

to be constituted by the normative and ideational structures of international society, and those structures are seen as the product of state practices. From this perspective, it is impossible to explain how fundamental changes occur, either in the nature of international society or in the nature of state identity. By bracketing everything domestic, Wendt excludes by theoretical fiat most of the normative and ideational forces that might prompt such change.

Unit-level constructivism is the inverse of systemic constructivism. Instead of focusing on the external, international domain, unit-level constructivists concentrate on the relationship between domestic social and legal norms and the identities and interests of states, the very factors bracketed by Wendt. Here Peter Katzenstein's writings on the national security policies of Germany and Japan (1996, 1999) are emblematic. Setting out to explain why two states, with common experiences of military defeat, foreign occupation, economic development, transition from authoritarianism to democracy and nascent great-power status, have adopted very different internal and external national security policies, Katzenstein stresses the importance of institutionalized regulatory and constitutive national social and legal norms. He concludes that:

In Germany the strengthening of state power through changes in legal norms betrays a deep-seated fear that terrorism challenges the core of the state. In effect, eradicating terrorism and minimizing violent protest overcome the specter of a 'Hobbesian' state of nature ... In Japan, on the other hand, the close interaction of social and legal norms reveals a state living symbiotically within its society and not easily shaken to its foundation. Eliminating terrorism and containing violent protest were the tasks of a 'Grotian' community ... Conversely, Germany's active involvement in the evolution of international legal norms conveys a conception of belonging to an international 'Grotian' community. Japan's lack of concern for the consequences of pushing terrorists abroad and its generally passive international stance is based on a 'Hobbesian' view of the society of states. (Katzenstein 1996: 153–4)

While not entirely disregarding the role of international norms in conditioning the identities and interests of states, Katzenstein draws attention to the internal, domestic determinants of national policies. Unit-level constructivism of this sort has the virtue of enabling the explanation of variations of identity, interest and action across states, something that systemic constructivism obscures. It follows, though, that this form of constructivism has difficulty accounting for similarities between states, for patterns of convergence in state identity and interest.

Where systemic and unit-level constructivists reproduce the traditional dichotomy between the international and the domestic, holistic constructivists seek to bridge the two domains. To accommodate the entire range of factors conditioning the identities and interests of states, they bring the corporate and the social together into a unified analytical perspective that treats the domestic and the international as two faces of a single social and political order. Concerned primarily with the dynamics of global change – particularly the rise and possible demise of the sovereign state – holistic constructivists focus on the mutually constitutive relationship between this order and the state. This general perspective has spawned two distinctive, yet complementary, analyses of international change: one focusing on grand shifts between international systems, the other on recent changes within the modern system. The former is typified by John Ruggie's path-breaking work on the rise of sovereign states out of the wreck of European feudalism, work that emphasizes the importance of changing social epistemes, or frameworks of knowledge (1986, 1993). The latter is exemplified by Friedrich Kratochwil's writings on the end of the Cold War, which stress the role of changing ideas of international order and security (Kratochwil 1993; Koslowski and Kratochwil 1995). Though less parsimonious and elegant than systemic constructivism, holistic scholarship has the merit of being able to explain the development of the normative and ideational structures of the present international system, as well as the social identities they have engendered. The more concerned this form of constructivism becomes with grand tectonic transformations, however, the more structuralist it tends to become, and human agency tends to drop out of the story. Ideas change, norms evolve, and culture transforms, but these seem to move independently of human will, choice, or action.

## **Constructivism and its discontents**

The articulation of a constructivist theoretical framework for the study of international relations has significantly altered the axes of debate within the field. The internecine debate between neo-realists and neo-liberals, which, until the middle of the 1990s was still being hailed as *the* contemporary debate, has been displaced as rationalists have haphazardly joined forces to confront a common constructivist foe. The rise of constructivism has also displaced the debate between rationalists and critical international theorists. The veracity of the epistemological, methodological and normative challenges that critical theorists levelled at rationalism has not diminished, but the rise of constructivism has focused debate on ontological and empirical issues, pushing the metatheoretical

debate of the 1980s off centre stage. The core debate now animating the field revolves around the nature of social agency, the relative importance of normative versus material forces, the balance between continuity and transformation in world politics and a range of other empirical–theoretical questions. This does not mean, though, that rationalism and constructivism constitute unified, unproblematic or fully coherent theoretical positions, standing pristine in opposition to one another. We have already seen the significant differences within the rationalist fold, and the remainder of this chapter considers the discontents that characterize contemporary constructivism. Four of these warrant particular attention: the disagreements among constructivists over the nature of theory, the relationship with rationalism, the appropriate methodology and the contribution of constructivism to a critical theory of international relations.

