The Influence of the Cloud: Ideas as the Motivation for International Action

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Abstract

This paper discusses the role of ideas in international relations theory and practice. IR has often been delineated by the research perspective taken, realist, liberal or constructivist. While each of these tries to differentiate itself from the other by examining specific aspects and influences on the international milieu, they are united by the sharing and acceptance of ideas.

While technology today discusses the "cloud" as a means of accessing and sharing data through the internet, history and current events have demonstrated that the sharing and accessing of ideas which reside in a "cloud" is not new. In fact, international relations, regardless of the perspective, have been based on actions that matured in the "cloud". The ideas which are shared in the cloud are not relegated to a specific civilization, culture or identity. Nor are they only attached to the systemic, state, or man levels of research. Sharing these ideas is not dependent upon the distribution of material power on any level.

The ebb and flow of history does not revolve around the material power of states. Nor is it solely the purview of institutions. And it is not based entirely on identity and anarchy. Instead it is about ideas and how those ideas are translated into actions. From the rise and fall of empires and the crusades through the Renaissance and Reformation, the American and French Revolutions, Socialism, Communism, Fascism, Democracy, the Cold War,

Fundamentalism and many of the revolutions we are experiencing today, ideas have been the motivation for interstate, state and substate groups' formations and interactions.

This cloud of ideas is even more relevant today as technology and education have given the masses greater access and participation in the creation and assertion of the place for ideas in world politics.

This paper argues, admittedly from a neo-classical realist perspective, the existence of the "cloud" as a separate influence on international relations. It suggests that the cloud, rather than being a separate level to research, is part and parcel to all levels and streams of international interaction and thought. It is, essentially, the cloud that allows individual, state and systemic actors to share ideas, gain support for those ideas and garner influence so as to see ideas translate into action.

Understanding the role of ideas in IR allows us to better analyze the ramifications of systemic, subsystemic and national change. By examining the ideas that motivate change it is possible to identify primary conflict lines; the leaders and followers within a conflict; and how these conflicts have led some to protect the status-quo while others seek to revise it at all levels. As the influence of the cloud and the role of ideas in IR is better understood it may have significant impact on strategic planning as well as future research.

Introduction

As a young researcher it is clear to me that I have only touched upon the tip of the iceberg in researching the topic of ideas, power and influence. On the one hand, I have no doubt that most of what I write here is not new, if anything it is a rehashing of the theories and thoughts that have already been gone over with a fine toothed comb. On the other, this essay seeks to examine the role of ideas as motivation for international action. In so doing, it argues a re-evaluation of the basis for power and proposes a balance-of-ideas approach that seeks to incorporate all the predominant theoretical paradigms.

As a result, this paper challenges theoreticians and researchers of politics (both domestic and international) to rethink how they analyze and address the topics of their field. The use of a neo-classical realist approach seemed the most logical, since it allows for the synthesis of realist and other theoretical paradigms. This allowed for the formation of a unifying paradigm that address the perspectives of the predominant frameworks - which are either too rigid in their form and structure or to undefinable to act as the guide for this work.

The study of international relations (IR) has often been delineated by the perspective of the researcher. As a result, three predominant theoretical models have coalesced. Each of these models is based on the primacy of a fundamental concept. For realism, power and the resulting influence have been used to explain international action. For neo-liberalism, institutions and the resulting domestic politics (as well as international politics resulting from institutions) have been used to examine international action. For constructivism, culture and identity and other social constructs explain international action. **The flaw in this division is the failure to**

recognize that these three streams of thought are intertwined and mutually supportive of each other.

The glue holding these theoretical paradigms together seems to be the influence of "ideas" on international interaction. Historically, ideas have played an integral role in accumulating power, the creation of institutions and the formation of cultures and identities with the resulting international action. While continuing the work of Brian Rathbun, who raised many questions about the role of ideas and whether they are proprietary to any one paradigm, this paper also reopens the debate about the link between ideas, power and interests. [1] In so doing, I will attempt to show that John Kurt Jacobsen's suggestion that ideas are only the "hook" for material interests and are only important as supplemental, intervening variables to "interest-based, rational actor models" is incorrect and that these models are, in actuality, one of the ways ideas should be examined as the underlying variable. [2] Furthermore, this essay will try to expand upon Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* thesis and demonstrate that it is not only civilizations that are clashing, but the ideas behind those civilizations that are leading to conflicts. [3] This also continues the work of Neil Bradford who stated that

> *in any policy sector certain ideas cohere as frameworks modeling the field of strategic action for decisionmakers. These integrative conceptions specify what is wrong, what can be done, and what technical and political instrumentalities are available to sustain or adapt policies. Such idea systems constitute a policy discourse structuring thought and action over time in particular areas. Policy discourses are neither invented by the state nor dictated by social forces.* [4]

So, this work continues to addresses the renaissance of ideation with the hope that more theoreticians will jump into the fray and help contend with the role of ideas in IR theory and practice.

The basic argument presented here is that international politics[*] are the continued sharing and conflict of ideas that develop in an nonmaterial "cloud". As an idea becomes more prominent within the cloud it gains in non-materialistic power. This nonmaterial power leads to the creation of institutions, cultures and identities, and potentially states and civilizations – thus acquiring material power. At the same time, these institutions, cultures and identities, states and civilizations further the prominence of the idea within the cloud, leading to greater material and nonmaterial power and influence.

The term "cloud" is often considered to be a synonym for the Internet or the World Wide Web. The term is used to describe the move away from home-based computing to Internet-based computing, be it the software used, the platform (Microsoft, Linux, Apache etc.) or the infrastructure (hardware).[5] For this work, the cloud does not focus on the Internet-based software inherent to social networking (like Facebook, Twitter or Google+) but rather demonstrates that, while technology has made access simpler, quicker and easier, the cloud of ideas and interactions resulting from those ideas are not limited to the modern era.

