does not go as far as Carruthers (1996) in suggesting that Africans should insulate themselves entirely from European thought, something he deems 'suicidal'. Kom (2000) argues that "Africans have never been anything but hostages" to Western knowledge and he therefore advocates the creation in Africa of "an autonomous framework for the validation and appropriation of a local body of knowledge, which could help [Africans] better to perceive their environment and construct a context for living which is suited to their own aspirations". His argument therefore also leaves very little space for non-African participation in the construction of African knowledge.

Several authors propose a more moderate view than those of Carruthers (1996) and Kom (2000). This moderate view is visible in the report that was drawn up at the end of the international symposium on globalisation and social sciences in Africa in 1998. At this symposium it was suggested by the scholars that there is "no unique African knowledge", but that "African knowledge owes its development to a variety of intellectual traditions that have both extragenous and endogenous origins" (Nieftagodien, 1998:232). They further argue that the argument, as set out by Carruthers (1996), to insulate African knowledge production and to define it in geographical terms would not only end in failure, but would be to the detriment of the social sciences on the continent. In questioning the constitutive nature of African knowledge, Zegeye and Vambe (2006:342) come to realise "the plurality of potential sources of African knowledge systems" and they therefore argue that "the issue at stake is how to broaden the theoretical catchment area from which African knowledge can originate". Similarly, Anyidoho (quoted in Smith, 2008:3) indicates that some scholars note that "there is no best location to produce knowledge; that, rather, there exist multiple, equally viable locations".

These moderate views are in line with the arguments that are posited in this thesis. By taking into consideration the emergent and therefore nebulous nature of African identity, it is argued that the cultural criterion presently provides the best measure by which to judge whether knowledge is African. This criterion does not restrict the producers of African knowledge to specific geographical areas and therefore provides an opportunity to explore the various potential sites of African knowledge-construction.

5.3.2 Pathways towards Including African Knowledge in IR Theory

Pinar Bilgan (2008) provides an excellent assessment of the efforts of some scholars to think past Western IR. She argues "that 'Western' and 'non-Western' experiences as well as their various interpretations have, over the years, clashed and fused in so many ways that 'non-Western' ways of thinking about and doing world politics are not always devoid of 'Western' concepts and theories. The reverse may also be true" (Bilgin, 2008:6). As a result of the dialectical relationship which continues to exist between the West and non-West, non-Western knowledge about IR will therefore probably look "almost the same, but not quite".

Two pathways, or rather starting points, towards including African knowledge have been identified by scholars. Each of these starting points bracket a part of the phrase Bilgin (2008) employs to describe non-Western IR knowledge. Scholars advocating the first pathway argue that the best starting point for the inclusion of African knowledge is to look and engage with areas of overlap between African and Western thought. Although the advocates of this position do not discount the differences between African and Western thought they argue that, if the goal is inclusion, similarities provide the best point of departure. Their focus is therefore on the notion of "almost the same". The scholars advocating the use of the second pathway argue that the process of inclusion should commence by focusing on the differences which exist. These scholars assert that it is the ideas and thoughts that are different that should frame the initial engagement as it is through these thoughts that African scholars will be able to *add* to the theoretical development of the discipline. Once again it should be noted that the scholars focusing on difference do not discount the potential similarities between Western and African thought. Their starting point is therefore the notion of "but not quite". See Figure 5.1 for a visual representation of the two starting points and pathways. This section explores both of these

pathways as it is argued, following the argument of Bilgin 2008), that both similarity and difference are important when attempting to potentially include African knowledge within IR.

Figure 5.1: Pathways towards Potentially Including African Knowledge in IR
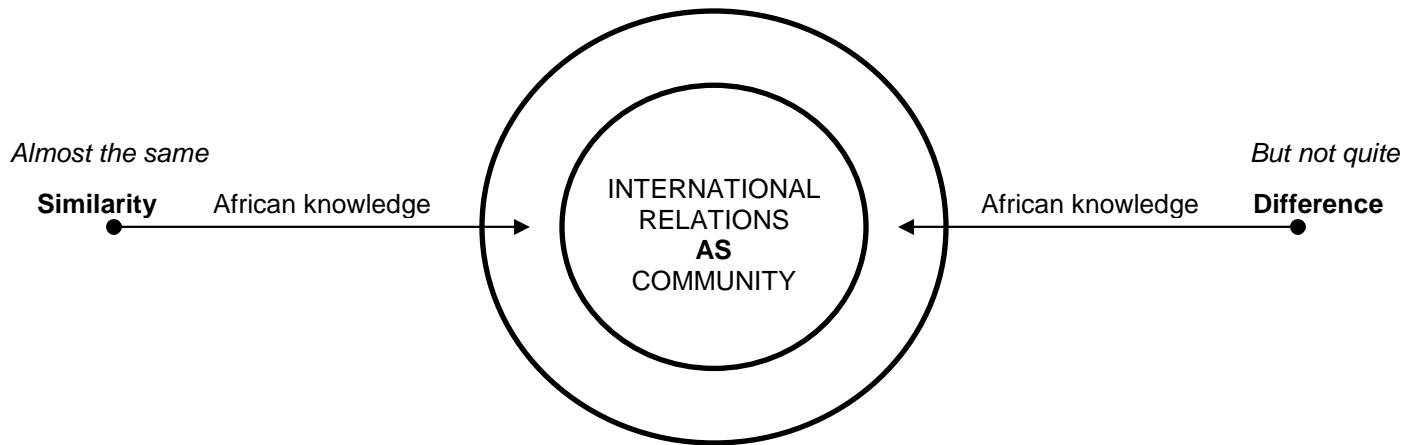
5.3.2.1 Looking for Similarities

Christopher LaMonica (2008) argues that very little room is created within political science and IR for exploring similar patterns of thought and behaviour between Africa and the West. He argues that this results from the "seemingly institutionalized exclusion of Africa within IR, coupled with the methodological emphasis on difference within political science" (LaMonica, 2008:8). This lack of space within IR theory needs to be challenged as not all of the political ideas and thoughts proffered by Africans are incommensurable with Western IR thinking. LaMonica therefore argues that the starting point for improving the dialogue between IR theorists from the West and non-West "[should] be the inclusion of [African] realist, idealist, liberal and structuralist ideas into the existing framework" created by IR theory (LaMonica, 2008:13). Taking his cue from Brown's argument discussed in Chapter 2, LaMonica argues that those scholars that focus exclusively on differences undermine constructive dialogue between scholars from the West and Africa. He concludes his argument by noting that "[what] is certain is that: 1) The discipline of IR remains parochially Western; 2) African involvement is sorely lacking; and 3) There are limits of usefulness to the methodologies that emphasize 'difference'".

Another scholar that argues for initially focusing on similarities is Candice Moore. She draws a distinction between undisciplined and disciplined non-Western IR communities. Moore (2008:5) argues that this distinction must be drawn between "'undisciplined' non-Western IR communities that do not consider themselves part of the mainstream discipline, and being 'disciplined', or at one with the discipline as practiced in the West". In her paper she advocates a move away from attempts to indigenise IR theory and rather calls for the employment of greater reflectivism when interacting with non-Western thought within IR theory. The major issue in developing IR theory within non-Western countries lie with the legitimisation of these countries as acceptable sites of knowledge production. In her conclusion Moore (2008:31) therefore suggests:

> *that non-Western IRs should seek not only to make nationally- and culturally-distinct contributions [an area that African scholars have been relegated to as a result of the emphasis on difference], but should also seek to use the mainstream's theoretical apparatus to improve its level of representation and knowledge-production in the field.*

Like LaMonica, Moore therefore advocates that African scholars should initially 'discipline' their knowledge in order to legitimate their countries as potential sites of knowledge production.

5.3.2.2 Focusing on Difference

Other scholars do not agree with the approach proposed by LaMonica and Moore and alternatively contend that the focus should initially fall on those contributions that are different. They argue that these contributions will eventually be able to make a theoretical contribution to the discipline. This argument is made most explicitly by Smith (2008:4) when she argues "that the underlying argument is that only if African insights are significantly different from existing IR will they be able to make a worthwhile contribution to the field". Her argument builds on the arguments made by Tickner (2003).

Smith (2008) proposes that Africa can contribute various alternative stories to the ones that are currently being told in the core of the discipline. She roots her search for alternative stories in the ideas of Bleiker. Bleiker (quoted in Smith, 2008:8) argues that "[indeed], the most powerful potential of critical scholarship may well lie in the attempt to tell different stories about IR, for once these stories have become validated, they may well

open up spaces for more inclusive and less violence-prone practice of world politics". Smith (2008) indicates that stories, imbued by the lived experiences of Africans, can be told in a new language; with new actors; and about existing characters, but comprising a different plot. It should be noted that she does not fall into the trap of essentialising the differences of African thought as several other authors do[29]. It warrants quoting her at length:

> *[There] are things that are different – that don't fit the mould, that western theories have difficulty coming to terms with. The aim here is, rather, to show how Africans' different worldviews and lived experiences can enrich our understanding of IR. Africa's difference thus becomes a tool to give us new insights into the workings of international relations not just in Africa, but in other parts of the world as well.*

(Smith, 2008:5)

Both of these approaches focus on realising a similar outcome as they aim to facilitate the creation of a more inclusive and pluralist IR which acknowledges and uses African and other non-Western knowledge as part of the potential theoretical development of the discipline. These authors argue that non-Western forms of knowledge would both enrich and deepen our understanding of world politics on a global level (Tsygankov & Tsygankov, 2007). Both of the discussed approaches are valid attempts at constructing a pathway towards realising this outcome. This author questions the feasibility of this outcome taking into consideration the current construction of the discipline of IR. The next section aims to re-imagine the discipline by introducing the notion of a community of difference as a potential normative framework for IR which, it is argued, would, if adopted, make the aforementioned outcome achievable.

5.4 RE-IMAGINING THE DISCIPLINE: IR AND ITS SOCIAL (RE)CONSTRUCTION AS A DISCIPLINARY COMMUNITY OF DIFFERENCE

This section is grounded in the notion that the discipline of IR is a socially constructed disciplinary community. A community is conceptualised as a form of social relation. The discipline may be viewed as a community in so far as scholars working within the discipline are a group of people with a collective purpose, which is to study IR. The boundaries of

---

[29] See the argument in Section 2.3 for an exploration of these issues.

this disciplinary community, relating to what is to be studied and how studies are to be conducted, is intersubjectively determined by the community and is, as a result, collectively meaningful.