It has long been the ambition of rationalists, especially neo-realists, to formulate a general theory of international relations, the core assumptions of which would be so robust that they could explain its fundamental characteristics, regardless of historical epoch or differences in the internal complexions of states. For most constructivists, such ambitions have little allure. The constitutive forces they emphasize, such as ideas, norms and culture, and the elements of human agency they stress, such as corporate and social identity, are all inherently variable. There is simply no such thing as a universal, transhistorical, disembedded, culturally autonomous idea or identity. Most constructivists thus find the pursuit of a general theory of international relations an absurdity, and confine their ambitions to providing compelling interpretations and explanations of discrete aspects of world politics, going no further than to offer heavily qualified ‘contingent generalizations’. In fact, constructivists repeatedly insist that constructivism is not a theory, but rather an analytical framework. The one notable exception to this tendency is Wendt, who has embarked on the ambitious project of formulating a comprehensive social theory of international relations, placing himself in direct competition with Waltz. In pursuit of this goal, however, Wendt makes a number of moves that put him at odds with almost all other constructivists: namely, he focuses solely on the systemic level, he treats the state as a unitary actor and he embraces an epistemological position called ‘scientific realism’ (Wendt and Shapiro 1997). While these represent the theoretical proclivities of but one scholar, Wendt’s prominence in the development of constructivism makes them important sources of division and disagreement within the new school. His *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999) is the most sustained elaboration of constructivist theory yet, and for many in the field it will define the very nature of constructivism. However, the vision of theory it presents has

been vigorously contested by other constructivists, thus forming one of the principal axes of tension within constructivism over the coming years.

The second discontent within constructivism concerns the relationship with rationalism. Some constructivists believe that productive engagement is possible between the two approaches, engagement based on a scholarly division of labour. We have seen that constructivists emphasize how institutionalized norms shape the identities and interests of actors, and that rationalists, treating interests as unexplained givens, stress how actors go about pursuing their interests strategically. The first focuses on interest-formation, the second on interest satisfaction. Seeking to build bridges instead of fences between the two approaches, some constructivists see in this difference a possible division of labour, with constructivists doing the work of explaining how actors gain their preferences and rationalists exploring how they realize those preferences. Constructivism is thus not a rival theoretical perspective to rationalism at all, but rather a complementary one. 'The result', Audie Klotz argues, 'is a reformulated, complementary research agenda that illuminates the independent role of norms in determining actors' identities and interests. Combined with theories of institutions and interest-based behaviour, this approach offers us a conceptually consistent and more complete understanding of international relations' (1995: 20). As attractive as this exercise in bridge-building appears, not all constructivists are convinced. Reus-Smit has demonstrated that the institutionalized norms that shape actors' identities help define not only their interests but also their strategic rationality (1999). Attempts to confine constructivist scholarship to the realm of interest-formation, and to concede rationalists the terrain of strategic interaction, have thus been criticized for propagating an unnecessarily 'thin form of constructivism' (Laffey and Weldes 1997).

Another discontent within constructivism involves the question of methodology. Critical theorists have long argued that the neo-positivist methodology championed by neo-realists and neo-liberals is poorly suited to the study of human action, as the individuals and groups under analysis attach meanings to their actions, these meanings are shaped by a pre-existing 'field' of shared meanings embedded in language and other symbols, and the effect of such meanings on human action cannot be understood by treating them as measurable variables that cause behaviour in any direct or quantifiable manner (Taylor 1997: 111). This led early constructivists to insist 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' (Kratochwil and

Ruggie 1986; Kratochwil 1988/9; Neufeld 1993: 49). Curiously, these arguments have been forgotten by a number of constructivists, who defend a position of 'methodological conventionalism', claiming that their explanations 'do not depend exceptionally upon any specialized separate "interpretive methodology"' (Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein 1996: 67). They justify this position on the grounds that the field has been bogged down for too long in methodological disputes and, at any rate, the empirical work of more doctrinaire constructivists such as Kratochwil and Ruggie does not look all that different from that of conventional scholars. Neither of these grounds addresses the substance of the original constructivist argument about methodology, nor do the advocates of methodological conventionalism recognize that the similarity between mainstream empirical work and that of interpretive constructivists may have more to do with the failure of rationalists ever to meet their own neo-positivist standards. The gap between these rival methodological standpoints within constructivism is most clearly apparent in the contrast between those studies that employ quantitative methodological techniques and those that adopt genealogical approaches (Johnston 1995; Price 1997).