So, what role do ideas play in international action and how do these ideas influence each of the theoretical frameworks? Is it possible to suggest that ideas are the primary variable? If so, what are the ramifications of the cloud in future IR research?

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[*] I began this work limiting myself to the influence of ideas on international actions. As time progressed, however, I realized that this examination was impossible without discussing the realm of the political as a whole. As Hans Morgenthau notes, "the essence of international politics is identical with its domestic counterpart…modified only by the different conditions under which this struggle takes place in the domestic and the international spheres." (Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (Knopf, 1967), 32.) Since this work seeks to address the "essence" of international politics, it must, consequently touch upon the domestic as well. As such, while this paper concentrates on international interaction it cannot escape discussing the influence of ideas on the domestic as well.

This analysis of the role of ideas in international action uses a neoclassical realist approach. Neoclassical realism is really abstract value realism, while neorealism is structural and realism is material. Abstract value means that it uses ideas, though ideas are often considered to be the purview of the constructivist and sometimes that of the neo-liberal, to examine power in international politics. I begin with a philosophical debate in search of the elusive definition for power. In so doing I demonstrate that ideas are the basis for power in politics and that all the existing theoretical paradigms examine this as their primary variable. Finally I present a basic model for idea maturation and demonstrate how idea's primary interest is the search for more power while seeking to maintain its present status. This will address how conflicts are, essentially, the points of contact between different ideas.

Lastly I examine several real-world examples of idea maturation and their effect on international interaction. Thus, the concept presented here seeks to demonstrate that ideas are the underlying variable for understanding international politics regardless of the theoretical framework used. While the empirical examples bolster the model presented, they do not represent in-depth research into ideational influences for each. Rather, the examples demonstrate the functional use of ideas as an underlying variable regardless of the theoretical perspective undertaken.

Realism and Ideation

The subject at hand being International Relations, the case can be made that one might logically assume all international interactions entail some form of social interaction. Robert Dahl has argued that without a relationship – a positive, negative, confrontational, friendly, or

other form of social construct – relations do not exists.[6] The only way for a non-relational system to exist is if everyone, at every level of interaction, is an isolationist or so geographically (and socially) removed from each other that they have no contact.[7]

As such, it could be suggested that when realists research international politics from a balance-of-power, balance-of-threat or balance-of-interest perspective they are examining the relational construct between two or more bases of power and how that power differential affects international action.[8] When analyzing from a neo-liberal perspective one examines the relational construct between institutional interest groups. The constructivist seeks to explain the relational construct from a social interaction angle. Thus each research method examines a different perspective on a social construct – a relationship – and its influence on international politics.

While this seems to suggest that all IR research paradigms are principally constructivist, the argument made here is that these relations, and the interactions studied in IR research, are the interplay of ideas. And that ideas are power in the purest sense of the word. Not ideas have power. Ideas are, in and of themselves, power in politics. Consequently, the research paradigms are not constructivist but realist at their core.

No Monopoly on Ideas

A constructivist perspectives in the application of theory is, however, generally assumed when discussing the role of ideas in IR. This is inherently problematic. Ideas are not the sole purview of the constructivist paradigm.[9]

It is constructivist frameworks, however, that uses ideational outputs for the analysis of foreign policy and interstate interaction. In essence, the constructivist paradigm seeks to explain why countries do what they do from a social construct perspective. When constructivists address the issue of state interaction they examine norms, morals, identity, culture and other social constructs as the ideational outputs to explain international politics.[10] In contrast, the neo-liberal perspective seeks an institutional variable to determine or explain states' actions. It looks to the supra and sub-state institutions, interest groups, and domestic politics to explain the impetus for state interaction in the international arena. [11]

Some researchers have argued that realists must accept this partitioning and any research that crosses into ideational and institutional explanations is no longer realist.[12] This division, however, is inherently problematic because it seeks to appropriate the use of an analytic tool while disregarding the means by which it is used. Brian Rathbun argues that the use of these tools by neo-realists and neoclassical realists are not *post hoc* attempts to cover up outcomes that fail to meet theoretical expectations. Instead, he suggests that they are used to demonstrate how states respond when policymakers fail to act as the system demands. [13]

If we accept this argument then realists (classical, neo, and neoclassical) are not only permitted to use these analytic tools, but it is incumbent upon them to do so. For neo-realists, this allows them to demonstrate how ideational and institutional outputs have interfered in systemic influences on state interaction. For neoclassical realists, domestic politics and ideation should be used to examine the accumulation of power through self-help and the resulting changes in interests.[14]

This argument for the use of ideational outputs in demonstrating paradigm validity is, however, not enough. Constructivists, like Alexander Wendt, also seek a monopoly on ideational inputs.[15] While ideational outputs – like norms, morals, identity and institutions– can be used by realists, but are the purview of constructivists and neo-liberals, ideational inputs do not belong to any specific theoretic framework. For instance, Wendt's suggestion that Stephen Walt's balance-of-threat theory was a ideational at its core, since it was not systemically focused but rather social because it included "perception" as an inherent variable of the neorealist analytic framework, was correct.[16] **Similar arguments can be made for Waltz's balance-of-power theory and Randall Schweller's balance-of-interest theory. 17 It can also be made for neo-liberal institutional theories.** Thus, while Wendt was correct in identifying the ideational construct in Walt's work (namely perception), he was incorrect in his assumption that ideational inputs, ideas (i.e. perception or interests) , are solely constructivist. On the contrary, ideation inputs are not only the basis for constructivist research, but the basis for realist and liberal theoretic frameworks as well.[DAL1]

Relations – The Expression of Power

While the above argument raises questions about the constructivist claim to ideational inputs, it does nothing to respond to Wendt and others' argument that a social construct – relations – seems to be the basis for international politics.[18] Essentially, every paradigm is based on a central theme and examines relations through the lens of that theme. Looking from the social construct perspective these themes are all relations-based and therefore constructivist.[19] For realists the theme is power relations, for neo-liberals it is institutional relations and for constructivists it is ideational output relations. While this appears to contradict the argument

being made here, it actually allows for the demonstration that ideation, and the relational construct that derives from it, are universal and are universally researched.