The first section looks at how the discipline is currently constructed and how this inhibits the effective inclusion of African knowledge. Secondly it will focus on attempts by other scholars to re-imagine the discipline of IR in order to create inclusive theoretical spaces for the different varieties of pluralism currently constituting the discipline. The third section will focus on the communitarian/cosmopolitan divide and will specifically explore the constructivist-led communitarianism in IR theory that is promoted by scholars such as Emanuel Adler as a one attempt at bridging this divide. The last section will provide the argument for the re-imagination of the discipline of IR as a Community of Difference by firstly introducing the notion and then indicating what it would entail for IR and the inclusion of African knowledge if the normative framework provided by this notion were to be accepted as the basis for its reconstruction.

5.4.1 The Current Construction of the Discipline

All practitioners of IR are participants in the social construction of the academic practice that frames the professional study of IR (Ackerly & True, 2008). This author argues that the current construction of the discipline is inhibiting the inclusion of Africans as potential contributors of theoretical developments in the discipline, but that the introduction of the constructivist approach has produced an opening by changing some aspects of the culture which exists within the discipline.

The first inhibiting aspect of the present construction of the discipline of IR is related to its designation as a social *science*. According to various authors this designation is a very significant factor in the construction of the discipline (Smith, 2000; Ackerly & True, 2008; Moore, 2008). As Smith (quoted in Moore, 2008:14) indicates the act of "… defining IR as a social science automatically skews our purview so as to define the field in a way that stresses US dominance in the discipline". This results from the connection which exists between realism and the positivist scientific method, and the US IR community. Both connections were discussed in Chapter 2. Wæver (1999:47) argues that when scholars investigate the development of the IR discipline there exists "a consistent ambivalence

about whether [they] report on the development of IR or American IR". The dominance of the US within the realm of theoretical production has allowed this national subgroup of IR scholars to define the boundaries of the discipline and in so doing also the boundaries of the IR community. This has led various scholars, especially from the countries in the periphery, to argue "that Western IR – and Western social science in general – is nothing but a sophisticated ideology and a set of conceptual tools that serve to justify Western global hegemony". (Tsygankov & Tsygankov, 2007:308). Holsti already argued in 1985 that the most unique characteristic of IR as a discipline is the hierarchical patterns of knowledge flows. This is especially true of theoretical knowledge.

The second aspect in the current construction of IR relates to this dominance of theoretical knowledge flows by the US and to a large degree also the UK. The discipline is currently constructed with various gate-keepers controlling the flow of knowledge from peripheral countries. Tickner (2003) and Smith (2006) argue that the existence of these gate-keepers inhibit the growth of theoretical contributions from non-Western countries as scholars from the periphery are limited to providing expertise of the specific country or region from which they hail. Aydinli and Mathews (2000:290) argue that in a discipline where these spatial boundaries exists, especially regarding knowledge production, the possibility of productive dialogue is weakened and "there is more likely to be dominance within the discipline of perspectives and discourse stemming from a country that is politically and economically stronger". This argument is especially relevant with regard to contributions by African scholars within the discipline of IR as "Africa remains on the scientific, technological, economic, political and military margins of the world largely because it is a consumer of useable knowledge" (Makinda, 2007:974). The current construction of the discipline as a social science and the dominance of the US and UK in terms of the production of theoretical knowledge therefore inhibits the inclusion of African knowledge and Africans as agents of IR knowledge.

Another important aspect of the disciplinary construction of IR is the penchant for organising the discipline along the lines of great debates to the extent that, the development of knowledge in IR is shaped at the core by this idea (Wæver, 1999). Buzan and Little (2001:31) argue that within the history of IR "it is hard to avoid the conclusion that … mainstream IR has taken on the character of its subject [as] it prefers fragmentation into the anarchy of self-governing and paradigm-warring islands of theory". These various

great debates have in a large part been conducted in the form of a dialogue of the deaf or a form of factionalised warring. The idea of a dialogue of the deaf refers to what Owen (2002) calls the 'Highlander view' as the ultimate goal for each of the warring theoretical factions is to gain ontological, epistemological and methodological sovereignty (Fearon & Wendt, 2002).

The continual reproduction of this debating culture founded on the notion of great debates lead to the institutionalisation of the incommensurability thesis discussed in Chapter 3 (Wight, 1996). This institutionalism has been challenged by the intervention of constructivism in the debating culture of IR. Wiener (2006:3) argues that the debating culture in the discipline is undergoing a constructivist turn, which has "created an opening for 'friendly' debates which moved IR theory forward from the gridlock of binary positioning"[30]. Ultimately, the debating culture within the discipline still closes down many potential attempts by Africans to contribute to theoretical development, but the intervention of constructivism has to some extent created an opening for potential opportunities to emerge.

The last aspect of the construction of the discipline that needs to be highlighted is a normative characteristic. It relates to the implicit normative bounding of the discipline as a traditional community and the privileging of homogeneity which result from it. As Shields (2003:33) indicates "it is difficult to talk about community without seeming to imply that community can be, perhaps even should be, homogeneous". This author argues it is as a result of this implicit normative assumption that Holsti (1985) decries the loss of what he deems to be the problematic that should be driving IR research. This normative boundary also underlies the penchant for great debates and the resultant dialogue of the death. Inayatullah and Blaney (2004) argue that it is this type of community that leads to the erasure of difference and plurality within the discipline of IR. This type of normative construction then also informs the concern, which is warranted, "that any disciplinary identity will act to marginalise or exclude voices which do not conform to the norms and practices imposed by that identity" (Owen, 2002:654). This concern refers to the dark side of community, as some voices are included, whilst others are excluded (Greene, 1993). This notion of IR as a traditional disciplinary community needs to be challenged, because if

---

[30] Section 3.3.1 provides a more extensive explication of the constructivist intervention in IR.

this normative boundary is not reconstructed in a different manner the possibilities for productive dialogue and the inclusion of African knowledge are limited.

5.4.2 Attempts to Create Inclusive Spaces by Re-Imagining IR

Several authors have attempted to re-imagine the discipline of IR in order to provide scholars with the means to deal inclusively with the plurality of theories, perspectives and knowledge(s) that currently leaves the discipline disorientated, divided, directionless and disputatious. Several different methods, concepts and norms have been proposed by scholars to form the foundation of such a re-imagination. This section will discuss some of these attempts.

Buzan and Little (2001) argue that IR has failed as an intellectual project as a result of its semipermeable disciplinary boundary and the existence of what they call the 'Westphalian straitjacket'. These two elements combine to reproduce the continual competition between theories and perspectives that currently define the discipline. Buzan and Little (2001:31) therefore argue that IR theorists should strive for the creation of a "federative archipelago of theoretically pluralist grand theory". This goal is derived from their view of the position IR should occupy within the division of labour of the social sciences. They believe that IR's "comparative advantage lies in its potential as a holistic theoretical framework, which should be able to speak equally well to political scientists, economists, lawyers, sociologists, anthropologists and historians" (Buzan & Little, 2001:22). IR needs to overcome its continual fragmentation and this can be achieved by changing the reigning assumption of the necessity of epistemological sovereignty. Ultimately, in order to achieve their goal IR and world history needs to be integrated, as this would lead to the cultivation of "more open-ended approaches to international systems, which do not prejudge the nature of the dominant units of the system, privilege one sector of activity over another or give precedence to one mode of explanation over another" (Buzan & Little, 2001:34).

The argument proposed by Buzan and Little falls into the same trap as many other scholars within the pluralism debate. It only focuses on re-imagining IR to incorporate different ontologies, epistemologies and methods and therefore does not explore how non-Western voices are silenced as a result of the entrenched power relations of knowledge

production. This author argues that the goal of their re-imagination, which is the creation of a "federative archipelago of theoretically pluralist grand theory", would actually entrench the current power relations with regard to knowledge production and thus further hamper the inclusion of African knowledge and Africans as potential agents of theoretical knowledge production.

Inayatullah and Blaney (2004) put culture, and more specifically the failure of IR to deal with cultural differences, at the centre of their re-imagination of IR. They aim "to begin to re-imagine IR as a perhaps uniquely placed site for the exploration of the relation between wholes and parts and sameness and difference" (Inayatullay & Blaney, 2004:3). Bleiker (2006:129) indicates that Inayatullah and Blaney (2004) argue against both cosmopolitan and communitarian approaches as both "revolve, in essence, around a deepseated desire to erase difference". They argue that these approaches do not facilitate the creation of spaces where multiple identities and values can coexist. In order to overcome the failure of these approaches they draw on the work of Todorov and Nandy by employing their notion of incommensurability. By accepting this notion, "difference is then not constructed as sinister and dangerous [but] it can become a source of wonder and inspiration" (Bleiker, 2006:129). They introduce the idea of re-imagining IR as a potential 'contact zone'. By re-imaging IR in this way, they argue, it opens up the dialogical space for the occurrence of cross-cultural dialogue.

Inayatullah and Blaney's argument is convincing to some extent as their attempted re-imagination would probably open up the dialogical space to include African knowledge. This is especially true since they found their re-imagination on the notion of culture. Culture is *one* of the building blocks of the conceptual framework provided by Tickner (2003)[31]. Their argument is, however, problematic for several reasons. The first is the implicit assumptions which permeate their argument about the apparent superiority of the 'different' (Tickner, 2007). Their notion of difference is solely based on the concept of culture and does not take into consideration some of the other conceptual elements introduced by Tickner (2003). Tied to this implicit assumption is their problematic acceptance of incommensurability. Secondly, their argument does not deal effectively with the communitarian/cosmopolitan debate in IR, as they dismiss the debate. Ultimately, by choosing culture as the vehicle of their analysis this author argues that they implicitly focus

---

[31] Section 4.4.2.1 provides a good explication of Tickner's (2003:308-312) conceptual framework.

on the communitarian side of the debate. Their argument, although opening up the dialogical space necessary for the inclusion of African knowledge, or rather Yoruba/Afrikaner/Zulu knowledge, inhibits the continual sense of belonging to an IR community by advocating the destruction of the boundaries which frame the discipline's existence.

Another author who puts forward a suggestion for re-imagining the discipline is Owen (2002), who argues that IR should be reoriented along the lines of the pragmatic ethos set out by John Dewey. This pragmatic ethos entails that IR should be "[committed] to combining objectivity and engagement through a problem-based focus on government and governance" which leads to the reorientation of IR as a form of practical philosophy (Owen, 2002:654). This type of practical re-orientation would suit various African scholars as, according to Higgs (2008), African philosophy also argues that knowledge and action should be linked in a pragmatic manner.

An important point that Owen (2002) highlights is that this pragmatic ethos does not advocate the realisation of a specific ethical outcome. The ethos is imbued with a processual orientation which takes growth, conceptualised in terms of critical intelligence, as an end in itself. He argues that there are three benefits to this processual orientation. The first benefit is that in not specifying an ethical ideal, the moral pluralism which is evident within IR can be accommodated. Secondly, this orientation moves IR away from trying to distinguish between ideal and non-ideal forms of theorising. Lastly, it allows people to adopt a multitude of perspectives of the world instead of forcing them to choose one. This entails, in Dewey's words, that

> *deliberation among the many is a way of bringing each citizen's [or IR scholar's] ethical views and insights—such as they are—to bear on the views and insights of each of the others, so they cast light on each other, providing a basis for reciprocal questioning and criticism and enabling a view to emerge which is better than any of the inputs and much more than a mere aggregation or function of those inputs* (Owen, 2002:672).

