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## ***Stephen Krasner: Subversive Realist***

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*Abstract:*

Stephen D. Krasner is conventionally regarded as a Realist student of international political economy. But he is equally an institutional theorist, who has made major contributions to our understanding of international regimes and sovereignty as well as of the difference between control and authority in world politics. Krasner also shares much common ground with Constructivists, due to his emphasis on the role of ideas and identity. His distinguished work on sovereignty emphasizes these themes. Going further, Krasner is an implicit theorist of social norms, who is more aware than some norms theorists that for norms to be consequential in world politics, the agents promoting them have to be effective. The paper concludes by suggesting that Steve Krasner's insightful perspective on world politics could be usefully focused on the important but under-theorized concept of persuasion. Progress in understanding persuasion is more likely to be made by combining concepts – as Krasner has done in such a distinguished fashion throughout his career – than by using only one perspective, Realist, Institutional, or Constructivist. Indeed, Krasner's work is a refutation of the view that these three approaches to world politics are mutually exclusive.

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Stephen Krasner is conventionally seen as a highly intelligent and articulate defender of an essentially Realist view that emphasizes the role of the state. My argument in this paper, to the contrary, is that Krasner is at most a “subversive Realist.” He has not only flirted with institutionalism and constructivism but has incorporated so many of these perspectives into his own work as to make it problematic to consider him a Realist at all. Further, I argue that Krasner is more a “subversive” than an adherent of any of the “isms.” He has a deeply ironic view of world politics. Beware when he seems to adopt a view, because as sure as night follows day, he will turn around and criticize it!

This paper begins with Krasner’s own self-identification of himself as a Realist, turning his critical and ironic perspective onto his claims about himself. It then puts forward arguments that he really should be seen as an institutionalist (Part II) or a constructivist (Part III), before qualifying these arguments as well. Part IV departs from the approach of the first three sections – interpreting Krasner’s arguments – by exploring a concept that becomes prominent for Krasner only recently: social norms. The final major section of the paper then goes beyond Krasner’s current work by raising issues of persuasion – one of the few major concepts not addressed in his work.

Krasner’s internal self-debate among Realism, institutionalism, and constructivism indicates that we should once and for all dispense with the notion that these views are alternatives. In the hands of a master analysis of world politics such as Steve Krasner, they are instead *complements*. The tensions that emerge between them help us deepen our understanding of social norms, and could perhaps make a similar contribution to our understanding of the role of persuasion in world politics.

## **I. Stephen Krasner as a Realist**

In the conventional view of Krasner, the major accomplishment of his work during the 1970s and 1980s – especially in *Defending the National Interest (DNI)*<sup>2</sup> and *Structural Conflict (SC)*<sup>3</sup> -- was to show (along with Robert Gilpin) that the realist concepts of power and interests are central to understanding not just international security politics but the world political economy. In *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy (SOH)*<sup>4</sup> Krasner extended this argument to broader issues, making new distinctions about one of the oldest concepts of international relations theory, and showing great historical reach in his discussions of Westphalia, minority and human rights, and new statehood, as well as the traditional international political economy topic of sovereign lending.

Krasner himself has lent credibility to this conventional interpretation. He declares in *DNI* (5-6) that one of his two central analytic tasks is to “elaborate a statist or state-centric approach” to the study of foreign policy, and that the second is to defend this approach against interest-group liberalism and Marxism. He argues against liberal-pluralist theories and in favor of a coherent notion of national interest, saying that that the “objectives sought by the state ... can be called appropriately the national interest” (*DNI*: 6-7). In his famous 1976 article, “State Power and the Structure of International Trade,” Krasner forcefully argues, consistent with Realist premises, that openness in the world economy is most likely to occur “during periods when a hegemonic state is in its ascendancy.”<sup>5</sup>

In *Structural Conflict*, Krasner identifies himself with “the realist approach” (p. 26), arguing that “the particular strategies adopted by a given state will be constrained by structural considerations – the distribution of power in the international system as a whole, and the place of a given state in that distribution” (*SC* 28). In that work he emphasizes distributional conflict to account for the strategies used by Third World countries, under the rubric of the “New International Economic Order” in the 1970s, to

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<sup>2</sup> Krasner 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Krasner 1985.