If we accept that politics is, by definition, relational, then we need look no further than Hans Morgenthau to realize that the realist perspective on political (as opposed to military) power refers to "mutual relations of control among holders of public authority, and between the latter and the people at large."20 While this argument is suggestive of Max Weber or Robert Dahl's "relations" – expressed in terms of power wielder/power receiver – Morgenthau and others, like Michael Foucault, argue that power is not wielded but is expressed as relations, with power functioning at every level and type of interaction.21 Steven Lukes furthers this argument by noting that all social interaction involves power because ideas are the basis for language and action.22 In other words, relations are the expression of power at, and between, the systemic, state and man levels of interaction.23 This argument for relations as expressions of power is further demarcated by Morgenthau's suggestion that power is the interest of the political sphere and that since "politics, as an autonomous sphere, has no intrinsic object of interest; it is literally lacking in any concrete 'interest' except the pursuit of power."[24] Thus, in politics, power is expressed through relations in which the interest is the pursuit of more power.

This argument for politics as an autonomous relational sphere, in which power is the only interest, is reminiscent of Friedrich Nietzsche. Both Nietzsche and Morgenthau argue for a force whose interest is non-materialistic, intangible power.[25] As Morgenthau notes, power is not defined by material form alone. While material power may be part of a relationship, and

pursuit of material interests may be part of the motivation for action, they are not power itself.[26] Neither is power garnered solely to promote interests – an instrumentalist take on power.[27] Furthermore, Nietzsche suggests that force will tend towards a constant increase in power and that relation is inherent to force.[28] As such, both note that every force and sphere will try to expand until modulated through relations with others.[29]

This seems to imply that every sphere has an interest and that the interest of every force in the sphere will always be to expand within the sphere. For instance, material wealth is the primary interest of economics and within this sphere power is determine by the value of material wealth possessed. Forces in this sphere understand power through the accumulation of material wealth and will thus seek to accumulate material wealth at the expense of other forces. Furthermore, the economic sphere will seek to accumulate power (material wealth) at the expense of other spheres. **In other words, politics – as a force and sphere – will try to expand its power, while the sphere's relations and relations within the sphere will determine the limits of power and the ability to express that power as interests through relations**.[30] Thus, one could argue that constructivist claims to relations is nothing less than the realist argument for expressing power. However, it is not enough to demonstrate that relations are expressions of power. The relations between and within each sphere are important if we are to understand two things: how these spheres form and, consequently, how ideas are power.

A Balance of Ideas

In order to address the topics of sphere formation and ideas as power, I first need to explain the "cloud of ideas" and its influence on international actions. The cloud is, essentially, the realm in which ideas are shared, gain prominence and conflict.

Ideas in the Cloud

Using the term "ideas" is, however, problematic in and of itself. For this work "ideas" should not be associated with the Kantian, and consequently Wilsonian, *ideals* that are consistently pursued but, by definition, may not be attainable.[31] Nor are they the Platonic "forms" or Descartes' understanding of knowledge as any idea that seems clear in the head.[32]

Without entering a philosophical debate about ideas and knowledge, "ideas" can be either *a priori* or experiential. **Ideas are, essentially, the mental fruit of cogitation, perception or a combination of these. This derives from David Hume's Fork, which suggests that that sound ideas derive from "the faculty of the understanding – or reason" and that "there are two types: (1) involving relations of ideas; or (2) involving matters of fact."[33] Relations of ideas (or relation between ideas) are "discoverable by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe'" while matters of fact are impressions that derive from objects or circumstances that have physical existence.**[34]

As such, in the context of this work, and especially relating to "the cloud," ideas can be based on either experience or imagination, but must be grounded in some form of reasoning. They cannot be simple ideas of fancy. This does not, however, negate Wilsonian ideals as a basis for

ideas, since these too can be explained and expressed through reason and operations of thought. **Thus, while many people associate the cloud with modern technology, the cloud has actually existed from the moment one person shared an idea with another. Modern technology has simply made it easier to share and express ideas in the public forum and loan support to ideas that already exist.**

This cloud, then, is more than Nietzsche's force or Morgenthau's sphere of the political. According to Michael Williams, Morgenthau's perspective on the struggle for power – expressed through the internal relations within the sphere of politics – is "the struggle over foundational principles, values and so on."[35] **While this sphere of politics is the continued expression of some relations in the cloud, it is not the cloud itself. The cloud is the domain of cerebration, where ideas meet, are shared and determine the interests and boundaries of each sphere. Within the cloud ideas interact, consequently creating spheres of interest that relate with each other. As a result, ideational outputs, institutions, interest groups and material power can coalesce.**

Interestingly, while the example above seems to point to the individual as the sole actor in the cloud of ideas, the cloud is not constrained to any level of analysis. In fact, it is through the cloud that individuals are able to share, support and contradict ideas with systemic and state actors and vice versa. It is exactly these relations within the cloud that express the power of an idea. Thus, while introduction of an idea to the cloud requires an ideational originator, ideas within the cloud may be supported by state or international actors.

Contrary to Huntington's suggestion of geographic limitations for civilizations, ideas in the cloud are not delineated by a geographic region but rather on its ability to spread.[36] This has, thanks to technological breakthroughs, become much easier in modern times, but the spread of ideas is not a modern phenomenon. **People have been sharing ideas beyond their geographic location for quite some time. Ideas have been shared and progressed through maturation despite geographic, civilizational, cultural and national divides**.