Ultimately, the benefit of re-orienting the discipline in this manner is that it promotes the "acknowledgement of the value of the various kinds of pluralism characteristic of the discipline of IR at this time, and hence the possibility for its diverse practitioners to share an effective sense of belonging to the IR community" (Owen, 2002:673).

Weldon's (2006) argument is quite similar to that of Owen (2002) as she combines the pragmatist view of science with a feminist standpoint epistemology in order to advocate the re-imagination of the discipline founded on a methodology of inclusion. She argues that "in order for standpoints to provide the greatest epistemological benefit, scientific communities must take measures to counter internal exclusion" (Weldon, 2006:73). She proposes various practical means through which this can be achieved. Weldon (2006) notes the importance of openness towards understanding as well as institutionalising dissent in scholarly communities. She concludes by stating that "requiring that these decisions [about what to study, how and by whom] be made more inclusive provides an alternative model for how our scientific community ought to be structured. This model is a methodological approach, a way of improving scientific inquiry and rendering it more objective" (Weldon, 2006:84).

The arguments made by Owen and Weldon regarding the re-orientation of IR along pragmatist lines and, in Weldon's case, pragmatic feminism, are closer to the argument that is posited in this thesis. The ethically open-ended nature provided by the processual ethos advocated is similar to the ideas that inform the community of difference approach. These approaches are also similar in that both attempt to provide space for different forms of plurality whilst allowing scholars to keep a sense of community. Before introducing the normative framework of the community of difference and its potential effects on IR it is important to first deal with some attempts to overcome the cosmopolitan/communitarian divide within IR as the community of difference approach is informed by and is a critical extension of the solutions provided to this debate.

5.4.3 Overcoming the Cosmopolitan/Communitarian Divide

Shapcott (2001:31) indicates that the cosmopolitan/communitarian divide "restates the opposition between community and difference". The debate is framed around the issue of where the limits of human community are situated. Cosmopolitans, whilst in search of universal justice, place "ultimate moral significance on the individual" whilst the communitarians, prioritising cultural diversity, "situate it in the local or national community" (Shapcott, 2001:30). In being constituted as a divide this debate has framed the ideas of universal justice and justice to difference as conflicting positions (Adler, 2005). Following

this outline of the divide it should be apparent that attempts to reconcile these positions inform the community of difference approach advocated in this chapter[32].

Shapcott (2001) employs Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and conception of conversation in his attempted reconciliation. Shapcott's (2001:50) approach is predicated on the idea of an "encounter with the other that is premised on the possibility of mutual understanding and agreement". Ultimately he argues that

> *the moment of equality in conversation [between the self and the other]*
> *occurs at the point in which a participant acknowledges not only the limits of*
> *their own knowledge, but also the possibility that the other participant(s)*
> *may be able to bring to light new ways of seeing or understanding, which*
> *are of equal or greater validity.*

(Shapcott, 2001:233)

In order to achieve justice it is necessary that a dialogical space is fostered where a variety of perspectives can interact in a mutually illuminating way. As Adler (2005) indicates, the approach that Shapcott employs is predicated on the notion that practice and discourse within a community will and should evolve. If this evolution does not occur, which is possible if the power relations which exist in communities is taken into account, the divide will be irreconcilable and neither form of justice will be achieved.

The other attempt at bridging this divide, on which this chapter focuses, is the constructivist-led communitarianism advocated by Adler (2005). His position builds on various previous normative attempts including that of Shapcott (2001). Adler argues not only that his approach can bridge the divide between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism, but also between normative and analytical theory through the adoption of a constructivist perspective. As constructivism indicates the mutual constitution of intersubjective social structures and agents Adler's proposal overcomes one of the problems at the heart of the divide: whether agents or structures should be the starting point.

Adler (2005:4) argues that the recent turn to communitarian IR "is an attempt to make knowledge, along with the communities within which it develops and evolved and from

---

[32] The two reconciliatory attempts discussed are by no means exhaustive or constitutive of the whole debate, but they are important to the extent that a critical engagement with them informs the community of difference approach.

which it diffuses, one of the leading ontological factors in the study of IR". Knowledge, from this perspective, does not only entail information, but "also the intersubjective background or context of expectations, dispositions, and language that gives meaning to material reality and consequently helps to explain the constitutive and causal mechanisms that participate in the construction of social reality" (Adler, 2005:4). He proposes that the notion of communities of practice should be employed to study IR. These communities of practice, it is argued, are seen as a mediating centre between human agency and social structures. He defines communities of practice as

> a configuration of a _domain of knowledge_, which constitutes like-mindedness, _a community of people_, which 'creates the social fabric of learning', and a _shared practice_, which embodies 'the knowledge the community develops, shares, and maintains. The knowledge domain endows practitioners with a sense of _joint enterprise_ that is constantly being renegotiated by its members. People function as a community through relationships of _mutual engagement_ that bind 'members together into a social entity'. Shared practices, in turn, are sustained by a _repertoire of communal resources_, such as routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, symbols, and discourse.

> (Adler, 2005:15, original emphasis)

The discipline of IR can be re-imagined as a disciplinary community of practice, but this author argues that, although it presents a step in the right direction, it does not overcome the problems posed by the privileging of homogeneity fostered by the traditional view of community. Within communities of practice certain ways of belonging are still normatively defined. It requires the various participants to embrace the particular disciplinary identity that signals membership to that community. The problem identified by Owen (2002), regarding the dark side of community discussed in Section 5.4.1, still persists in this proposed re-imagination. The problem is derived from the notion that a domain of knowledge, within the community of practice approach, must constitute _like-mindedness._ This will not open up the dialogical spaces necessary for productive dialogue to occur within IR. What is critical to remember is that no community contains a monolithic culture as the participants in the community continually ally themselves with various subgroups within the community. This is an element that the community of practice approach seems to discount.

The extension of the notion of a discipline to a disciplinary community of practice therefore does not overcome the problems posed by the current normative framework of the disciplinary IR community. In this thesis it is argued that these problems can be overcome by employing the notion of a community of difference as the foundation for the normative re-imagining of the discipline of IR.

5.4.4 The Discipline of IR and the Community of Difference

5.4.4.1 What is a Community of Difference?

This section introduces the notion of a community of difference as one possible way to challenge the monolithic view of a disciplinary community. The notion of a community of difference entered the lexicon of academia largely through the work of Carolyn Shields (2001, 2003, 2004, 2006). She is an educator working within the field of school reform. As a teacher she has continually been confronted by academic spaces that struggle with the plurality and diversity of the individuals that constitute these spaces and interact within them.

As far back as 1993 Maxine Greene made a plea for the expansion of the metaphor of community. She invoked the Deweyan notion of a 'Great Community' but argued that the idea of community should not be identified with conformity and homogeneity. She argued that a notion of community that is attentive to difference and open to the plea of plurality is essential within the increasingly diverse world in which we interact as human beings. "Something life-affirming in diversity must be discovered and rediscovered, as what is held in common becomes always more many-faceted - open and inclusive, drawn to untapped possibility" (Greene, 2003:17). Taking the call from Greene to find a way of speaking about this expanding and diverse community, Shields (2003:39) explores the question "How can we acknowledge difference and at the same time live together in a community?" In answering this question she attempts to move away from the purely normative use of the notion of community and to embrace 'community' as a construct forceful enough to encompass the many purposes of schooling. She admits that the notion she advocates is both normative and descriptive, but that it does not result in the creation of a prescriptive

normative framework as is the case with homogeneous communities. Her answer to the above question led to the introduction of the notion of a community of difference.

What does a community of difference entail? In 2001 Shields argued that a genuine community "will approximate Alain Locke's notion of a 'cosmopolitan unity amidst valued diversity'" (Shields, 2001:72). Shields (2003:44), in adopting this goal as achievable, defines a community of difference in the following manner:

> *I believe that a more robust concept of community, one that respects and understands diversity and difference and accommodates value differences, but must also demonstrates cohesiveness, caring and shared goals is necessary to move us forward. This is the concept of a community of difference.*

Figure 5.2 is adapted from Shields' comparison of a school as a traditional community and school as a community of difference and can further shed light on Shields' concept of a community of difference.

In her construction of a community of difference Shields (2003:55) therefore draws a distinction between the traditional school community and a school as a community of difference (see Figure 5.2). Contrary to the traditional community whose centre is considered predetermined and fixed (mostly by the powerful or dominant group within the community), whose values, beliefs and norms are seen as equally shared by all members of the community and where homogeneity is presumed, the community of difference is one where the common centre would not be taken as a given but would emerge from a process of co-construction from the negotiation of and engagement with dissimilar beliefs and values by participants in dialogic relationships. Heterogeneity is accepted and bonds among members are not assumed, but actively fostered. The boundaries which frame the community of difference are not imposed but negotiated (Shields, 2003). The unity that is therefore ultimately achieved is not fixed, but rather fluid and dynamic.