<sup>4</sup> Krasner 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Krasner 1976.

press for authoritative rather than market-oriented international economic regimes. He sees Third World countries as using “meta-power behavior” to change principles, norms and rules in a direction that would make them subject to authoritative state decision (SC 309). He shows considerable interest in the beliefs of Third World elites, but in the end, these beliefs are rooted in *vulnerability*. “The defining characteristic of Third World policies is vulnerability” (SC 343). Since such vulnerability cannot realistically be addressed by the pursuit of wealth for most developing countries (China is mentioned as an exception), the attempt to create authoritative rather than market-oriented regimes is the preferred method for reducing it, and the domestic political uncertainty that it generates (SC 58). Realism’s emphasis on power and vulnerability, in the end, lies at the base of an argument that pays a lot of attention to ideas and beliefs.

Finally, in *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*, Krasner directly takes on constructivist claims about the role of norm-consistent appropriateness in world politics. He says that “the basic contention of this study is that the international system is an environment in which the logics of consequences dominate the logics of appropriateness.”<sup>6</sup> And he famously concludes *SOH* by emphasizing coercion: “In a contested environment in which actors, including the rules of states, embrace different norms, clubs can always be trump.”<sup>7</sup>

Yet despite Krasner’s own language, quoted above, in this paper I argue against this conventional interpretation of his contribution to international relations theory, on the grounds that it seriously undervalues the innovativeness and creativity of what he himself calls a *modified* realist orientation (SC 29; my italics). Indeed, as noted at the outset, my thesis is that Krasner is a *subversive Realist*. He is a Realist since his default position on world politics is that states are the dominant actors in world politics, their actions are best-explained by their material interests, and power is crucial: “clubs are trump.” But he keeps straying from the Realist reservation, exploring the role of multilateral institutions and recognizing with the Constructivists that ideas can play a major role in world politics. Krasner’s

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<sup>6</sup> Krasner 1999: 6.

<sup>7</sup> Krasner 1999: 238.

theoretical eclecticism co-exists with his underlying Realism. He is too curious and imaginative simply to defend standard Realism or neo-Realism against all comers; but too sensitive to the crucial importance of interests and power in world politics to break decisively with the Realist tradition.

## *II. Krasner as Institutional Theorist*

In response to the claim just put forward, one could respond that Realism is such an elastic concept that it may not be meaningful to debate whether Krasner's innovations are compatible with it.<sup>8</sup> I do not want to debate that point because I essentially agree with it. It is more interesting to note how creative Krasner has been in his departures from Realist orthodoxy, such that it is. Let me first consider Krasner's pursuit of themes that I will characterize as institutionalist.

Institutional theory begins with the empirical observation that multilateral institutions, such as the World Trade Organization, the Montreal Protocol regime to control ozone-depleting substances, the International Whaling Commission, the United Nations Security Council, and NATO, play a prominent role in world politics. These forms of institutionalized cooperation are not well-explained by Realist theory. Institutional theory focuses on information and how institutions can improve the informational environment for states, by setting standards, monitoring state behavior, establishing focal points, or providing valid causal information about the impact of behavior on outcomes. Not only do states seek information about others; they may also want reliably to provide information about themselves in order to enhance their credibility. As a result, the theory contends, institutions perform important functions *for states*. Institutionalism does not refute the core of Realist theory but builds on it and modifies it ways that enhance our understanding of international cooperation.<sup>9</sup>

Krasner's early Realism had led him to downgrade the significance of multilateral institutions. But he quickly recognized both the fact of international regimes and the strengths of rationalist-institutionalist explanations for them. His major contributions on this subject are bracketed by two well-

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<sup>8</sup> Legro and Moravcsik 1999.