The final discontent concerns the relationship between constructivism and critical international theory. It is reasonable, we have seen, to view constructivism as an outgrowth of critical theory, and Price and Reus-Smit (1998) have argued that its development has great potential to further the critical project. Andrew Linklater (1992a) has identified three dimensions of that project: the normative task of critically assessing and revising how political organization, particularly the sovereign state, has been morally justified; the sociological task of understanding how moral community – locally, nationally and globally – expands and contracts; and the praxeological task of grasping the constraints and opportunities that bear on emancipatory political action (1992a: 92–4). Nowhere is the second of these tasks being undertaken with greater energy and rigour than within constructivism. Exploring the development and the impact of the normative and ideational foundations of international society is the constructivist stock in trade, and dialogue between constructivists and those engaged in the more philosophical project of normative critique and elaboration is the most likely path toward true praxeological knowledge. Constructivism is divided, however, between those who remain cognizant of the critical origins and potentiality of their sociological explorations, and those who have embraced constructivism simply as an explanatory or interpretive tool. Both standpoints are justifiable, and the work of scholars on both sides of this divide can be harnessed to the critical project, regardless of their individual commitments. It is imperative, though, that the former group

of scholars work to bring constructivist research into dialogue with moral and philosophical argument, otherwise constructivism will lose its ethical veracity and critical international theory one of its potential pillars.

It is tempting to explain these discontents in terms of differences between modern and postmodern constructivists, differences outlined earlier. Yet disagreements over the nature of theory, the relationship to rationalism, the appropriate method and the contribution to critical international theory do not map neatly onto the divide between minimal and anti-foundationalism. While postmodern constructivists would never advocate the development of a general theory of international relations, task-sharing with rationalists, methodological conventionalism, or pure explanation, neither would many modern constructivists. Here Ted Hopf's (1998) distinction between 'conventional' and 'critical' constructivisms may be more fruitful: 'To the degree that constructivism creates theoretical and epistemological distance between itself and its origins in critical theory, it becomes "conventional" constructivism (1998: 181). The discontents outlined above reflect the differences between those who have consciously or unconsciously created such distance and those who wish to stay in touch with constructivism's roots. Among the latter group, important differences remain between modernists and postmodernists. The most important of these differences concerns the questions they address, with the former focusing on *why* questions, the latter on *how* questions. For instance, Reus-Smit (1995) takes up the question of why different international societies have evolved different institutional practices to solve cooperation problems and facilitate coexistence among states, while Cynthia Weber asks 'How is the meaning of sovereignty fixed or stabilized historically via practices of international relations theorists and practices of political intervention' (1995: 3).

## **The contribution of constructivism**

In spite of these discontents, which are as much a sign of dynamism as division, the rise of constructivism has had several important impacts on the development of international relations theory and analysis. Thanks largely to the work of constructivists, the social, historical and normative have returned to the centre stage of debate, especially within the American core of the discipline.

Until the late 1980s, two factors conspired to marginalize societal analysis in International Relations scholarship. The first was the overwhelming materialism of the major theoretical perspectives. For neo-realists, the principal determinant of state behaviour is the underlying

distribution of material capabilities across states in the international system, a determinant that gives states their animating survival motive, which in turn drives balance of power competition. To the extent that they discussed it, neo-liberals also saw state interests as essentially material, even if they did posit the importance of international institutions as intervening variables. The second factor was the prevailing rationalist conception of human action. As we have seen, both neo-realists and neo-liberals imagined humans – and, by extension, states – as atomistic, self-interested, strategic actors, thus positing a standard form of instrumental rationality across all political actors. When combined, the materialism and rationalism of the prevailing theories left little room for the social dimensions of international life, unless of course the social is reduced to power-motivated strategic competition. Materialism denied the causal significance of shared ideas, norms and values, and rationalism reduced the social to the strategic and ignored the particularities of community, identity and interest. By re-imagining the social as a constitutive realm of values and practices, and by situating individual identities and interests within such a field, constructivists have placed sociological inquiry back at the centre of the discipline. Because of the prominence of the ‘international society’ school, such inquiry had never disappeared from British International Relations scholarship. Constructivists, however, have brought a new level of conceptual clarity and theoretical sophistication to the analysis of both international and world society, thus complementing and augmenting the work of the English School.