Figure 5.2: Differences between Traditional Communities and Communities of Difference
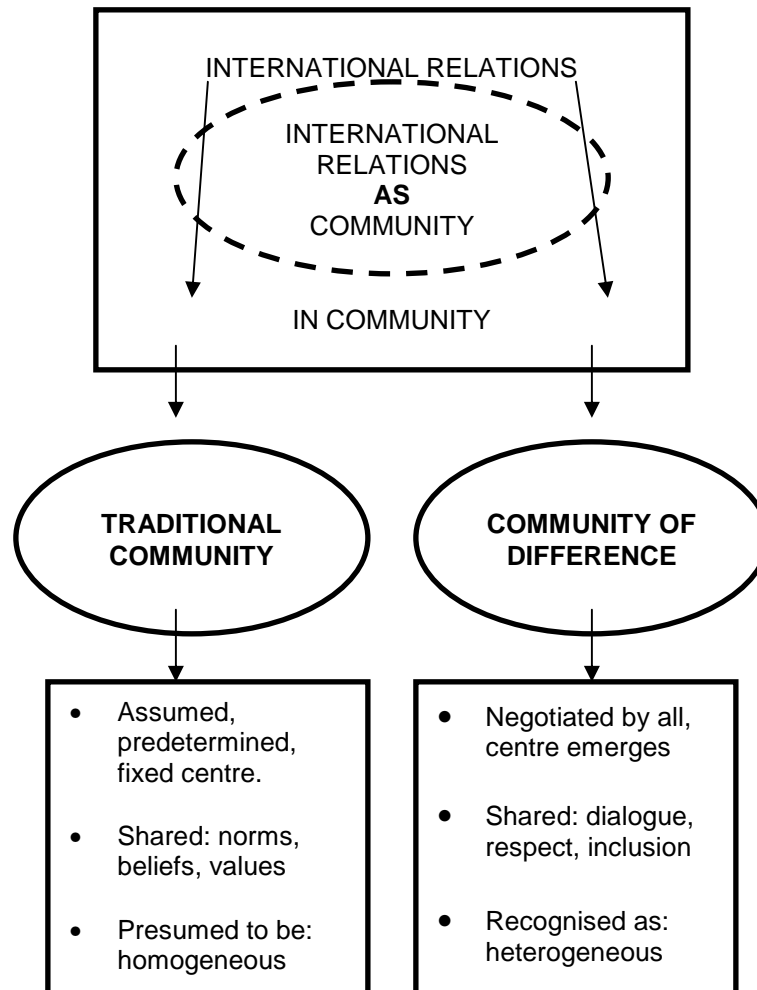
(Adapted from Shields, 2003:55)

The notion is further grounded in a strong commitment by the participants in the community to dialogue, reflection, critique, and social justice built on the values of the inclusion of all voices and respect for differences (Shields, 2003, 2004, 2006). Dialogue, in this case, is not just talking, as Shields (2004:41) argues that it is rather "a way of encountering others and treating them with absolute regard. … [Dialogue] is the lifeblood that grounds a community in the bedrock principles of social justice and academic excellence for all". A final aspect of the notion of a community of difference needs to highlighted. Through its adoption it encourages participants in the community to bring their *lived experiences* to the dialogue that perpetually continues to renegotiate the boundaries of the community.

Now that a description of what is meant by a community of difference has been provided it is necessary to focus on what it will entail for IR to be re-imagined as a disciplinary community of difference. How will adopting this notion of community and the normative framework it provides open up the dialogical space necessary for the creation of a more inclusive IR discipline?

5.4.4.2 Re-Imagining IR as a Disciplinary Community of Difference

This last part investigates what the potential effects would be on the construction of the discipline of IR as a result of the adoption of the normative framework provided by the community of difference. Several important potential effects are identified and explicated with due cognisance of the purpose of this chapter.

The first and most important effect that this disciplinary re-imagination would facilitate is that it will allow IR scholars to deal in a positive manner with the amount and different varieties of pluralism that currently characterises the discipline. It, to some extent, relates to the idea of an extended conceptualisation of Lapid's 'engaged pluralism' that also focuses on the current geographical parochialism within the discipline. The author argues that the notion of a disciplinary community of difference allows for the acknowledgement of the value of the different forms of pluralism, whilst not destroying the sense of a disciplinary community that is, this thesis argues, necessary for the existence of a discipline. This author therefore does not advocate the deconstruction of the boundaries of the discipline, but rather their continual renegotiation and reconstruction. In a community of difference the community is never misguidedly seen as monolithic, despite being homogeneous on the surface (Shields, 2006). How can a discipline be seen as undivided if it does not have a core problematic?

Holsti (1985) argues that the main constitutive element of a discipline is the existence of a core problematic. In his argument he implicitly assumes that a disciplinary community must be homogeneous and as such the current pluralism seems to leave us with no choice but to acknowledge that we have a deeply divided discipline. This implicit assumption also partly explains the existence of the great debates and the present factionalist and disputatious construction of IR. By re-imagining IR as a disciplinary community of

difference this potentially disintegrative characteristic can be overcome. Smith argues that the increasing pluralism within the discipline has opened up intellectual space to think and debate about how and what we essentially study by challenging the dominant assumptions and methods (Schmidt, 2007). In a disciplinary community of difference a common centre or a core problematic will emerge as a result of the process of negotiated co-construction between all the members of the community. This core problematic will not be fixed, as Holsti (1985) believes it should be, but will be fluid and dynamic. This means that the core problematic will be continually renegotiated and reconstructed by the interaction of members of the disciplinary community. A continual sense of disciplinary community will thus exist without having to sacrifice the critical ability to discuss, debate and engage with various differences within IR. The integration of dialogue therefore becomes very important

The importance of dialogue and specifically space for dialogue within the discipline has been highlighted by various IR scholars including Kratochwil (2003), Lapid (2003), Tickner (2003) and Ackerly and True (2008). The integration of the notion of dialogue, conceptualised as a way of encountering others during a process of collaborative meaning-making, will create the space necessary for members of the IR community to engage with each other's ideas in a way never done before (Lapid, 2003). The intervention of constructivism has to some extent provided the opening for adopting this notion of dialogue as it facilitated the creation of a "median communicative space" within the discipline through the process of establishing the middle ground (Lapid, 2003:130; Wiener, 2006). This form of dialogue will also help to rid the discipline of its continual organisation along the lines of factionalised and incommensurable great debates as it facilitates the creation of a more positive space for engaging with different positions and different types of knowledge. The introduction of this notion of dialogue, as central to the disciplinary community of difference, will therefore open up space for the inclusion of African knowledge, whether similar or different, as potential contributions to the theoretical development of the discipline. Constructivism, as an approach, will thus occupy a central position in the potential adoption of this normative framework.

In her conceptual framework, Tickner (2003) argues that culture, hybridity and lived experience inform the view that IR will look different if seen from the non-Western world, including Africa. Within a disciplinary community of difference it is argued that members must bring their individual lived experiences to the dialogue that facilitates the continual

renegotiation of the boundaries. The worldview that people embrace is also influenced by their cultural environment and therefore culture should also be incorporated. These arguments tie into the feminist arguments of Weldon (2006) and Harding (2008). By allowing the inclusion of lived experience and culture within the dialogical space provided by the disciplinary community of difference it opens up the space for the potential inclusion of African knowledge and Africans as agents of theoretical IR knowledge. As IR knowledge is opened up for renegotiation within the disciplinary community of difference it will also inform the creation of more culturally sensitive theories as their development is closely related to the ideas underlying the community of difference approach.

Table 5.1: The Content of Hegemonic and Culturally Sensitive Theories

	Hegemonic theories	**Culturally sensitive theories**
Self	Morally superior Defined in exclusive terms	Open to (re)negotiation Inclusive
Other	Morally inferior	Equal in moral capacities, a source of potential learning
Self vs. Other	Promote Self's interests/values	Negotiate mutually acceptable values

(Tsygankov & Tsygankov, 2007:309)

The disciplinary community of difference is founded upon the importance of social justice as one of the normative framework's bedrock principles. This ties in with calls from within IR, and the social sciences in general, for disciplines to be rooted in social justice both on the level of knowledge production and as an overall theoretical objective (Harding, 2008). Smith (2008:17) argues that "one of, if not *the* main objective(s) of social theory, including IR theory, should be the advancement of social justice and human emancipation on a global scale". If re-imagined as a disciplinary community of difference IR will be able to pursue the social justice objective of social theory as it will be foundational organised around the importance of this notion. Lor and Britz (2006) argue, in an article providing an African perspective on knowledge production, that social justice should be an integral part of the moral framework for "dealing with the moral questions arising from phenomena observed in the [North-South, South-North and South-South] flow of information [and knowledge]". The disciplinary community of difference will therefore be able to deal with

potential diverse sites of theoretical knowledge production, specifically Africa, in an inclusive manner.

The notion of a disciplinary community of difference is provided as a potential normative framework for the re-imagination of the discipline. The author argues that its adoption will be able to open up the dialogical spaces necessary for the effective potential inclusion of African and non-Western knowledge as well as Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge.

5.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has focused on the current boundaries of the discipline of IR and has indicated how they inhibited the potential inclusion of African knowledge and Africans as agents of IR knowledge. The first part of this chapter provided an analysis of the debates regarding pluralism in IR. It advocated the use of Lapid's notion of engaged pluralism, but noted that his conceptualisation of pluralism needs to be extended towards bridging the gaps between different IR communities, especially those situated in the periphery. The next part interrogated the notion of African knowledge and indicated the viability of both attempts to include African knowledge by starting from a position of similarity or difference. It was argued that both pathways are necessary to include African knowledge as, following Bilgin, it was acknowledged that African knowledge will probably look "almost the same, but not quite". This author questioned the feasibility of realising the outcome of creating a more inclusive and pluralist IR given the current construction of the discipline of IR.

The last section therefore proposed that the discipline of IR should be reconstructed by adopting the normative framework provided by the community of difference approach. This section first identified the current construction of the discipline and how it inhibits the potential inclusion of Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge, but noted the positive effect that the constructivist intervention has had on the prevalent culture of the discipline. The section then interrogated previous attempts at re-imagining the discipline. The focus shifted to scholars' attempts to reconcile the ideas of universal justice and justice to difference encapsulated in the cosmopolitan/communitarian divide. These previous attempts at re-imagining the discipline and bridging the divide informed the argument for advocating the community of difference approach as the foundation for re-imagining the

discipline. The community of difference approach was then articulated and the potential positive effects were noted if it were to be adopted as the normative framework for the discipline.

In this chapter it is therefore argued that the boundaries of the discipline must be opened up for renegotiation and that the constructivist intervention in IR has made this possible by establishing a median communicative position that could facilitate dialogue. The practicality of this argument could be challenged, but this author contends that if scholars from within the West and non-West are willing to engage with this normative framework and adopt it within their arguments it would facilitate a discipline that can focus on the goal of social progress and open up the intellectual space necessary for the inclusion of Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge.

CHAPTER 6

TYING A KNOT:

SUMMARY, LIMITS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The research conducted in this thesis and the resulting construction of knowledge emanating from the theoretical reconstructions that were proposed should be seen as part of the ongoing process of knowledge construction that informs the discipline. This chapter should therefore aims at tying a small knot in this ongoing process.

This thesis explored the possibility that employing a constructivist approach could facilitate the inclusion of Africa as an object of study and Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge within the discipline by bridging the theoretical abyss. This study found that constructivism facilitates the process of establishing the middle ground between rationalism and reflectivism and in so doing could include Africa as an object of study. It also found that the intervention of constructivism facilitated a necessary change in the culture of the discipline to create the possibility of extending the notion of engaged pluralism and re-imagining the discipline as a disciplinary community of difference. This leads to the opening up of the necessary dialogical space to include Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge.

This chapter therefore provides a summation of the dual theoretical reconstructions that were proposed in his thesis. The first theoretical reconstruction situated the researcher within the intellectual space afforded by the boundaries of the discipline, whilst the second theoretical reconstruction problematised the boundaries themselves. The mutually constituting link between these theoretical reconstructions will also be explicated. This chapter will also provide a discussion of the limitations of the research and the subsequent possibilities for future research which flows from the knowledge construction in the process of writing this thesis.