<sup>9</sup> For the summary argument that this paragraph summarizes, see Keohane and Martin 2003: 80.

known articles in *World Politics*, in 1976 and 1991, with his introduction and conclusion to the famous *International Regimes* volume (1982) and *Structural Conflict* falling in the middle of this period. He returns to these themes, although implicitly, in *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*.

As noted above, Krasner begins his 1976 article with the hypothesis that hegemony will explain openness in the world political economy. But with his typical honesty, by the end of the article he admits that “the whole pattern is out of phase” (p. 341). Indeed, he finds that his prediction is only correct in three of the six periods that he considers. The strength of the paper is not its central thesis – which the author himself effectively disconfirms -- but the bold way in which Krasner views state power as a solution to a salient puzzle: what accounts for variation in the openness of international economic regimes?

Krasner’s conclusion to the volume that he edited on international regimes, published as a special issue of *International Organization* in the spring of 1982 and as a book the following year, represents the point of furthest distance from his Realist roots.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, his conclusion is entitled “Regimes and the Limits of Realism: Regimes as Autonomous Variables.” In this essay Krasner suggests the imagery of tectonic plates rather than billiard balls. One plate can be thought of as the underlying structure of power, the other as “regimes and related behavior and outcomes.” When regimes are constructed, they are consistent with the structure of power, so there is little tension. But pressure builds up. Regimes remain fairly static until there is a sudden shift – an “earthquake.”<sup>11</sup>

The implication of Krasner’s argument is that regimes have a degree of autonomy, which “is derived from lags and feedbacks” (p. 359). Feedbacks are particularly important: “Once regimes are established they may feed back on the basic causal variables that gave rise to them in the first place” (p. 358). As Krasner says, this is a “discomforting line of reasoning” – discomforting, that is, for someone inclined toward Realist assumptions. Feedbacks operate by regimes altering interests, serving as sources

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<sup>10</sup> Krasner 1983, 355-368.

<sup>11</sup> Since Steve Krasner is an Easterner who has lived in California since the mid-1970s, his sensitivity to earthquakes is understandable. Native Californians seem to take them for granted while lifelong Easterners regard them with as little interest as they devote to typhoons and tornadoes. For a similar argument, to Krasner’s but without the tectonic plates analogy, see Keohane and Nye 1977/2001: 126-28.

of power, and altering relative power capabilities of actors. Krasner argues, then, that the causal process assumed by Realism can be *reversed*: institutions could affect the fundamental building-blocks of Realist theory. Even committed institutionalists might have hesitated to go so far.

As we have seen, in *Structural Conflict* Krasner holds that regimes are fundamentally structured by power, and “powerful states can destroy regimes that are antithetical to their interests.” The explicit themes of this book are Realist ones. But even here, Krasner’s Realism is subversively modified. The procedures of international regimes can matter and “established regimes generate inertia if only because of sunk costs and the absence of alternatives.”<sup>12</sup>

In his *World Politics* article of 1991, Krasner relies on Realism to critique institutional theory for not paying sufficient attention to distributional conflict. Even if international institutions can be explained as moving joint policy-making toward the Pareto frontier, he argues, distributional conflict will remain: states struggle about where, on or near the Pareto frontier, outcomes will fall. But in this article, with his usual honesty, Krasner admits that his argument, however close it may seem to Realism, “is not logically inconsistent with the analysis of market failure” that I and others have developed. Institutionalists, he recognizes, explicitly take power structures into account.<sup>13</sup> His quarrel is with the institutionalists’ emphasis, not their logic. He seeks to emphasize not why institutions exist to solve coordination and collaboration problems but why the distributions of benefits from regimes are skewed as they are. One could as well call this “distributionally sensitive institutionalism” as Realism.