This supports Morgenthau suggestion that ideas have power, though they do not have enough power to prevail on their own.[37] "[The idea] must…possess viable social foundations and be supported by competing interests."[38] **In other words, while the original idea has inherent power, its power expands or is constrained by the expression of that power and the ideational relations that derive from that. Once it is presented to the cloud, that idea seeks predominance through relations. This is reminiscent of Antonio Gramsci's discourse on the need to struggle against the dominant ideas to advance a "new hegemony" of ideas**.[39] Thus, the cloud is where ideas are shared, form spheres of interests, compete with other spheres and begin their struggle for prominence. It is where ideas support each other or conflict or ignore each other as irrelevant.

The cloud, then, is the international equivalent to John Locke's perspective on inner reflection – which "provides a clear and distinct idea of active power."[40] Like the influence of the mind upon the human body, this cloud of ideas is the "mind" of individual, national and international action. As an idea matures within the cloud, resources make actualization of the idea possible.

Thus, ideas gain material power (body) through available resources, institutions and ideational outputs. International action, then, results when an idea is powerful enough within the cloud and materially, through its institutions and through its ideational outputs to contend with established ideas and their material capabilities. Within the cloud this conflict can lead to an exchange of ideas resulting in changes to the material, institutional and ideational foundations upon which a group, state, or systemic actor is based. Additionally, if the hegemonic ideas resist or seek to constrain an idea that is both immaterially and materially powerful, actors may suffer a conflict that moves from the immaterial to the materialistic…resulting in conflicts like revolution or war. **If all the ideas within the cloud were to find their ideational limits – and consequently material, institutional and social limits – then a status-quo should exist until revision is attempted. Fortunately, ideational inputs continually flow into the cloud thus limiting the potential for stagnation…the cloud is anarchic and always in flux as new ideas are presented**.

The Constant Struggle

These new ideas constantly push in search of more power. At the same time, these same ideas seek to maintain the power base they have.[41] This is true for all ideas in the cloud including the hegemon in each sphere of influence. The hegemonic idea, however, does not only push in the sphere for greater influence or to maintain its power, but will guide the entire sphere's outward push against other spheres.

Ideational inputs lead to informal hierarchy which leads to ideational structures and formality. The end result is the ideational hegemony of the mind. But the ideas are all in the

mind. What then is a sphere of ideas? It defines personal, institutional and systemic ideational identity . It creates ideational institutions through relations. There is no physical presence needed, though the potential exists/is greater the more powerful the idea.

Thus, inter-spherical relations are the play of power that define foundational principles for formal and informal groups, states, cultures, societies, identities, beliefs and civilizations . As these sphere interact they influence each other, with the limits of that influence directly proportional to their power. Thus, if one were to examine the cloud systemically one would find individual ideations seeking or creating forces or groups that then combine with the spheres of forces intimately influencing each other while seeking to influence other spheres or groups. These groups will continually try to expand until there is one group with each sphere. At the same time new ideas and spheres are constantly pushing upward and grouping together, thus limiting the possibility of absolute ideational hegemony in the cloud.[42]

Thus, while powerful ideas counter powerful ideas, they also come into contact with weaker ideas. The cloud is, therefore, the realm in which man, state and system interact and influence each other. Each idea within the cloud, from the most insignificant to the grandest, has the potential to spread in the cloud and mature to actualization and hegemony.

Maturation in the Cloud

The examination of ideational input's development and influence leaves one open to some of the greater philosophical debates – what comes first cogitation, perception or action and what separates humans from animals.[43] By necessity, I forgo these debates to concentrate on how

ideas develop in the cloud, how they influence the creation of spheres, how those spheres coalesce, how they interact as a group, and how they balance against each other.

The maturation process of ideas within the cloud are not time limited. Nor are they bounded by scope. Thus the maturation process for some may be extremely quick while others may take time. Some may remain at the individual level while other seeks to influence national or international actions. Regardless of the scope or time, however, every idea within the cloud goes through 4 stages of gestation: zygote, embryonic, fetal and postpartum.

Rather than explaining the process and its connection to international relations separately, we will be looking at the gestation of ideas leading to international interactions. At the same time we will touch on how the stages of gestation might relate to a Waltz levels of man, state and system, and how the ideas on each level interact with each other and with ideas at other levels.[44]

Having said that, it is important to understand why this analysis begins at the individual level and not the systemic or state levels. While we could begin this study at the systemic or state levels – examining how relations between systemic actors express ideas as political power and how these ideas are put into practice – that has the potential to revert to an examination of policy development and actualization rather than the influence of the cloud or ideas.

Furthermore, while this study begins at the individual level, we must remember that when discussing political power we are addressing the mutual relations between "holders of public authority" as well as between public representatives and the people.[45] As such, even

Morgenthau recognized that the systemic and state levels include individuals and that it is through these relations between individuals that power is expressed.

Individual Ideation

Ideas, then, are expressed through the relations. These relations, however, must have a starting point. Locke notes that most actions are a result of external pressures but that "barely by willing it, barely by a thought of the mind, we can move the parts of our bodies, which were before at rest."[46] Thus, the internal reflections of man, the "relations of ideas," can lead to actions of the body. The mind, then, is analogous to the cloud of ideas. In sharing an idea, a person removes the idea from internal reflection and presents it – orally, visually or through some perception – to other people. These actions, then, are the first examples of the influence of ideational inputs on material resources.

At this stage the idea is incapable of independent international interaction. It can, however, seek to influence state and international interaction through individual action. While the potential exists for a "lone wolf" idea to seek influence of national and international interaction through actions resulting from internal reflection, the possibility for a unitary actor with *no* ideational inputs – a tabula rasa – is highly unlikely. It is difficult for this type of ideational input to influence much beyond the individual actor and generally does not develop to influence the state or systemic levels. Furthermore, if the action is the result of earlier ideational relations, then it is ideationally dependent.