6.2 TYING A KNOT: CONCLUDING SUMMATION

This thesis identified two discourses which frame the theoretical abyss to which Africa as an object of study and Africans as agents of IR knowledge have been marginalised within IR. These discourses adhere to the opposing analytical approaches which constitute the Third Debate, namely rationalism and reflectivism.

The rationalist discourse was discussed by focusing on the theoretical paradigm of (neo)realism. Realism has come to define the boundaries of legitimate knowledge as a result of its perceived dominance and superiority within the discipline. These boundaries currently inhibit the inclusion of Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge. The assumption of the universalism of realist knowledge and its built-in great power bias also lead to the exclusion of Africa as an object of study in the discipline. The Africanist discourse is mostly reflectivist in orientation. The division of labour between Africans and Africanists continue to marginalise the potential of Africans to contribute theoretically. The Africanist critiques of neorealism, although placing Africa at the centre of their analysis, base their arguments on the apparent essential differences which exist between Africa and the West. As a result, Africa therefore continues to be the marginalised to the hidden spaces of Europe's self-reflection. Both of these critiques have been very effective at marginalising Africa as an object of study and excluding Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge.

This is the theoretical abyss that this thesis argues can be bridged by employing a constructivist approach. This argument was conducted through the proposal of two mutually constitutive theoretical moves.

6.2.1 Dual Theoretical Reconstructions

6.2.1.1 Utilising the Intellectual Space

The theoretical reconstruction proposed to address the first part of the problem statement was advocated from within the current intellectual space afforded by the boundaries of the discipline. The research thus utilised the intellectual space in order to indicate how the

intervention of constructivism in the discipline could lead to the inclusion of Africa as *an object of study*.

The intervention of constructivism in IR initiated the process of establishing the middle ground and can thus lead to bridging the theoretical abyss. This processual orientation entails that the middle ground will never substantively be established, but that the friendly debates and dialogue which it facilitates, should be seen as an end in itself. By employing the notion of bridg*ing* the metaphor of the bridge is reinterpreted. Ultimately, the variegated nature of the middle ground and subsequently constructivism were highlighted. Although constructivism could lead to the bridg*ing* of the theoretical abyss, the form that constructivism should take in order to effectively include Africa as an object of study needed to be explicated.

By critiquing Wendtian constructivism from an African perspective, several aspects of the African context were identified that needs to be included in a theoretical approach. Both subjective and objective knowledge is necessary in any attempt to include Africa as an object of study. It was argued that the African context can be included through the application of the methodology of Standpoint SObjectivism. It combines inductive, interpretive and historical methodologies with a feminist-informed epistemology. It was thus argued that the marginalised position of Africa can and should be included in order to make the discipline less partial and distorted.

6.2.1.2 Problematising the Boundaries of the Discipline

The second theoretical reconstruction was derived from the problematisation of the boundaries of the discipline. It was argued that these boundaries needed to be opened up for renegotiation and in order to create the necessary space to include African knowledge. By re-imagining their normative underpinning, Africans as *potential agents of IR knowledge* could be thus included.

The current construction of the discipline inhibits the inclusion of Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge as it makes the possibility of creating a more inclusive and pluralist IR an unrealisable outcome. The boundaries of the discipline are underpinned by a normative framework informed by the idea that the discipline must adhere to the

traditional view of a community which entails that the existence of a monolithic culture. The constructivist intervention in IR has initiated the process of potentially opening up the boundaries by establishing a median communicative position that could facilitate the creation of the necessary dialogical space. This ties into the argument for extending Lapid's notion of engaged pluralism to bridging the gaps which exist between Western and African IR communities. This thesis argued that the normative underpinning of the discipline needed to be re-imagined by invoking the notion of a disciplinary community of difference. This re-imagination provides the discipline with the normative potentiality to include Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge as it opens up the boundaries of the discipline for renegotiation.

6.2.2 Constructivism: The Mutual Constituting Link

In Chapter 1 it was argued that the distinction made between the three worlds identified by Mouton is merely analytical in nature as various interrelationships exist between them. Constructivism diffuses the boundaries between these different worlds as both of the theoretical reconstructions that were proposed in this thesis result from the intervention of constructivism within the discipline of IR. Constructivism thus provides the mutual constituting link that can potentially include Africa as an object of study and Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge. Constructivism initiated the process of establishing the middle ground which facilitated the possibility of bridging the theoretical abyss and including Africa as an object of study. This intervention, by providing a median communicative position, also changed the debating culture in the discipline and thus provided an opening to renegotiate the boundaries of the discipline and their normative underpinning in order to include Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge.

Employing a constructivist approach, both as a theoretical framework for this thesis and as the foundation for both the proposed theoretical reconstructions eventually leads to the possibility of including Africa(ns) within the discipline. Overcoming the Eurocentric subjectivities that currently define the boundaries of the discipline is therefore necessary in order to make the knowledge promulgated by the discipline less partial and distorted. If the knowledge of a discipline, that informs policies and solutions to problems, is made less partial and distorted by including African subjectivities, then the proffered policies and solutions might potentially be a better fit with the African context. Constructivism also

imbues the discipline with the possibility of capturing life in motion as the construction of world politics and the construction of knowledge within the discipline is an ongoing process (Pettmann, 2000; Mbembe & Nuttall, 2004).

Figure 6.1: Visual Summary of the Dual Theoretical Reconstructions
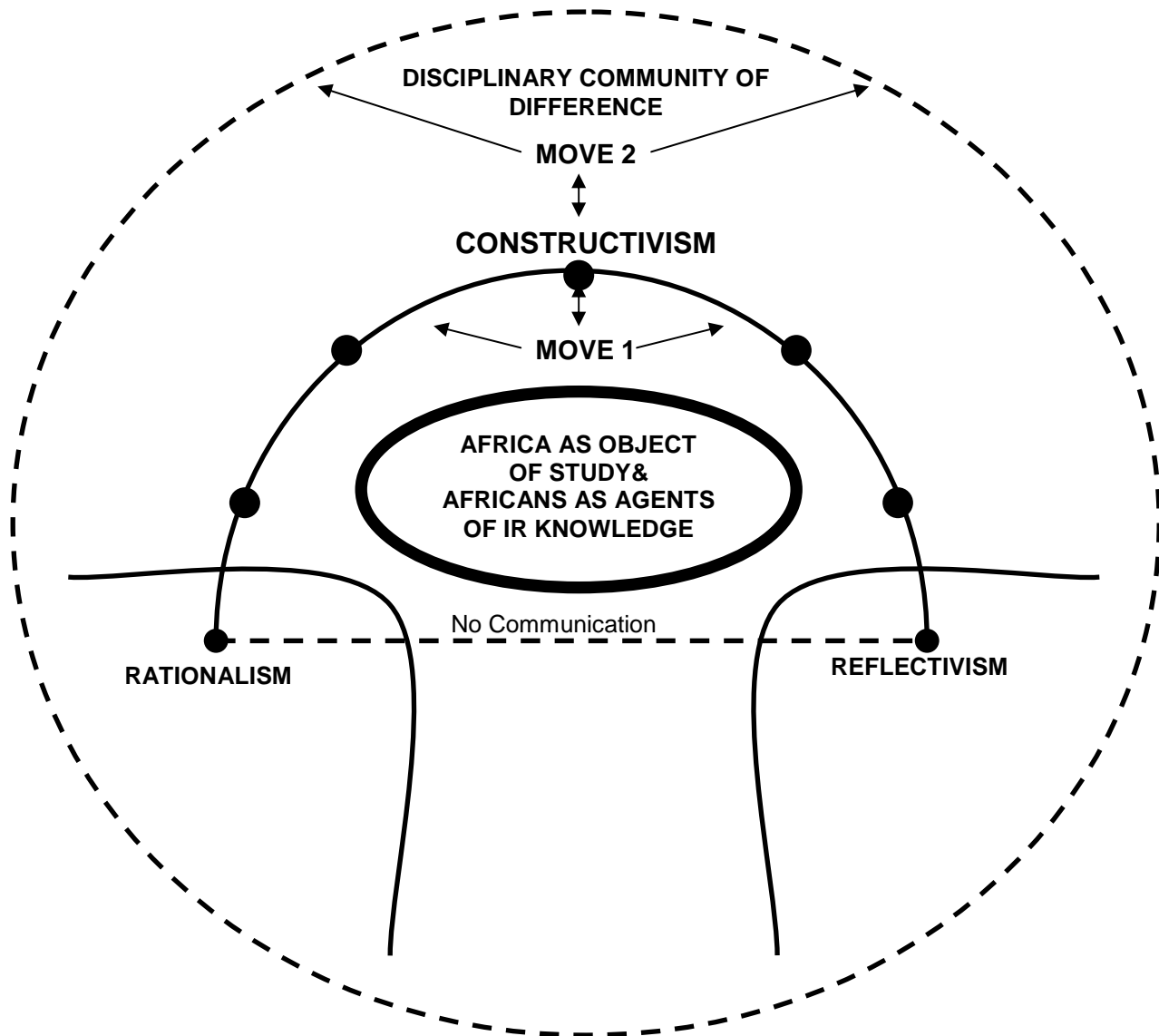
6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research study has several limitations that need to be addressed in future research studies. The first limitation relates to the scholarship covered. This thesis only looked at

how (neo)realism currently defines the boundaries of legitimate knowledge of the discipline as it excluded neoliberal institutionalism. This needs to be remedied in future studies. Although most of the research within IR that places Africa at the centre of its analysis were discussed, some studies might have been left out as a result of the limited scope of the thesis.

Looking at potential ways in which the community of difference approach could be practically implemented within the discipline also fell beyond the scope of this study. Weldon (2006) provides various practical methods by which the author believes this could be achieved. The main hurdle that will inhibit the normative framework's adoption and the subsequent extension of the notion of engaged pluralism is if Western and non-Western scholars are not willing to engage with each other through the process of dialogue and are not willing to engage in the a manner described by the notion of the disciplinary community of difference. Practical methods to produce dialogue between Western and non-Western scholars should therefore also be the focus of future studies.

6.4 THE WAY FORWARD: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Following on from the limitations of this study several recommendations can be made regarding potential future studies. Future studies need to apply the constructivist methodology of Standpoint SObjectivism that was articulated in this thesis. Understandably it is difficult to employ this methodology in Africa as a result of the difficulty in accessing African subjects. Data gathering has always been an issue when working within the African context. Harding (2008) argues that feminist standpoint research should initiate studies by focusing on women's lives in households. In trying to articulate an African standpoint this author would argue that research into African subjectivities should be initiated by focusing on the lives of African elites. This entails that research should focus on political, economical and cultural elites as a potential starting point. This focus is advocated as these people are partaking in the everyday process of making decisions that influences African IR and therefore their ideas about the current construction of world politics need to be accessed.