In *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*, Krasner engages explicitly with institutionalist theory. His arguments are *explicitly* anti-institutionalist while, in my view, *implicitly* accepting institutionalist themes. Explicitly, Krasner generates a typology of institutional theory, classifying various schools of thought based on their assumptions about institutionalization and durability.<sup>14</sup> He then argues that none of the institutionalist arguments, assuming high levels of institutionalization, explains well the actual practice of sovereignty. He also, however, rejects the classical Realist anarchy model (low durability and

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<sup>12</sup> Both quotes are from Krasner 1999: 29.

<sup>13</sup> Krasner 1991: 360-61.

<sup>14</sup> Krasner 1999: Figure 2.1, p. 58.

institutionalization) in favor of a view that sees sovereignty norms as durable but not highly institutionalized, much less taken for granted. Krasner's "organized hypocrisy" combines durable cognitive scripts with low institutionalization. Looking ahead to Part III of this paper, it seems to bow more to a particular version of constructivism than to either Realism or institutionalism.

Yet in *SOH* Krasner also makes much of the distinction between control and authority. As far as I can tell, the concept of authority is absent from *DNI* and almost entirely absent from *SC* – with the exception of arguments about the desire of Third World states to enhance their legitimacy (*SC* 57), which implies a desire to enhance authority. But it is very prominent in *SOH*, in which Krasner defines authority as involving "a mutually recognized right for an actor to engage in specific kinds of activities."<sup>15</sup> "Control," by contrast, seems to be similar to the crude view of power as the ability to determine outcomes: it can be achieved through "force or compulsion." It would be quite natural to associate it with Realist theory, although Krasner does not explicitly do so.

Krasner's definition of authority is consistent with the conventional view that authority is rightful or legitimate rule, and "a political construct created and sustained through practice by a ruler and the ruled."<sup>16</sup> Another way of defining authority would be as a capacity for influence that reflects the relationship between one who makes rules and another who obeys them because she views them as legitimate. Typically, this relationship is institutionalized in some way: that is, it refers to situations in which durable rules prescribe behavioral roles for actors.<sup>17</sup> Legitimacy – the critical basis for authority -- means that those subject to authority believe that the actor in authority has a "content-independent right to rule."<sup>18</sup> Because it relies on beliefs, authority is a constructivist concept. Because it relies on sustained institutionalized relationships, it is also a deeply institutional concept. What authority is *not* is a classical Realist concept.

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<sup>15</sup> Krasner 1999: 10.

<sup>16</sup> Lake 2009: 17, 20.

<sup>17</sup> Keohane 1989: 163.

<sup>18</sup> Buchanan and Keohane 2006: 405.



Krasner uses the concepts of control and authority to discriminate among his various types of sovereignty. Interdependence sovereignty – the ability to regulate flows across national borders – is entirely a matter of control.<sup>19</sup> Domestic sovereignty refers both to domestic authority structures (not a focus of *SOH*) and the effectiveness of domestic controls. Krasner focuses in the book, instead, on the two forms of sovereignty that are about authority, not control. International legal sovereignty – recognition by other states – is entirely a matter of authority. That is, which states, or elites in control of states, are recognized as having the right to engage in governance? Westphalian sovereignty – territoriality and the exclusion of external actors from domestic authority structures<sup>20</sup> – is partly about authority: that is, who is legitimately entitled to make and enforce rules within a given territory. Krasner’s organized hypocrisy argument is that these authority claims are frequently, indeed necessarily, contradicted by power and opportunism, resulting in organized hypocrisy.

Krasner’s creative use of the distinction between control and authority suggests that we should pay more attention to the concept of authority in world politics, which both David Lake and Abraham Newman perceptively discuss in recent books. World politics is a world of power and coercion – on some issues, in some relationships – but it is more pervasively a world of authority. As Lake emphasizes, states are functionally differentiated, contrary to what Waltz taught; and many of them can be properly regarded as subordinate to others, although this subordination is subtle and sometimes concealed since it conflicts with the doctrine of sovereignty. In his book on the regulation of personal data in the global economy, Abraham Newman argues that regulatory *capacity*, and transgovernmental networks among regulators with such capacity, create a form of authority. Such authority is different, as Newman also argues, from either coercion (“hard power”) or persuasion and emulation (“soft power”). Indeed, Newman sees regulatory authority as “a new locus of power.”<sup>21</sup>

Coupled with Krasner’s discussion of control and authority in *SOH*, these works suggest to me that we need to be more careful, in discussing “power,” to indicate whether we are actually discussing

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<sup>19</sup> Krasner 1999: 10.