An examples can shed light on this. Theodore Kaczynski (the Unabomber) attempted to stop what he perceived as the threat of the "techno-industrial system" by conducting a 20 year long

mail-bombing campaign.[47] While the Unabomber acted as a "lone wolf," his ideational basis

was not unitary. His manifesto was reminiscent of works by Jaques Ellul,[48] Lewis Mumford, Neil

Postman, Paul Goodman and Eric Hoffer.[49] Thus, despite his claims for unitary action resulting

from personal experiences with "machines ripping up the woods and so forth," the ideational

basis for this actions were grounded in other's work.[50] As Kaczynski noted about Ellul's

work…"this guy is saying things I have been wanting to say all along."[51] So we find that even this

apparently unitary actor was influenced by previous ideational inputs. Kaczynski's actions, then,

are attempts to influence national and international actions resulting from ideational relations.

Through sharing, ideas come in contact with each other. When this happens the outcomes

can be positive, negative, negotiated, neutral or adopted. Positive contact leads to mutual

reinforcement; negative potentially leads to conflict; negotiated outcomes result in the

refinement of the idea; neutral responses result from the lack of interaction because the

ideas have nothing to do with each other; and adopted contacts lead to an idea being

appropriated to the ends of another idea. It is through these relations that ideational

structures form, creating ideational hierarchy in each sphere. This is true whether the idea

leads to individual, state or systemic actions.

The Zygote Stage

The first phase in idea maturation is the zygote stage. There is no structure to the idea at the

zygote stage, nothing beyond the give and take relations between ideas. It is at this stage that

ideas seek out other ideas with similar interests within the cloud. At this stage new ideas are

connected with old ones. All this leading to any of the potential outcomes above. At this stage,

ideas balance against each other, constantly adopting, adapting or supporting some ideas while resisting pressure from and ignoring other ideas. These relations are the expression of each ideas power within the cloud. These ideational relations manifest themselves as interpersonal relations. One might argue, though this is not the place for it, that these relations are, in many ways, the basis for human interaction.

These ideas are, by their nature, intimately connected to the actors who share them. As these unitary actors share ideas they lend tentative support to them. As these ideas come in contact, the outcome of those interactions can lead to either the expansion or limitation of the idea. As more actors share the idea, more relations are formed. These informal relations are expressions of the ideas. At this point it is may be difficult to qualify or quantify the potential or existence of material power, institutional capabilities or social constructs. This is because ideas at this stage are not powerful enough to manifest themselves materially, institutionally nor as a discernible independent construct in the international system.

That is because it is at the zygote stage that everyone, from holders of public authority to unknown individuals, present ideas to the cloud and start a maturation process. Both the President of the United States of America and John Doe can be ideational originators. While the President, as a holder of public authority, may have the ability to address his idea to a greater audience with less difficulty, the idea must still go through the entire maturation process. That is because if the President does not share the idea he can only use the resources at his *personal* disposal to bring the idea to fruition. The moment the President shares the idea – with his wife, family, cabinet, advisors or the general public – the ideational relations between the President

and his audience are, if momentarily, at the zygote stage. If the President's idea contradicts his mandate or runs counter to ideas held by his audience – from spouse to the world – then there is a greater likelihood for a negative outcome and conflict. This is true for the ideas which put him into office, the foundational ideas upon which the state rests and the ideational basis for international relations. Interestingly, the same can be said for John Doe. While he may not be able to attract the same size audience for his ideational relations within the cloud, he has the ability to spread his idea through bilateral relations that will have the same potential for maturation to international interaction as the President's ideas.

One problem with the zygote stage is that it is sometimes very difficult to identify the different ideas and their relations. Ideas are delicate at this stage in their maturation. Their weakness lies in their lack of ideational structure and physical presence. As a result, ideas that fail to mature beyond this stage are sometime nigh on impossible to identify, especially since history is written by the victors.[52]

The Embryonic Stage

The move from the zygote to embryonic stage is dependent on the formation of an ideational force with a unique interest. Ideational forces in the cloud seek other forces with similar interests. These forces establish relations that determine outcomes that either add to, detract from or do not influence each force's power. This balancing establishes informal hierarchies that are in flux.

So depending on their ideational power, these informal hierarchies may begin expression as informal institutions, values, morals, identities, norms or beliefs with tentative material

resources. **It is at the embryonic stage that the potential manifestation of the idea in the material world becomes possible, thus possibly influencing the further maturation of the idea within the cloud**[DAL2].[53] Thus, ideas have reached a point that their relations may have moved beyond the cloud to include physical manifestation. Consequently, it may be possible to identify actors associated with an idea at any level of analysis.

This ability to manifest an idea is dependent upon the material, institutional and social resources available to each actor and how much of those resources the actors are using to bring the idea to maturation. In other words, if the actors associated with an idea put nothing into it beside the original relations, the idea dies in its infancy. This is true for ideas shared between people, groups, states or any combination thereof. If, on the other hand, actors associated with an idea are willing to put resources towards furthering it then it has the potential to move to the next stage of development.

Two recent events demonstrate how relation outcomes impact this stage of ideational maturation: the Occupy Movement and the Arab Spring. While the ideas behind the Occupy Movement have been unable to develop beyond the embryonic stage of maturation, they have, nonetheless, spread internationally.[54] They are not limited to any civilization, culture, generation or other specific group. Both rich and poor support the Occupy Movement. While this movement has been able to spread, has material resources and has formed informal institutions and social constructs – specifically based on participatory democracy – the ideas behind the movement have been slow to develop an ideational structure. While this may be a result of the need for consensus in their informal institutions, the failure to reach ideation

coalescence has meant that the each idea is not powerful in relation to other forces and, as such, cannot effectively overthrow the pre-existing ideational hegemon.[55] An analysis of the material resources at their disposal might show disparity with other ideational forces as part of the reason for maturation. Examination of the social constructs will probably find schisms between civilization, cultural, moral and other social constructs. But each of these analyses would be examining the same balance of ideas within the cloud.