Complexity theory also provides some links with constructivism that can tie into the ideas proposed in this thesis. Adler (2002) already discussed the potential benefits of combining

constructivist research with complexity theory and this author would like to reiterate the potential benefits. Complexity theory analyses non-linear systems and can therefore capture the non-linearity of the processes which define the chaos some scholars see on the African continent. Adler (2002:111) also indicates that "[complexity] theory may also illuminate the agent-structure problem" by applying a non-linear focus. The agent-structure problem directly relates to the methodology advocated in this thesis and the problems related to positivist epistemology. Future research studies should thus employ complexity theory in studies that focus on the African context and the interaction and diffusion which occurs between and within disciplines.

Further studies should also take note of other potential middle ground perspectives. Doxtader (quoted in Lapid, 2003:130) invites scholars to "find other middles and investigate their communicative qualities". This thesis could not identify all the potential middle grounds within IR and future studies could thus do more to highlight the potential middle ground aspects of post-colonial theory, feminism, and so forth, and investigate their potential effects on the discipline, but also on the possibility of employing them as elements in bridging the theoretical abyss. The IBO approach discussed by Lapid (2001) could potentially provide the conceptual grounding for other middle ground approaches.

6.5 CONCLUSION: AFRICAN LIFE IN MOTION

Africa is part of a world in motion. The static pictures of reality drawn up by rationalist theories and Wendtian constructivism do not capture the ongoing processes within the African context and within the discipline of IR. Constructivism can provide a picture of reality that takes into account these motions and its intervention in the discipline can thus lead to a bridging of the theoretical abyss. Africa(ns) need to be included in order to make the knowledge in the discipline less partial and distorted.

LaMonica (2008:20) argues that "the establishment of a more open global dialogue of political ideas just may require some of us, within the West, to do exactly that – to reach out – but with a demeanor of mutual respect and purposeful aim of scholarly inclusion". Harding (2008:234) similarly argues that "this moment is one of extraordinary opportunities for those in the west who are unhappy with this situation to join with those at the borders of conventional western modernity in envisioning fresh ways to move forward in the

production of reliable knowledge that can be for comprehensive social progress". I am an African and currently situated on the fringes of reliable knowledge within the discipline of IR. The constructivist intervention in the discipline opened up the dialogical space for me to communicate and construct some knowledge within the discipline and in so doing potentially include Africa as an object of study and Africans as potential agents of IR knowledge.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Ackerly, B., Stern, M. & True, J. 2006. "Feminist Methodologies for International Relations". In, Ackerly, B., Stern, M. & True, J. (eds.) *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 1-16.

Ackerly, B. & True, J. 2008. "An Intersectional Analysis of International Relations: Recasting the Discipline". *Politics & Gender.* 4(1): 156-173.

Adler, E. 1997. "Seizing the middle ground: Constructivism in World Politics". *European Journal of International Relations.* 3(3): 319-363.

Adler, E. 2002. "Constructivism and International Relations". In, Carlsnaes, W., Risse, T. & Simmons, B.A. (eds.). *Handbook of International Relations.* London: SAGE. Pp. 95-118.

Adler, E. 2005. *Communitarian International Relations: The epistemic foundations of International Relations.* London & New York: Routledge.

Agnew, J. 1994. "The territorial trap: the geographical assumptions of international relations theory". *Review of International Political Economy.* 1(1): 53-80.

Amoore, L., Dodgson, R., Germain, R.D., Gills, B.K., Langley, P. & Watson, I. 2000. "Paths to a historicized international political economy". *Review of International Political Economy.* 7(1): 53-71.

Appiah, K.A. 2001. "African Identities". In, Castle, G. (ed.). *Postcolonial Discourses: An Anthology.* Malden, MA: Blackwell. Pp. 221-231.

Ashcroft, B. 2002. "The Boundaries of the State: Africa and Modernity". In, Ahluwalia, P. & Zegeye, A. (eds.). *African Identities: Contemporary political and social challenges.* Aldershot: Ashgate. Pp. 1-11.

Aydinli, E. & Mathews, J. 2000. "Are the Core and Periphery Irreconcilable? The Curious World of Publishing in Contemporary International Relations". *International Studies Knowledge.* 1(3): 289-303.

Ayoob, M. 1998. "Subaltern Realism: International Relations Theory meets the Third World". In, Neuman, S.G. (ed.). *International Relations Theory and the Third World.* London: Macmillan. Pp. 31-54.

Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. 2001. *The practice of social research: South African edition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Barkin, J.S. 2003. "Realist Constructivism". *International Studies Review.* 5: 325-342.

Barnett, M. 2008. "Social Constructivism". In, Baylis, J., Smith, S. & Owens, P. (eds.). *The Globalization of World Politics: An introduction to international relations.* 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp.160-173.

Beer, F.A. & Hariman, R. 1996. "Realism and Rhetoric in International Relations". In, Beer, F.A. & Hariman, R. (eds.). *Post-Realism: the rhetorical turn in International Relations.* East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press. Pp. 1-33.

Biersteker, T.J & Weber, C. 1996. "The social construction of state sovereignty". In, Biersteker, T.J & Weber, C. (eds.). *State Sovereignty as Social Construct.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 1-21.

Biersteker, T.J. 1999. "Eroding Boundaries, Contested Terrain". *International Studies Review.* 1(1): 3-9.

Bilgin, P. 2008. "Thinking Past 'Western" IR". *Third World Quarterly.* 29(1): 5-23.

Bleiker, R. 2006. Review Article: "Searching for Difference in a Homogenous Discipline". *International Studies Review*. 8: 128-130.

Brown, W. 2006. "Africa and international relations: a comment on IR theory, anarchy and statehood". *Review of International Studies.* 32: 119-243.

Buzan, B. 1998. "Conclusions: Systems versus Units in Theorizing about the Third World". In, Neuman, S.G. (ed.). *International Relations Theory and the Third World.* London: Macmillan. Pp. 213-234.

Buzan, B. & Little, R. 2001. "Why International Relations had failed as an Intellectual Project and what to do about it". *Millennium: Journal of International Studies.* 30(1): 19-39.

Carruthers, J. 1996. *"The Invention of Africa" and Intellectual Colonialism.* [Online] Available at: http://africawithin.com/carruthers/invention_of_africa.htm (8 September 2008).

Cederman, L. & Daase, C. 2003. "Endogenizing Corporate Identities: The next step in Constructivist IR Theory". *European Journal of International Relations.* 9(1): 5-35.

Clapham, C. 1996. *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Clapham, C. 1998. "Degrees of Statehood". *Review of International Studies.* 24: 143-157.

Checkel, J.T. 1998. "The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory". *World Politics.* 50(2): 324-48.

Checkel, J.T. 2004. "Social constructivisms in global and European politics: a review essay". *Review of International Studies.* 30: 229-244.

Copeland, D.C. 2000. "The Constructivist Challenge to Structural Realism: A Review Essay". *International Security.* 25(2): 187-212.

Croft, S. 1997. "International Relations and Africa". *African Affairs.* 96(385): 607-615.

Dahlberg, K.A. 1983. "Contextual Analysis: Taking Space, Time, and Place Seriously". *International Studies Quarterly.* 27(3): 257-266.

Desch, M.C. 1996. "Why Realists Disagree about the Third World (and Why They Shouldn't)". In, Frankel, B. (ed.). *Realism: Restatements and Renewal.* London: Frank Cass. Pp. 358-381.

Donelly, J. 2000. *Realism and International Relations.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dunn, K.C. 2001a. "Introduction: Africa and International Relations Theory". In, Dunn, K & Shaw, T. (eds.). *Africa's challenge to International Relations.* Houndsmills: Palgrave. Pp. 1-8.

Dunn, K.C. 2001b. "MadLib #32: The (*Blank*) African State: Rethinking the Sovereign State in International Relations Theory". In, Dunn, K & Shaw, T. (eds.). *Africa's challenge to International Relations.* Houndsmills: Palgrave. Pp. 46-63.

Engel, U. & Olsen, G.R. 2005. "Introduction: The African Exception: Conceptual Notes on Governance in Africa in the New Millennium". In, Engel, U & Olsen, G.R. (eds.). *The African Exception.* Aldershot: Ashgate. Pp. 1-16.

Engel, U. & Olsen, G.R. 2006a. "Global Politics and Africa – and Africa in international relations theory". In, Engel, U. & Olsen, G.R. (eds.). *Africa and the North: Between Globalization and Marginalization.* London & New York: Routledge. Pp. 1-19.

Engel, U. & Olsen, G.R. 2006b. "Africa in International Relations Theory". *Paper presented at the 47th Annual International Studies Association Convention.* San Diego, CA., 22-25 March 2006.

Englebert, P. 1997. Review Article "The contemporary African state: Neither African nor state". *Third World Quarterly.* 18(4): 767-775.

Fearon, J & Wendt, A. 2002. "Rationalism v. Constructivism: A Skeptical view". In, Carlsnaes, W., Risse, T. & Simmons, B.A. (eds.). *Handbook of International Relations.* London: SAGE. Pp. 52-72.

Fierke, K.M. & Jørgenson, K.E. 2001. "Introduction". In, Fierke, K.M. & Jørgenson, K.E. (eds.). *Constructing International Relations: the next generation.* Armonk, N.Y. & London: M.E. Sharpe. Pp. 3-10.

Finnemore, M & Sikkink, K. 2001. "Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics". *Annual Review of Political Science.* 4: 391-416

Frankel, B. 1996. "Restating the Realist Case: An Introduction". In, Frankel, B. (ed.). *Realism: Restatements and Renewal.* London: Frank Cass. Pp. ix-xx.

George, J. 1989. "International Relations and the Search for Thinking Space: Another View of the Third Debate". *International Studies Quarterly.* 33(3): 269-279.

Geschiere, P. 2007. "Epilogue: 'Seeing like the State' in Africa – High Modernism, Legibility and Community". *African Studies.* 66(1): 129-134.

Gilpin, R.G. 1996. "No One Loves a Political Realist". In, Frankel, B. (ed.). *Realism: Restatements and Renewal.* London: Frank Cass. Pp. 3-26.

Greene, M. 1993. "The Passions of Pluralism: Multiculturalism and the Expanding Community". *Educational Researcher.* 22(1): 13-18.

Grovogui, S.N. 2001. "Sovereignty in Africa: Quasi-Statehood and other myths in International Theory". In, Dunn, K & Shaw, T. (eds.). *Africa's challenge to International Relations.* Houndsmills: Palgrave. Pp. 29-45.

Gusterson, H. 1993. "Realism and the International Order after the Cold War". *Social Research.* 60(2): 279-300.

Guzzini, S. 1998. *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: the continuing story of a death foretold.* London: Routledge.

Guzzini, S. 2000. "A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations". *European Journal of International Relations.* 6(2): 147-182.