<sup>20</sup> Krasner 1999: 20.

<sup>21</sup> Lake 2009; Newman 2009. The quote from Newman appears on p. 153.

authority. How important is legitimacy in generating obedience? For regimes within states, legitimacy is important: as Douglas North comments, it reduces the costs of ensuring obedience to the commands of the government.<sup>22</sup> The same is true for empires. Thucydides tells the story of how the increasing *hubris* of Athens undermined the legitimacy of its rule, and Adrienne Mayor, in writing about Mithradates, shows how the rapacity of Roman rule in the Black Sea area during the first century B.C.E. undermined the legitimacy of Roman authority and created the conditions under which Roman rule could be challenged.<sup>23</sup> Soviet authority was challenged at the end of the Gorbachev era, leading to a sudden decline in Soviet power; and US authority is under challenge now in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The point is that the exercise of power without authority is very costly and difficult to sustain.

Thinking more clearly about authority may help us to think not only about empires but about contemporary world politics. Does increasing social mobilization, spurred on by wider access to communications media, widen the gulf between power and authority by making subjects more likely to question power-holders – or has that gulf always been wider than crude power theories would lead us to expect? In a condition of social mobilization, is “soft power” – the ability to entice or attract -- increasingly important?<sup>24</sup> How does the absence of authority for the United States, and its practices, in countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan affect its ability to achieve its objectives in those societies?

How does democracy relate to authority in world politics? Do decisions made by democratic states have more legitimacy, and hence more authority, than decisions made by non-democratic states – and with what audiences? Are there ways in which actions by democracies, since they are responsive to culturally specific publics, could be *less legitimate*, and carry less authority, with people in different cultures than decisions made by more closed leadership groups and crafted to fit local conditions? With respect to multilateralism, are norms emerging that require quasi-democratic practices (such as those of

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<sup>22</sup> North 1981, ch. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Mayor 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Nye 2004.

administrative law) as a condition for the legitimacy of regulation? Are non-coercive authoritative decisions likely to be more democracy-enhancing than coercive ones, and if so, under what conditions?

Krasner's institutionalism runs deep, even though on the surface it is easier to see his ambivalence about it than his intellectual sympathies with it. Krasner's willingness to entertain institutionalist ideas has enriched our understanding not only of international institutions but also of how institutionalization can generate patterns of authority.

### ***III. Krasner as Constructivist Theorist***

Krasner's Realism and institutionalism are accompanied by a strong pull toward a more constructivist emphasis on ideas and identity. We have already seen the constructivist strain in his recent reliance on the concept of authority, which draws from both constructivist and institutionalist theory. We also see it in his analysis, much earlier, of ideology.

Some of the most interesting and prominent arguments in *Defending the National Interest*<sup>25</sup> (*DNI*) are not about interests but about ideology. In contrast to Realism, Krasner does not see interests and power as explaining foreign policy. Morgenthau sees the "signposts" of foreign policy in terms of "interests defined in terms of power," and although Krasner accepts part of this argument, he modifies it in fundamental ways. Ideology as "a vision of what the global order should be like derived from values and experience" (*DNI* 15) makes a fundamental difference at least to American foreign policy. But it only makes a difference insofar as the United States is very powerful – hence, only after World War II. In other words, in Krasner's interpretation, structural power and ideology *interact* to generate the actual goals that the United States has pursued.