In the same vein, the Arab Spring has sought the introduction of democracy, economic parity and social change in the Arab world. Here too ideas that coalesced in the cloud found physical expression in many Arab countries including Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Syria and Yemen. Some of these ideas, like those expressed by protesters in Syria, are stuck in the embryonic stage, unable to garner ideational support or formulate ideational structures. As a result they lack material, institutional and social resources necessary for further ideational maturation. This shortage of ideational power is lacking not only within Syria, but also systemically – the ideas behind the Syrian uprising have not found support internationally. Consequently, the ideas being espoused are not able to further mature. Others ideas have been co-opted, like in Egypt, where a military junta took power despite the ideational basis of democratic rule.[56] The ideas behind the Libyan revolution and the National Transitional Council, on the other hand, have matured beyond the embryonic stage with the establishment of an ideational structure based on an interim Constitution Declaration and through international support.[57] Nonetheless, the National Transitional Council and the Military Junta in Egypt still face hierarchical balancing by Islamic and other ideational forces within the states.

The ability of the ideational forces behind the Arab Spring to continue the maturation process, or if it was usurped or dies in adolescence, will depend on the physical resources the people involved invest in furthering their goals of democracy and equality and the support from individual, national or international forces and spheres as well as their physical resources, institutions and social structures.

The Fetal Stage

Though these force hierarchies may be the ideational basis for any number of different social constructs and institutions – from familial to civilizational – this is not the end of the maturation process. That is because the sphere to which each force hierarchy is associated may still have powerful dominant ideas – which generally have historic precedent, institutional presence and material resources at their disposal – and other ideational forces competing with it. These then lead to the further balancing of ideas. The balance here may be asymmetric – one idea in the role of hegemon with other force hierarchies challenging it within the sphere for example – or symmetric with the relations between two ideational hierarchies balancing each other within the sphere while still trying to expand – as might occur in a sphere that is still defining itself or, for instance, after the fall of a hegemonic idea.

One need look no further than the Palestinian Authority (PA) attempt to attain full United Nations membership in 2011 to see a force hierarchy attempt to influence an international ideational sphere while having neither the internal hegemony nor the relations with other hierarchies to achieve maturation. First, the PA was still fighting with the Hamas for ideational hegemony of Palestinian National aspirations. This significantly detracted from its power base

since the ideational forces at play were unable to create a unified hierarchy. Second, even if it could be argued that the PA's idea was at the fetus stage in the process, it was unable to garner enough power in the sphere of the political to overcome the predominant ideational hierarchy regarding Palestinian National aspirations and a negotiated settlement with Israel to push the idea of a Palestinian State to maturation. Interestingly, this may not be apparent in the physical resources, formal and informal institutional structures or social constructs at the PA's disposal. Concurrently, any of these may have been physical expressions of the ideational interactions within the cloud.

The Postpartum Stage

Reaching this stage is the pinnacle of achievement within a sphere. At this point the idea has matured to hegemony in a sphere and uniquely guides that sphere's interactions with other spheres in the cloud. This sphere will still face continual challenges from both internal ideational and inter-sphere relations. These challenges may result in changes to the sphere's ideational basis. At this point, the sphere can manifest as formal institutions and social constructs. These are based on relations between the ideational hierarchies within the sphere.

Ideational Influence on International Relations

Moving away from the theoretical, let us look at the influence of the cloud, and the ideas that seek maturation in the cloud, on international actions while addressing the different analytic perspectives that could be used to examine and explain international actions. As noted above, any actor, from any level of analysis, can support an idea within the cloud. As a new idea is presented in the cloud the existing ideas will try to absorb, influence, or contain it. Through

these relations – which are expressions of the idea's inherent and acquired power – the idea is either able to mature or dies in infancy or adolescence. Rather than continue taking modern examples of this process, I propose to demonstrate this process in IR with a brief examination of the American Revolution and the American Neutrality in the French Revolutionary Wars.

The Rise of Republics – From America to France

If we examine the ideational basis for the American revolution we will find its sources in the ideational principles of liberty, republicanism and equality. This love of liberty was the outcome of England's "period of 'salutary neglect' which encouraged the growth of self-reliance and love of freedom in its subjects overseas."[58] Thus, the authority of the British Empire in the American colonies came into question.

During the political upheavals of the 1760s and 1770s, leaders of the revolutionary movement, articulated "the political philosophy that would eventually lead to separation" from England. [59] The basis for this philosophy began as "no taxation without representation." Thus, the original protest movement, which culminated in the Boston Tea Party, was not about the price of tea, it was about the ideas behind British Parliamentary rights in the colonies.

The ideas of the American Enlightenment had a strong influence on the ideational basis for the American Revolution. Among the ideas were concepts of liberalism, democracy, republicanism, and religious tolerance. The influence of these ideas fostered an intellectual environment leading to an ideational clash with the predominant ideas of English colonial rights.

Thus, ideas of liberty and equality rose against monarchy, tyranny and classes. As each of these ideas was shared amongst the American colonials ideational forces formed. These ideas were spread and began to form an ideational hierarchy through the works like Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" which helped to fuse liberalism and republicanism and other ideas into a hierarchy of ideational forces.[60] Thus, Thomas Paine's work offered Americans an ideational basis against the threat of tyranny.[61]

These ideas were further developed and coalesced through the drafting of the American Declaration of Independence. That document set out the ideational basis for the revolution and clearly delineated the sphere to which these ideas were associated, "When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the *political* bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them…"[62] While this delineated the sphere as the political, it is the next section that defines the ideational hierarchies relating in this sphere, namely the American ideational hierarchy (not a state) of equality, liberty, republicanism, life and the pursuit of happiness versus English despotism and tyranny (a state):

> *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are **Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness**…laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness…But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute **Despotism**, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.--Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their*

*former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, **all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States**. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.*

Thus the American Revolution was the physical expression of the attempt to balance against ideas of despotism and absolute tyranny.