Guzzini, S. 2004. "The Enduring Dilemmas of Realism in International Relations". *European Journal of International Relations.* 10(4): 533-568.

Guzzini, S. & Leander, A. 2006. "Wendt's constructivism: A relentless quest for synthesis". In, Guzzini, S. & Leander, A. (eds.). *Constructivism and International Relations: Alexander Wendt and his critics.* London & New York: Routledge. Pp. 73-92

Haas, P.M. & Haas, E.B. 2002. "Pragmatic Constructivism and the study of International Institutions". *Millennium: Journal of International Studies.* 31(3): 573-601.

Harding, S. 2008. *Sciences from Below: Feminisms, Postcolonialities, and Modernities.* Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Harvey, F. & Cobb, J. 2003. "Multiple Dialogues, Layered Syntheses, and the Limits of Expansive Cumulation". In, Hellman, G. (ed.). "Are Dialogue and Synthesis Possible in International Relations?" *International Studies Review.* 5: 144-147.

Hayman, P. 2006. "Theoretical Territory: Constructivism and the Consequences of Division". *Paper presented at the British International Studies Association Annual Meeting.* Cork, Ireland, 17-19 December 2006.

Henning, E. 2004. *Finding your way in qualitative research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Higgs, P. 2008. "Towards an indigenous African educational discourse: A philosophical reflection". *International Review of Education.* 54: 445-458.

Hill, J. 2005. "Beyond the Other? A postcolonial critique of the failed state thesis". *African Identities.* 3(2): 139-154.

Holsti, K. J. 1985. *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory.* Boston: Allen & Unwin.

Hopf, T. 1998. "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory". *International Security.* 23(1): 171-200.

Hopf, T. 2005. *Bringing Society Back into Social Constructivism.* [Online] Available at: http://psweb.sbs.ohio-state.edu/intranet/rip/hopf.pdf (29 September 2008).

Hopkins, A.G. 2000. "Quasi-states, weak states and the partition of Africa". *Review of International Studies.* 26(2): 311-320.

Ibert, O. 2007. "Towards a geography of knowledge creation: The ambivalences between 'Knowledge as an object' and 'Knowledge in Practice". *Regional Studies.* 41(1): 103-114.

Inayatullah, N. 1996. "Beyond the sovereignty dilemma: quasi-states as social construct". In, Biersteker, T.J & Weber, C. (eds.). *State Sovereignty as Social Construct.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 50-80**.**

Inayatullah, N. & Blaney, B.L. 2004. *International Relations and the problem of difference.* New York & London: Routledge.

Jackson. R.H. 1990. *Quasi-states: sovereignty, international relations and the Third World.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jervis, R. 1999. "Realism in the Study of World Politics". In, Katzenstein, P.J., Keohane, R.O. & Krasner, S.D. (eds.). *Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics.* Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press. P. 331-351.

Jørgenson, K.E. 2001. "Four levels and a Discipline". In, Fierke, K.M. & Jørgenson, K.E. *Constructing International Relations: the next generation.* Armonk, N.Y. & London: M.E. Sharpe. Pp. 36-53.

Katzenstein, P.J., Keohane, R.O. & Krasner, S.D. 1999. "*International Organization* and the study of World Politics". In, Katzenstein, P.J., Keohane, R.O. & Krasner, S.D. (eds.). *Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics.* Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press. P. 5-46.

Kiros, T. 2001. "Introduction: African Philosophy: A Critical/Moral Practice". In, Kiros, T. (ed.). *Explorations in African Political Thought.* New York & London: Routledge. Pp. 1-6.

Klotz, A. 1995. *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle Against Apartheid.* Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.

Klotz, A. 2001. "Can we speak a Common Constructivist Language?" In, Fierke, K.M. & Jørgenson, K.E. (eds.). *Constructing International Relations: the next generation.* Armonk, N.Y. & London: M.E. Sharpe. Pp. 223-235.

Kom, A. 2000. "Knowledge and Legitimisation". *Mots Pluriel.* 14, June. [Online] Available at: http://www.arts.uwa.edu.au/MotsPluriels/MP1400akfr.html (8 September 2008).

Kratochwil, F. 2003. "The Monologue of Science". In, Hellman, G. (ed.). "Are Dialogue and Synthesis Possible in International Relations?". *International Studies Review.* 5: 124-128.

Kubálková, V., Onuf, N.G., & Kowert, P. 1998. "Constructing Constructivism". In, Kubálková, V., Onuf, N.G. & Kowert, P. (eds.). *International Relations in a Constructed World.* New York & London: M.E. Sharpe. Pp. 3-21.

LaMonica, C. 2008. "Where is African Political Thought in International Relations Theory?". *Paper presented at the 49th Annual International Studies Association Convention.* San Francisco, CA., 26-29 March 2008.

Lapid, Y. 1989. "The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era". *International Studies Quarterly.* 33(3): 235-254.

Lapid, Y. 2001. "Introduction: Identities, Borders, Orders: Nudging International Relations Theory in a New Direction". In, Albert, M., Jacobson, D. & Lapid, Y. (eds.). *Identities, Borders, Orders: Rethinking International Relations Theory.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. Pp. 1-20.

Lapid, Y. 2003. "Through Dialogue to Engaged Pluralism: The Unfinished Business of the Third Debate". In, Hellman, G. (ed.). "Are Dialogue and Synthesis Possible in International Relations?". *International Studies Review.* 5:128-131.

Lavelle, K.C. 2005. "Moving in from the periphery: Africa and the study of international political economy". *Review of International Political Economy.* 12(2): 364-379.

Lawson, S. 2008. "Political Studies and the Contextual Turn: A Methodological/Normative Critique". *Political Studies.* 56: 584-603.

Legro, J.W. & Moravcsik, A. 1999. "Is anybody still a Realist?" *International Security.* 24(2): 5-55.

Lemke, D. 2003. "African lessons for International Relations Research". *World Politics.* 56(1): 114-138.

Lemke, D. 2007. "Return to Realism: Power Politics and State-Making in Africa". *Paper presented at the 48th Annual International Studies Association Convention.* Chicago, IL., 28 February - 3 March 2007.

Linklater, A. 1995. "Neo-realism in Theory and Practice". In, Booth, K & Smith, S. *International Relations Theory Today.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Locher, B. & Prügl, E. 2001a. "Feminism: Constructivism's Other Pedigree". In, Fierke, K.M. & Jørgenson, K.E. (eds.). *Constructing International Relations: the next generation.* Armonk, N.Y. & London: M.E. Sharpe. Pp. 76-92.

Locher, B. & Prügl, E. 2001b. "Feminism and Constructivism: Worlds Apart or Sharing the Middle Ground?" *International Studies Quarterly.* 45:111-129.

Lor, P.J. & Britz, J. 2006. *Knowledge production from an African perspective: International information flows and intellectual property.* [Online] Available at: https://www.up.ac.za/dspace/handle/2263/1466 (8 September 2008).

MacLean, S.J. 2001. "Challenging Westphalia: Issues of Sovereignty and Identity in Southern Africa". In, Dunn, K & Shaw, T. (eds.). *Africa's challenge to International Relations.* Houndsmills: Palgrave. Pp. 146-162.

Makinda, S.M. 2007. "How Africa can benefit from knowledge". *Futures.* 39: 973-985.

Malaquias, A. 2001. "Reformulating International Relations Theory: African Insights and Challenges". In, Dunn, K & Shaw, T. (eds.). *Africa's challenge to International Relations.* Houndsmills: Palgrave. Pp. 11-28.

Mama, A. 2004. *Critical Capacities: Facing the Challenges of Intellectual Development in Africa.* Inaugural Lecture Prince Claus Chair in Development and Equity, Institute of Social Studies, 28 April 2004. [Online] Available at: http://www.uu.nl/uupublish/content/Mama_PrinceClausInaugural_.pdf (8 September 2008).

Mama, A. 2007. "Is it ethical to study Africa? Preliminary Thoughts on Scholarship and Freedom". *African Studies Review.* 50(1): 1-26.

Mazrui, A.A. 2001. "Shifting African Identities: The Boundaries of Ethnicity and Religion in Africa's Experience". In, Bekker, S., Dodds, M. & Khosa, M. (eds.). *Shifting African Identities: Identity? Theory, Politics, History.* Pretoria: HSRC. Pp. 153-175.

Mbembe, A. 2000. "At the Edge of the World: Boundaries, Territoriality, and Sovereignty in Africa". *Public Culture.* 12(1): 259-284.

Mbembe, A. & Nuttall, S. 2004. "Writing the World from an African Metropolis". *Public Culture.* 16(3): 347-372.

Mearsheimer, J.J. 1995. "A Realist Theory". *International Security.* 19(5): 82-93.

Mkandawire, T. 1997. "The Social Science in Africa: Breaking Local Barriers and Negotiating International Presence". *African Studies Review.* 40(2): 15-36.

Moore, C. 2008. "Disciplining the Developing World: Perspectives of a Non-Western IR". *Paper presented at the 49th Annual International Studies Association Convention.* San Francisco, CA., 26-29 March 2008.

Moravcsik, A. 2003. "Theory Synthesis in International Relations: Real not Metaphysical". In, Hellman, G. (ed.). "Are Dialogue and Synthesis Possible in International Relations?". *International Studies Review.* 5: 131-136.

Morgenthau, H. 1948/1978. *Politics among Nations.* 5th ed. New York, N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf.

Morton, A.D. 2005. "The 'failed state' of International Relations". *New Political Economy.* 10(3): 371-379.

Mouton, J. 1996. *Understanding Social Research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Mouton, J. 2001. *How to succeed in your Master's & Doctoral studies: A South African guide and resource book.* Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Muiu, M. 2008. "'Civilization' on Trial: The Colonial and Post-Colonial State in Africa". *Journal of Third World Studies.* 25(1): 73-93.

Neufeld, M.A. 1995. *The Restructuring of International Relations Theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Neuman, S.G. 1998. "International Relations Theory and the Third World: An Oxymoron?" In, Neuman, S.G. (ed.). *International Relations Theory and the Third World.* London: Macmillan. Pp. 1-29.

Nieftagodien, N. 1998. "Report of the international symposium on globalisation and social sciences in Africa, University of the Witwatersrand, September 1998". *African Studies.* 57(2): 229-238.

Niemann, M. 2001. "Unstated Places – Rereading Southern Africa". In, Vale, P., Swatuk, L.A. & Oden, B. (eds.). *Theory, Change and Southern Africa's Future.* New York: Palgrave. Pp. 58-82.

Nieuwenhuis, J. 2007. "Qualitative research designs and data gathering techniques". In, Maree, K. (ed.). *First Steps in Research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers. Pp. 69-97.

Nkiwane, T.C. 2001. "Africa and International Relations: Regional Lessons for a Global Discourse". *International Political Science Review.* 22(3): 279-290.