In *Defending the National Interest* Krasner accepts a conventional distinction between the concepts of preference and strategy, although he does not use that language. An actor's preferences, in this conventional view, "are the way it orders the possible outcomes of an interaction." But constraints inherent in the environment also affect strategies. In an example given by Jeffrey Frieden, a firm might

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<sup>25</sup> Krasner 1978.

prefer a quota to a tariff to no protection, but in the presence of strong opposition by the government to quotas, might lobby for a tariff. That is, its strategy – the means to its end – might differ from its preference.<sup>26</sup> Krasner makes the same point in *DNI* in different language, explaining support for right-wing authoritarian regimes by liberal American policy-makers during the Cold War as a result of “constrained choice” (*DNI* 339). US elites preferred democratic regimes (other things being equal) but pursued strategies, in some situations, of supporting authoritarian ones.

In *DNI* (337) Krasner explicitly rejects the notion that interests can explain the use of force by the United States in situations involving raw materials between 1914 and the 1970s. He argues instead that preferences were established historically and sociologically as a result of American experience. The goals of American policy were set by a vision of Lockean liberalism, to which communism was antithetical.

This sounds like Constructivism before the phrase had been invented, and may help us understand Krasner’s ambivalence toward, rather than outright rejection of, Constructivist thinking in *SOH* and other work.<sup>27</sup> However, the distinctive conceptual and theoretical contribution of *DNI* is not an emphasis on ideology *per se* – Krasner was hardly the first analyst to take that tack – but the ingenious attempt that Krasner made to reconcile it with his Realist framework. Krasner argues that ideology is only exceptionally important for foreign policy. Due to constraints of power, “for most states it must be interests, and not visions, that count.” Only very powerful states “can attempt to impose their vision on other countries and the global system. And it is only here that ideology becomes a critical determinant of the objectives of foreign policy” (*DNI* 340).

Krasner is here proposing that the validity of conventional Realist theory for foreign policy analysis is *conditional* on the state in question not being extraordinarily powerful. Ordinary countries calculate their interests to derive preferences and then adopt strategies that take into account constraints, particularly constrained power. “Only states whose resources are very large, both absolutely and

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<sup>26</sup> Friden 1999: 42.

<sup>27</sup> Notably in his joint article with Peter J. Katzenstein and myself for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary special issue of *International Organization*. Katzenstein, Keohane and Krasner 1998.

relatively, can engage in imperial policies” (*DNI* 340). The passage presciently foreshadows the Bush Administration official in 2002 who was quoted as saying: “We are an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality.”<sup>28</sup> But Krasner’s argument also represents a very sophisticated theoretical position. Structures of power are important, Krasner argues, but not uniformly across the range of variation in the relative and absolute power of states. Explanations that rely on ideology are more compelling when power constraints are low.

Note that in *DNI* Krasner also lets the accuracy of perceptions vary: misperception by American policy-makers, he claims, led them to exaggerate the importance of communist influence in foreign countries and led them, in “nonlogical” fashion, sometimes to fail to calculate clearly about means and ends (*DNI* 16). It would be a short step to argue that not only are extraordinarily powerful countries prone to act on ideology, but so are countries whose leaders *mistakenly believe* themselves to be extraordinarily powerful.

With its quasi-constructivist arguments about the interaction of power, ideology, and misperception, *Defending the National Interest* therefore yields insights about the performance of the first administration of George W. Bush. President Bush and his top advisors both held strongly ideological views about the unique and multiple advantages of democracy abroad and exaggerated the ability of the United States to achieve such democracy. Their beliefs help to explain their policies – which certainly would not have been advised or predicted by traditional Realists. The fact that they misperceived US power helps to explain the failure of those policies.<sup>29</sup>

When Krasner turned to sovereignty, I think he struggled at first, because he recognized that sovereignty is a socially constructed concept. Hence the state that he had long celebrated as central to

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<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Esherick 2006: 374.