By resuscitating societal analysis, the rise of constructivism has also sparked a renewed interest in international history. So long as International Relations theorists were wedded to the idea that states are driven by context-transcendent survival motives or universal modes of rationality, the lessons of history were reduced to the proposition that nothing of substance ever changes. Such assumptions denied the rich diversity of human experience and the possibilities of meaningful change and difference, thus flattening out international history into a monotone tale of ‘recurrence and repetition’. Historical analysis became little more than the ritualistic recitation of lines from the celebrated works of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes, all with aim of ‘proving’ the unchanging nature of international relations, licensing the formulation of increasingly abstract theories. Such history had the paradoxical effect of largely suffocating the study of international history in the American core of the discipline. Aided by the momentous changes that attended the end of the Cold War, and also by the ongoing processes of globalization, the constructivist interest in the particularities of culture, identity, interest and experience created space for a renaissance in the study of history and world politics. If ideas, norms, and practices matter, and if

they differ from one social context to another, then history in turn matters. Not surprisingly, in their efforts to demonstrate the contingency of such factors and their impact on the conduct of world politics, constructivists have sought to re-read the historical record, to re-think what has long been treated as given in the study of international relations. While a similar impulse came from International Relations scholars inspired by the re-birth of historical sociology, constructivists have dominated the new literature on international history (Hall 1999; Kier 1997; Philpott 2001; Rae 2002; Reus-Smit 1999; Ruggie 1986, 1993; Thomson 1994; Welch 1993).

Finally, constructivism may be credited with helping to re-invigorate normative theorizing in International Relations. Not because constructivists have been engaged in philosophical reflection about the nature of the good or the right, a project that has itself been re-energized by the multitude of ethical dilemmas thrown up by the end of the Cold War and the march of globalization, but because they have done much to demonstrate the power of ideas, norms and values in shaping world politics. While talk of the 'power of ideas' has at times carried considerable rhetorical force outside of academic International Relations, such talk within the field has long been dismissed as naïve and even dangerous idealism. Material calculations, such as military power and wealth, have been upheld as the motive forces behind international political action, and ideational factors have been dismissed as mere rationalizations or instrumental guides to strategic action. Through sustained empirical research, constructivists have exposed the explanatory poverty of such materialist scepticism. They have shown how international norms evolve, how ideas and values come to shape political action, how argument and discourse condition outcomes and how identity constitutes agents and agency, all in ways that contradict the expectations of materialist and rationalist theories. While this 'empirical idealism' provides no answers to questions probed by international ethicists, it contributes to more philosophically oriented normative theorizing in two ways: it legitimizes such theorizing by demonstrating the possibility of ideas driven international change; and it assists by clarifying the dynamics and mechanisms of such change, thus furthering the development E. H. Carr's proposed 'realistic utopianism'.

## **Constructivism after 9/11**

Since the turn of the new millennium, debates within constructivism have continued apace, even if their general trajectory has remained largely the same. As noted above, four discontents have characterized

constructivism's evolution: differences over whether constructivists should aspire to a general theory of international relations, over the relationship with rationalism, over questions of method and over the relationship between constructivism and critical theory.

Since 2000, the first of these discontents has dissipated. Neo-realists and rationalists still call for constructivism's codification as a theoretical paradigm, capable of generating testable hypotheses and law-like propositions. But among constructivists, the centre of gravity has moved away from Wendtian-style theorizing, even if Wendt himself has continued to produce innovative and challenging theory (see Wendt 2003). The centre of gravity has move toward, on the one hand, a more eclectic, problem-driven kind of research and, on the other, the critical strand of constructivism that has been there from the outset. This has not, however, produced a strong consensus among constructivists. As the centre of gravity has moved away from general theorizing, the other discontents concerning the relationship with rationalism, questions of method and the critical nature of constructivism have become more pronounced. The tendencies for constructivists in the American mainstream to advocate an analytical division of labour with rationalists, and to deny that constructivism's focus on inter-subjective meanings demands an interpretive methodology, have persisted. But they have also transmuted into a new style of scholarship, one barely recognizable as constructivism. Katzenstein has called for an 'eclectic' form of theorizing, one that starts from concrete empirical puzzles and draws on diverse theories to construct compelling explanations (Katzenstein and Okawara 2001/2; Suh, Katzenstein and Carlsen 2004). Constructivism thus becomes one tool among many in the scholar's toolkit, and methodological conventionalism is taken as the norm. Parallel to these developments, other scholars have sought to retain constructivism's critical edge, largely by pushing its engagement with normative and ethical theory (Kratochwil 2000; Reus-Smit 2000, 2002a; Shapcott 2000a). Constructivism, in their view, should not only be about the politics of ethics, but also the ethics of politics.