Nwoye, A. 2006. "Remapping the Fabric of the African self: A Synoptic Theory". *Dialectical Anthropology.* 30: 119-146.

Ofuhu, C.H. 2003. "The Changing Images of a Continent: An Eclectic Survey of Writings on Africa in the International System". *Global Society.* 17(2): 151-164.

Olukoshi, A. 2006. "African scholars and African studies". *Development in Practice.* 16(6): 533-544.

Owen, D. 2002. "Re-Orienting International Relations: On Pragmatism, Pluralism and Practical Reasoning". *Millennium: Journal of International Studies.* 31(3): 653-673.

Palan, R. 2000. "A world of their making: An evaluation of the constructivist critique in International Relations". *Review of International Studies.* 26: 575-598.

Pasic, S.C. 1996. "Culturing International Relations Theory: A Call for Extension". In, Lapid, Y. & Kratochwil, F. (eds.). *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory.* London: Lynne Rienner. Pp. 85-104.

Pettman, R. 2000. *Commonsense Constructivism or the making of world affairs.* Armonk, N.Y. & London: M.E. Sharpe.

Pouliot, V. 2007. ""Sobjectivism": Toward a Constructivist Methodology". *International Studies Quarterly.* 51: 359-384.

Price, R. & Reus-Smit, C. 1998. "Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism". *European Journal of International Relations.* 4(3): 259-294.

Reus-Smit, C. 2002. "Imaging Society: constructivism and the English School". *British Journal of Politics and International Relations.* 4(3): 487-509.

Reus-Smit, C. 2005. "Constructivism". In, Burchill, S., et al*. Theories of International Relations.* 3rd ed. Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 188-212.

Risse, T. & Wiener, A. 1999. "Something Rotten and the Social Construction of Social Constructivism: A Comment on Comments". *Journal of European Public Policy.* 6(5): 775-782.

Roe, E.M. 1995. "Except-Africa: Postscript to a Special Section on Development Narratives". *World Development.* 23(6): 1065-1069.

Rosenberg, J. 1990. "What's the matter with realism?" *Review of International Studies.* 16: 285-303.

Ruggie, J.G. 1986. "Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis". In, Keohane, R.O. (ed.). *Neorealism and its Critics.* New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press. Pp. 131-157.

Ruggie, J.G. 1998. *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalization.* London and New York: Routledge.

Schmidt, B. 2007. "International Relations Theory: Hegemony or Pluralism?" *Millennium: Journal of International Studies.* 36(2): 105-114.

Schoeman, M. 1998. "Celebrating Westphalia's 350th Birthday: Reflections on the state of the state in Southern Africa". *South African Journal of International Affairs.* 5(2): 1-20.

Searle, J.R. 1995. *The Construction of Social Reality.* London: Penguin.

Shapcott, R. 2001. *Justice, Community, and Dialogue in International Relations.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shields, C.M. 2001. "A Dialogue about Communities of Difference: A Rejoinder to Robert Boostrom". *Curriculum Inquiry.* 31(1): 71-76.

Shields, C.M. 2003. *Good Intentions are not enough: Transformative Leadership for Communities of Difference.* Lanham: The Scarecrow Press.

Shields, C.M. 2004. "Creating a Community of Difference". *Educational Leadership.* April, 38-41.

Shields, C.M. 2006. "Creating Spaces for Value-Based Conversations: the role of school leaders in the 21st Century". *ISEA.* 34(2): 62-81.

Smith, K. 2006. "Can it be home-Grown? Challenges to developing IR theory in the Global South". *Paper presented at the 47th Annual International Studies Association Convention.* San Diego, CA., 22-25 March 2006.

Smith, K. 2008. "Has Africa got anything to say? African contributions to the theoretical development of International Relations: a preliminary investigation". *Paper presented at the 49th Annual International Studies Association Convention.* San Francisco, CA., 26-29 March 2008.

Smith, S. 2000. "The discipline of international relations: still an American social science?" *British Journal of Politics and International Relations.* 2(3): 374-402.

Smith, S. 2001. "Reflectivist and constructivist approaches to international theory". In, Baylis, J. & Smith, S. (eds.). *The Globalization of World Politics: An introduction to international relations.* 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 224-249.

Smith, S. 2003. "Dialogue and the Reinforcement of Orthodoxy in International Relations". In, Hellman, G. (ed.). "Are Dialogue and Synthesis Possible in International Relations?". *International Studies Review.* 5: 141-143.

Solomon, H. 2001. "Realism and its Critics". In, Vale, P., Swatuk, L.A. & Oden, B. (eds.). *Theory, Change and Southern Africa's Future.* New York: Palgrave. Pp. 34-57.

Sørenson, G. 2001. "War and State-Making: Why Doesn't it work in the Third World?" *Security Dialogue.* 32(3): 341-354.

Sørenson, G. 2008. "The case for combining material forces and ideas in the study of IR". *European Journal of International Relations.* 14(1): 5-32.

Spirtas, M. 1996. "A House Divided: Tragedy and Evil in Realist Theory". In, Frankel, B. (ed.). *Realism: Restatements and Renewal.* London: Frank Cass. Pp. 385-423.

Steans, J. 2003. "Engaging from the margins: feminist encounters with the 'mainstream' of International Relations". *British Journal of Politics and International Relations.* 5(3): 428-454.

Sterling-Folker, J. & Shinko, R.E. 2005. "Discourses of Power: Traversing the Realist-Postmodern Divide". *Millennium: Journal of International Studies.* 33(3): 637-664.

Swatuk, L. 2001. "The Brothers Grim: Modernity and 'International' Relations in Southern Africa". In, Dunn, K & Shaw, T. (eds.). *Africa's challenge to International Relations.* Houndsmills: Palgrave. Pp. 163-182.

Taylor, I. 2000. "Rethinking the study of International Relations in Africa". *Politikon.* 27(2): 207-220.

Thomas, C. & Wilkin, P. 2004. "Still Waiting after all these years: 'The Third World' on the Periphery of International Relations". *British Journal of Politics and International Relations.* 6(2): 241-258.

Tickner, A.B. 2003. "Seeing IR differently: Notes from the Third World". *Millennium: Journal of International Studies.* 32(2): 295-324.

Tickner, A.B. 2007. "A Political Economy of Dialogic IR Scholarship". *Paper presented at the 48th Annual International Studies Association Convention.* Chicago, IL., 28 February - 3 March 2007.

Tickner, J.A. 2005. "What is your Research Program? Some Feminist Answers to International Relations Methodological Questions". *International Studies Quarterly.* 49: 1-21.

Tsygankov, A.P. & Tsygankov, P.A. 2007. "A Sociology of Dependence in International Relations Theory: A Case of Russian Liberal IR". *International Political Sociology.* 1(4): 307-324.

Vale, P. 2001. "Dissenting Tale: Southern Africa's Search for Theory". In, Vale, P., Swatuk, L.A. & Oden, B. (eds.). *Theory, Change and Southern Africa's Future.* New York: Palgrave. Pp. 17-33.

Vasquez, J.A. 1998. *The Power of Power Politics: From Classical Realism to Neotraditionalism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wæver, O. 1999. "The Sociology of a Not so International Discipline: American and European Developments in International Relations". In, Katzenstein, P.J., Keohane, R.O. & Krasner, S.D. (eds.). *Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics.* Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press. P. 47-87.

Walker, T.C. & Morton, J.S. 2005. "Reassessing the "Power of Power Politics" Thesis: Is Realism still dominant?" *International Studies Review.* 7: 341-356.

Walt, S.M. 1998. "International Relations: One world, many theories". *Foreign Policy.* 110: 29-36.

Waltz, K.N. 1959. *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Waltz, K.N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics.* Reading, Ma.: Addison Wesley.

Wang, Y. 2007. "Between Science and Art: Questionable International Relations Theories." *Japanese Journal of Political Science.* 8(2): 191-208.

Warner, C.M. 2000. "A reply to A.G. Hopkins". *Review of International Studies.* 26(2): 321-325.

Warner, C.M. 2001. "The rise of the state system in Africa". *Review of International Studies.* 27: 65-89.

Weber, C. & Biersteker, T.J. 1996. "Reconstructing the analysis of sovereignty: concluding reflections and directions for future research". In, Biersteker, T.J & Weber, C. (eds.). *State Sovereignty as Social Construct.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 278-286.

Weldon, S.L. 2006. "Inclusion and Understanding: A collective methodology for feminist International Relations". In, Ackerly, B., Stern, M. & True, J. (eds.) *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 62-88.

Wendt, A. 1992. "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics". *International Organization.* 46(2): 391-425.

Wendt, A. 1995. "Constructing International Politics". *International Security.* 19(5): 71-81.

Wendt, A. 1999. *Social Theory of International Politics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wiener, A. 2001. "Social Facts in World Politics – The Value-Added of Constructivism". *Paper Presenter at the 42nd Annual International Studies Association Convention.* Chicago, IL., 20-25 February 2001.

Wiener, A. 2003. "Constructivism: The Limits of Bridging Gaps". *Journal of International Relations and Development.* 6(3): 252-275.

Wiener, A. 2006. "Constructivist approaches to International Relations Theory: Puzzles and Promises". *Webpapers on Constitutionalism & Governance beyond the State No. 5.* [Online] Available at: www.bath.ac.uk/esml/conWEB (30 June 2008).

Wight, C. 1996. "Incommensurability and Cross-Paradigm Communication in International Relations Theory: 'What's the Frequency Kenneth?'" *Millennium: Journal of International Studies.* 25(2): 291-319.

Wright, H.K. 2002. "Editorial: Notes on the (Im)Possibility of Articulating Continental African Identity". *Critical Arts.* 16(2): 1-18.

Wylie, G. 2000. Review Article: "International Relations' *Via Media:* Still Under Construction". *International Studies Review.* 2(3): 123-126.

Yordán, C.L. 2003. "Review: John Mearsheimer: The Tragedy of Great Power Politics". *Journal of International Relations and Development.* 6(1): 89-92.

Young, C. 2004. "The End of the Post-Colonial State in Africa? Reflections on Changing African Political Dynamics". *African Affairs.* 103: 23-49.

Zegeye, A. & Vambe, M. 2006. "Knowledge Production and Publishing in Africa". *Development Southern Africa.* 23(3): 333-349.

Zehfuβ, M. 2001 "Constructivisms in International Relations: Wendt, Onuf, and Kratochwil". In, Fierke, K.M. & Jørgenson, K.E. (eds.). *Constructing International Relations: the next generation.* Armonk, N.Y. & London: M.E. Sharpe. Pp. 54-75.

Zehfuβ, M. 2002. *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zuern, M. & Checkel, J. 2005. "Getting Socialized to Build Bridges: Constructivism and Rationalism, Europe and the Nation-State". *International Organization.* 59: 1045-1079.