<sup>29</sup> It seems to me hardly accidental that a book written in the wake of the Vietnam War contains valuable insights about the decision of the Bush Administration to go to war in Iraq. Krasner characterizes US policy in Vietnam during the 1960s and early 1970s as “imprudent” (*DNI* 286) and “nonlogical” (*DNI* 316; 321-22). He says: “For those of us who listened to some ten years of rationales for U.S. intervention in Vietnam there is one gnawing thought: they just do not make sense” (*DNI* 321). Much the same can be said for the rationales for the U.S. invasion of Iraq between August 2002 and March 2003. Contemporary arguments for increasing US involvement in Afghanistan on grounds that the United States must show “determination” and prevent its enemies from taking heart at withdrawal remind one of Mark Twain’s aphorisms, “History doesn’t repeat itself but it rhymes.”

world politics is a result of political and social processes that were deeply shaped by ideational conflicts, such as the wars of religion in the early-modern state system. Yet this tension between Krasner's understanding of sovereignty as a socially constructed concept and his view of the state as a political structure with definite interests and capacities to pursue them, drove Krasner to a deeper level of scholarship in what I regard as his best book. For theoretical depth, he went to John Searle's masterful volume on *The Social Construction of Reality* and came to see a strong link between the game-theoretic understanding of strategy so central to both Realist and institutionalist thought and the common knowledge created by constructivist conceptions of appropriate behavior. For historical depth, he went not only to the extensive historical literature on sovereignty but to the texts of documents such as the Treaty of Westphalia, which, as he pointed out, is quite different from its reputation as the fountain of modern thinking about sovereignty and the state.

Most important, Krasner synthesizes his traditional view of state structures and interests with his understanding of discourse by developing the idea of "organized hypocrisy" – systematic behavior that at one level celebrates sovereignty as a central organizing concept of international relations, and that simultaneously violates its precepts. Krasner maintains his view that since leaders and their followers care about outcomes, the "logic of consequences" dominates the "logic of appropriateness." But as soon as he makes this point, he qualifies it, since he recognizes that discourse is profoundly shaped by ideas. As Krasner writes, "a logic of consequences, in which control is the key issue, and a logic of appropriateness, associated with authority, can both affect the behavior of actors" (*SOH* 10). The result is a work that integrates an understanding of institutions, developed in the context of prevailing ideas of sovereignty but profoundly shaped by interests; ideas, as expressed in discourses about sovereignty, its implications, and permissive exceptions to those apparent implications; and power and opportunism, the traditional focus of Realist thought.

In *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*, Krasner's willingness to subvert the Realist tradition without becoming a renegade paid off. He saw the multiple sides of sovereignty: its various definitions and dimensions. He analyzed the way in which institutions of sovereignty emerged as a means of limited

cooperation in the context of religious strife. And he saw how attempts to apply sovereignty concepts in a consistent or universal way have been disrupted by opportunities to exploit situations for gain or power, in ways that have prevented their consistent implementation. *SOH* is a synthesis in the best sense of the term: a work that recognizes and connects different traditions without simply embracing all of them in an indiscriminating and contradictory fashion.

As a subversive Realist, Krasner continually claims to subscribe to the Realist credo, but protests too much. In *Defending the National Interest* he subverts Realism by treating ideology as an independent force that does not merely rationalize interests but has the ability to trump interests. In *Structural Conflict* and the international regimes volume he subverts Realism by conceding a great deal to institutionalist arguments. Although he distances himself from their liberal flavor, he accepts their rationalist core, which builds on conceptions of power and interests to understand institutions.<sup>30</sup> In *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* Krasner subverts Realism by introducing the concept of authority, which is a deeply institutionalized notion whose validity depends on the beliefs of people subject to rule.

I am not claiming that all of Krasner's arguments are consistent. Notably, *Structural Conflict* seems to retract the argument in *Defending the National Interest* about the independent role of ideology. In *Structural Conflict* ideology in the global sense as discussed in *Defending the National Interest* has disappeared, only being referred to in the context of the *domestic* politics of weak, vulnerable Third World states (SC 57). Ideology in this volume seems to be less vision than rationalization. Krasner sees the coherence of ideological arguments "*used to rationalize and justify their demands*" (SC 9: italics added) as an important variable affecting the success of Third World attempt to create authoritative regimes responsive to their will.