A curious feature of these developments has been their relative autonomy from the events of 11 September 2001 and their aftermath. Theoretical developments in International Relations have generally – though not always – responded to catalytic historical events: liberalism got a boost after the First World War, realism emerged ascendant after the crises of the inter-war period and the Second World War and, as we have seen, constructivism's rise had much to do with the end of the Cold War. Yet the terrorist attacks of September 11, which were just as momentous as the fall of the Berlin Wall, have not sparked a tectonic shift in the nature of constructivism, or in the general terrain of

International Relations theorizing. There is a general sense that history has drawn the field back to questions of power, hegemony and the state, and some have concluded that this advantages realist forms of thinking. We are yet to see, however, significant theoretical innovations from realists, constructivists, or others.

In many respects, the paucity of an innovative constructivist response to the post-9/11 world is surprising, as many of the big and important questions now facing the international community (and which pose ample scholarly challenges) play to constructivism's strengths. Three of these deserve particular attention: the nature of power, the relationship between international and world society and the role of culture in world politics.

Discussions of power in international relations have traditionally been seen as the preserve of realists. 'Absolute power', 'relative power', 'structural power' and 'the balance of power' are all realist conceptions, as are notions of 'the struggle for power' and 'hegemonic stability'. Yet, as Wendt persuasively argues, the 'proposition that the nature of international politics is shaped by power relations ... cannot be a *uniquely* Realist claim.' (1999: 96–7). What is uniquely realist is the 'hypothesis that the effects of power are constituted primarily by brute material forces' (1999: 97). Recent events, however, cast doubt over this hypothesis. The United States presently enjoys a greater degree of material preponderance than perhaps any other state in history, yet across a wide spectrum of issue areas it is struggling to translate that material advantage into sustained political influence or intended (as opposed to unintended) political outcomes. Power, it seems, is also constituted by non-material factors, most notably legitimacy and legitimacy is in turn conditioned by established or emergent norms of rightful agency and action. The debate in the Security Council over war with Iraq highlighted this complex interplay between institutional norms and processes, the politics of international legitimacy and the power of the United States. Washington commanded the material resources to oust Saddam Hussein from power, but without Security Council endorsement it has struggled to shake off an aura of illegitimacy and illegality, seriously undermining its capacity to socialize the costs of the occupation and reconstruction. The unilateralist turn in American foreign policy, the 'war against terrorism' and the advent of 'preventive' war against rogue states has prompted a number of constructivists to articulate a social conception of power that accommodates the complex relationship between norms, legitimacy and hegemonic power, yet this remains lightly ploughed terrain (Ikenberry 2000; Cronin 2001; Barnett and Duvall 2004; Reus-Smit 2004a). Relevant here is the growing body of constructivist work on international law, an institution intimately related to the politics of

norms, legitimacy and power (Brunnee and Toope 2000; Finnemore and Toope 2001; Reus-Smit 2004b).

It is common to distinguish conceptually between an 'international society' and a 'world society', the former being the 'club of states', with its norms and institutions of coexistence and cooperation, the latter being the broader web of social relations that enmesh states, NGOs, international organizations and other global social actors (Bull 1977). Without denying the continued relevance of the system of sovereign states, constructivists have done much to show how international society and its institutions have been shaped by actors within the wider world society. Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998) have demonstrated the ways in which NGOs operating within states, in association with international NGOs, have mobilized human rights norms to constrain the domestic exercise of state power. More recently, Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore (2004) have shown how international organizations – created by states for state purposes – can gain degrees of autonomy that enable them to condition the terrain of international state action. Important as these insights are, constructivists have yet to see their relevance for understanding the normative politics of transnational terrorism. Like many humanitarian NGOs, transnational terrorist organizations operate in the social space transcending state borders and, like these NGOs, groups such as Al-Qaeda use forms of moral suasion and symbolic politics to redefine the terms of political discourse affecting state interests and actions. The novelty and magnitude of the violence they unleash often blinds us to the fact that they are ultimately seeking to transform ideas and values, both those of the 'West' and those of politically disaffected and economically alienated Moslems. Constructivists have taken two steps in the right direction by considering the way in which world society forces constitute the political fabric of international society, and by highlighting the politics of values that attends this process of constitution. Their task now is to confront three questions: What is the relationship between the exercise of violence and the erosion and propagation of social and political values, both by states and non-state actors? How has this constituted international society historically? And what are the implications of this nexus between violence and normative changes for international and global order?