As these ideational hierarchies attempted to expand their power resulting in a negative relation outcome, they also sought out other ideational hierarchies in the realm of the political with whom they could have positive relational outcomes. This is exactly what happened when Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane and Arthur Lee, as representatives of a government that was independent only in name, signed a treaty with representatives of France that established a defensive alliance created to maintain the "liberty, sovereignty and independence absolute and unlimited of the said United States."[63] Thus, the ideational relations between the French ideational hierarchy (which was monarchical) and the American hierarchy (which was republican) had positive outcomes and led to a strengthening of American power in the sphere of the political and the eventual ideational supremacy of the American ideational hierarchy.

An examination of this process shows that ideas which were originally shared through interpersonal relations in the cloud coalesced to form specific ideational forces – liberalism, republicanism, liberty, equality and religious tolerance. Through a process of negotiated balancing these forces established an informal and then formal hierarchy of ideas, with some of these ideas being more powerful motivators for action than others. The contact between this hierarchy and the English monarchical one led to a negative relational outcome and resulted in

ideational conflict through which both tried to expand their power. Thus a powerful ideational hierarchy – namely English monarchical ideas – that held historic precedent was faced with a new ideational hierarchy. In an attempt to maintain its power base the English hierarchy tried to suppress the American ideas. The American ideational hierarchy, however, was able to expand its power both internally through the further spread of ideas and inclusion of other ideational forces and through positive relations with other ideational hierarchies – namely the French ideational hierarchy (happens to be monarchical but also had negative relations with the English hierarchy). These positive outcomes led to a balancing of ideas that established American ideational supremacy in the conflict with the English ideational hierarchy.

Clearly an analysis of this process will show the development of material power, institutional influences, and social constructs. An examination of the American revolution from the realist perspective might examine the balance of material power, the threat perceptions of the actors involved and their interests. Neo-liberal analyses might address the institutions – informal institutions like the Sons of Liberty and formal ones like the colonial assemblies and the Continental Congresses or the British Parliament and the Monarchy – and their influence on the American Revolution. Social constructs, like the Whigs and the Tories, colonial identities, morals, religions might be examined by researchers of the constructivist vein. And yet, they are also each examining the interplay of ideational power in the cloud and its influence on international interactions.

The outcome of these ideational relations was the rise in power of the American ideational hierarchy and a lessening of the British hierarchy's power in the sphere of the political. While

this is interesting in and of itself, this rise in power had significant influence on the American hierarchy and was accompanied by new pressures through both internal and external relations that resulted in changes in ideational hierarchy. The Neutrality decision by America's first President – George Washington – regarding the French Revolutionary Wars can help shed light on this continued influence of ideas on international interaction.

Washington, the French Revolution and the Neutrality Decision:

"By abandoning English constitutionalism and creating a new republic based on the rights of the individual, the North Americans introduced a new force in the world."[64] These ideas quickly spread (as ideas that have "adequate concrete expression" will often do) crossing oceans and finding expression as new ideational hierarchies in the sphere of the political. The outcome of these hierarchies relations represented a "complete reversal of a principle. Until then, a king who ruled by the grace of God had been the center around which everything turned. Now the idea emerged that power should come from below..."[65] The relations between these ideational hierarchies resulted in their physical manifestation (the American Revolutionary War), their spreading through the cloud and eventually the French Revolution.[66]

What is interesting about the French Revolution, however, is not that its force hierarchy was similar to the American one during the American Revolution, but that the American ideational hierarchy's relational outcome with the French hierarchy was neutral despite that supposed similarity. An analysis that compares these two ideational hierarchy's at this point in their relations will show, however, that the American hierarchy was quite dissimilar to that of the French.

While analyses might examine historical precedent, systemic motivations, institutional pressures and complex social relations, they are all examining the power relationship between two ideational hierarchies in the sphere of politics. Neither of these ideational hierarchies has garnered enough power to rise to hegemony in the sphere. From the European perspective, in fact, the hegemonic idea of the sphere of the political at this time was still monarchical rule.

As such, one would think that an ideational hierarchy that expanded its power under the guidance of republican liberal ideas in relations with the monarchical hierarchy would support another ideational hierarchy trying to do the same. And yet, the contrary is true. Ideas constantly seek to expand their power – just as the French hierarchical assistance in the American Revolution also affected the power ratio in the French – English relations. At this point, however, the American hierarchy had moved from a negative relation to a neutral or perhaps even positive one with the English. At the same time, the French hierarchy faced negative relations with several of the powerful ideational hierarchies in the sphere.

  In addition to the ideational struggle between these hierarchies, the hegemonic ideas of the American hierarchy were having negative relations with forces that were gaining power – specifically federalism.[67] Thus the Democrat-Republican forces were losing power in the sphere of the political to the Federalist ideas. Interestingly, and of some significance, is that the Federalist forces were also influenced by, and had a positive ideational relationship with, economic ideational forces, to expand power. This demonstrates that relations in the cloud need not relegated to a specific sphere. Ideas can have relations across spherical boundaries just as they can physical or electronic ones.[68]

The result of the force and hierarchy relations was change in the American ideational hierarchy that was no longer compatible with the French revolutionary ideational hierarchy. As a consequence of these changing ideas the American and British hierarchies were able to find positive relational outcomes and the American and French revolutionary hierarchy's relations were neutral.

Civilizations and Beyond

As the above analyses demonstrate, ideas are not limited to a relations within a specific sphere. They also spread beyond geographic borders. While this does not entirely contradict Huntington's theory of clashing civilizations, it does give us pause to rethink the examination of civilizations.[69]

The examination of civilizational ideation Huntington unknowingly undertakes does much to demonstrate the flow of ideas and their influence on international actions. His suggestions regarding the potential for a unified civilization are correct, though he fails to acknowledge the ideational basis for his argument.[70] In essence, much of Huntington's work is an examination of ideational interactions in the post-Cold War world.