The study of culture and international relations is closely identified with constructivism, an association reinforced by book titles such as 'Cultural Realism' and 'The Culture of National Security'. By 'culture', however, constructivists generally mean social and legal norms and the ways in which these are deployed, though argument and communication, to constitute actors' identities and interests. Methodologically, this generally involves the identification of a particular norm, or set of norms,

and the tracing of its effect on political action. Culture, understood more holistically as the broader framework of inter-subjective meanings and practices that give a society a distinctive character, has been largely neglected. The events of September 11 have, however, thrust culture, in this more expansive sense, on to the international agenda, creating an opening and an obligation for constructivists. Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis has gained a new lease of life, with commentators, from diverse quarters, no longer inhibited in attributing essentialist characteristics to 'The West' and 'Islam'. Few now deny that culture is important in world politics, but the overwhelming tendency is to naturalize and reify culture, carving ethically and racially defined lines across the globe. The need for a constructivist voice here is crucial, as constructivists think culture matters but that it is inherently socially constructed, not rooted in blood and soil. Research is needed into how ideas of 'The West' and 'Islam', as radically different transnational communities, have been constituted, on how these ideas are related to the constitution, or erosion, of state power and on how these ideas can be mobilized to sustain system-transforming political projects, either on the part of liberal democracies, seeking to redefine the norms of sovereignty and global governance, or terrorist organizations seeking an end to the liberal capitalist world order.

## **Conclusion**

The rise of constructivism has heralded a return to a more sociological, historical and practice oriented form of International Relations scholarship. Where rationalists had reduced the social to strategic interaction, denied the historical by positing disembedded, universal forms of rationality and reduced the practical art of politics to utility maximizing calculation, constructivists have re-imagined the social as a constitutive domain, reintroduced history as realm of empirical inquiry and emphasized the variability of political practice. In many respects, constructivism embodies characteristics normally associated with the 'English School', discussed by Linklater in Chapter 4 in this volume. Constructivists have taken up the idea that states form more than a system, that they form a society and they have pushed this idea to new levels of theoretical and conceptual sophistication. Their interest in international history also represents an important point of convergence with the English School, as does their stress on the cultural distinctiveness of different societies of states. Finally, their initial emphasis on interpretive methods of analysis echoes Hedley Bull's call for a classical approach, 'characterized above all by explicit reliance upon the exercise of judgement' rather

than neo-positivist standards of 'verification and proof' (1969, 1995: 20–38).

These similarities, as well as constructivism's roots in critical international theory, appeared to pose a challenge to conventional understandings of the field. An 'Atlantic divide' has long structured understandings of the sociology of International Relations as a discipline, with the field seen as divided between North American 'scientists' and European (mainly British) 'classicists'. Two of the defining 'great debates' of the discipline – between realists and idealists and positivists and traditionalists – have been mapped onto this divide, lending intellectual divisions a cultural overtone. At first glance, constructivism appears to confuse this way of ordering the discipline. Despite having taken up many of the intellectual commitments normally associated with the English School, constructivism has its origins in the United States. Its principal exponents were either educated in or currently teach in the leading American universities, and their pioneering work has been published in the premier journals and by the leading university presses. The United States also spawned much of the earlier wave of critical international theory, especially of a postmodern variety, but that work never achieved the same centrality within the American sector of the discipline. One of the reasons for constructivism's success in the United States has been its emphasis on empirically informed theorizing over meta-theoretical critique, an orientation much less confronting to the mainstream. With success, however, has come normalization, and this has seen the neglectful forgetting, or active jettisoning, of theoretical commitments that were central to constructivism in the early years. Disappearing, in the American discipline, are the foundational ideas that constructivism rests on a social ontology radically different from rationalism's, that studying norms, as social facts, demands an interpretive methodology, and that constructivism was linked, in important ways, to the emancipatory project of critical theory. The continued importance of these commitments to non-American constructivism suggests that a new manifestation of the 'Atlantic divide' may now be emerging.