As Huntington noted, however, the state still seems to be the predominant actor in the international arena.[71] As such, it is impossible to ignore the civilizational clashes that states have participated in – and that these are not limited to the post-Cold War era. Thus the only way for a civilization to participate independently in international interactions, and not by proxy of states, is to be a state representing an entire civilization.

What the above arguments seem to suggest is that these civilizational clashes are, at their core, a balancing of ideas. Like the Occupy Movement or the Palestinian National aspirations, these ideational spheres can spread beyond the geographic borders of a state but may not have the ideational power or formal resources, institutions and social constructs to take independent systemic action. That does not, however, eliminate the pressure these ideas have on state actions. Thus, what Huntington has shown is the potential power of an idea that has geographic unity.

Imagine for a moment if everyone who supported the "environmental" movements were living relatively close geographically. As a result of this geographic proximity, there is a higher likelihood that the ideas behind the movement would move from informal to formal ideational structures with a hierarchy. Consequently, the ideas would find expression in the physical institutions, social constructs and use of resources in this region, thus leading to a more unified ideational basis with a greater likelihood of instigating state and international interactions. This does not limit the idea to one state. On the contrary, if the region has multiple states it may be able to better influence the system.

This region is not dissimilar to Huntington's civilizations. While the states in the region may have similar fundamental principles, based on mutually supportive ideas, they may not be the same fundamental principles. Within this civilizational sphere there is a hierarchy of ideas which may be expressed through state and international leadership. There is also a higher likelihood that civilizational spheres will clash with geographically adjacent spheres. This is

because the influence of these ideas on states that are geographically close to the region may be greater than on states distanced from the region.

Nonetheless, and despite Huntington's suggestion to the contrary, civilizations are not the largest possible ideations. Ideas are. It is because of the cloud of ideas that, for instance, a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant woman might be found in a liberal US college wearing a keffiyeh and protesting in support of the Palestinian National Movement. It is why the Occupy movement, the Environmental movement, Human Rights and other ideas have found formal or informal expression internationally, despite civilizational, cultural, societal or national borders. It is why states that are in the midst of a legal, military, social, cultural, religious or political disagreement will nonetheless lend aid in the face of natural disasters – like Israeli aid to Turkish Earthquake victims in October 2011 despite the political friction between the countries.[72]

Furthermore, while Huntington seeks to suggest that modern civilizations are somehow different from historic ones, the cloud of ideas is not limited to the post-Cold War and the rise of internet communication.[73] Newspapers, books, periodicals, manuscripts, letters, word of mouth and other forms have been used to spread ideas throughout history. This is historically why some groups, states, cultures, beliefs, societies, and civilizations have censored ideas running counter to their core forces – when deemed necessary burning books, blocking the internet and even excommunicating, detaining or killing ideational dissenters.

Ideas, then, are the building block of civilizational clashes, just as they are of interstate, domestic and interpersonal ones. How then can a fragmented analysis of these clashes, as

well as the interplay of ideas with positive, neutral, adopted or negotiated outcomes, help to further our understanding of international relations? Point in fact, they cannot.

Towards a Macro-political Paradigm

Up to this point, much of the recent research done in IR has been micro-political. In essence, researchers, using a specific theoretical framework, have sought to explain ideational relations. As a result of paradigmatic flux, researchers have attempted time and again to determine the motivations for international interactions, their limitations and influences on them including material, institutional and societal constructs.

What these paradigms have failed to do is take a macro-political view of domestic and international interaction. **This is, in some ways, what Morgenthau argued in suggesting that interests defined as power "provides the link between reason trying to understand international politics and the facts to be understood. It sets politics as an autonomous sphere of action and understanding apart from other spheres, such as economics (understood in terms of interest defined as wealth), ethics, aesthetics, or religion. Without such a concept a theory of politics, domestic or international, would be altogether impossible, for without it we could not distinguish between political and nonpolitical facts, nor could we bring at least a measure of systematic order to the political sphere.**"[74]

A macro-political analysis, the "research of the political," should begin by defining and examining the sphere relations analyzed (i.e. politics and religion) or the ideational relations within being analyzed (i.e. the ideational hierarchy of US international fiscal policy). It should acknowledge than any research using one specific paradigm is by definition limiting and seek a

multi-paradigmatic approach in examining international relations. It should accept **Morgenthau's argument that "the essence of international politics is identical with its domestic counterpart…modified only by the different conditions under which this struggle takes place in the domestic and the international spheres" and incorporate the domestic in explaining the international – and vice-versa**.[75] In so doing, research of the macro-political may better help explain some of the basic questions of IR?

Conclusions

This essay proposes a rethinking of the use of ideas in the study of IR. In so doing it proposes a balance-of-ideas model as the basis for marco-political examinations of international action. This model allows for the incorporation of the different theoretical paradigms by acknowledging the balance-of-ideas as an underlying influence in IR. This hopefully lays the groundwork for the examination of international interaction from a wider perspective than has been done in the past.

As I noted in the beginning of this paper, I have no doubt that most of what I write here is not new, if anything it is a rehashing of the theories and thoughts that have already been gone over with a fine toothed comb. My hope is that this rehashing will raise the questions necessary to see a move towards a more unified theory of IR. One that acknowledges ideas as power in the sphere of the political and challenges theoreticians and researchers of politics (both domestic and international) to rethink how they analyze and address the topics of their field.

While continuing the work of Brian Rathbun,[76] John Kurt Jacobsen,[77] Samuel Huntington,[78] and Neil Bradford,[79] I have also tried to show that ideas in the cloud are not so different from ideas in the mind. Both may have access to raw resources, but it is only influence of ideas on their resources that can lead to action. In so doing, I have tried to stay true to the neo-classical realist approach that seeks to influence ideational and institutional paradigms in the examination of power in IR.

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