*Defending the National Interest* emphasizes misperception and "non-logical" US foreign policy behavior but rationalizes actions by the Third World in the 1970s that were clearly not wealth-maximizing. *Structural Conflict* is much more rationalist. Both books ignore the distinction between power and authority, seeming to assume that the views of people who are ruled are not particularly

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<sup>30</sup> Keohane 1984.

important in world politics. *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*, in contrast, emphasizes authority as opposed to control. But “a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines.”<sup>31</sup> Krasner’s writings are much more interesting, and insightful, than if he had stuck to a dull Realist consistency.

#### IV. *Krasner as an Implicit Theorist of Social Norms*

*Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* directly addresses issues of social norms. The norm of what Krasner calls Westphalian sovereignty is that external actors should be excluded from domestic authority structures.<sup>32</sup> Krasner would probably agree with a conventional definition of social norms as *shared expectations, on the part of a group, about appropriate behavior*.<sup>33</sup> But he emphasizes that the norms of sovereignty are frequently violated, yielding organized hypocrisy. I now put forward my understanding of the role of social norms in world politics, a view that I think is implicit in Krasner’s writings.

First, however, it is essential to make a methodological point. When norms are espoused by state leaders, it is very difficult to figure out whether norms are making a difference, or are simply brought out to rationalize interests. When norms are widely shared or at least given lip service, leaders not driven by normative commitments will seek to mimic leaders who have internalized norms. This problem of observational equivalence bedevils many attempts to show that norms are important sources of behavior in world politics. For example, Iain Johnston has claimed that “the socialization of (Chinese) reform elites

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<sup>31</sup> *Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations*, on line, attributes this phrase to Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882).

<sup>32</sup> Krasner 1999: 20.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Ellickson (2001: 35) defines a social norm as “a rule governing an individual’s behavior that third parties other than state agents diffusely enforce by means of social sanctions.” But many prominent definitions omit sanctions. Martha Finnemore (1996: 22) defines norms as “shared expectations about appropriate behavior held by a community of actors.” Peter Katzenstein, Ron Jepperson and Alexander Wendt define norms as “collective expectations about proper behavior for a given entity.” (Katzenstein 1996b: 54.) Abram and Antonia Chayes use different language but the point is similar: for them, norms are “prescriptions for action in situations of choice, carrying a sense of obligation” (Chayes and Chayes 1995: 112). However, Deborah Prentice, drawing on a large literature in psychology, differentiates between group beliefs and individuals’ *beliefs* about group beliefs, which are often mistaken. Social norms defined as “representations of where one’s group is located or ought to be located on an attitudinal or behavioral dimension (Prentice 2009: 5) often do not match up with the actual beliefs of members of one’s group. That is, “shared expectations” conceal the fact that members of groups make incorrect inferences about the expectations of others in the group: the sociological norm does not match psychological norms.



in capitalist ideology...helps explain the leadership's push for China's integration in the major capitalist institutions today."<sup>34</sup> He points to China's increasing emphasis on multilateral institutions as evidence. But from an instrumentalist standpoint it seems much more plausible that China's material self-interest – in trade, investment, and other benefits derived from participation on the world economy and from being on friendly terms with its neighbors -- accounts for both for its new interest in multilateral institutions and for the statements of its leaders. Purely self-interested states have incentives to engage in what Beth Simmons calls "social camouflage."<sup>35</sup>

Krasner has pointed out the weakness of norms at the international and transnational levels. This finding should not be surprising, since world politics is dominated by strategic interactions among organizations – powerful, coherent states -- that have independent sources of legitimacy, funding, and means of coercion; and between these states and other organizations, whether multilateral or transnational, which also have resources of legitimacy and often of funding. States are constituted according to a variety of norms; they have different organizational arrangements; and they are staffed by people with beliefs that vary cross-nationally. They typically have different material interests, and they all seek some margin of security that may appear to threaten their competitors. They therefore have very strong reasons to act according to instrumental rationality, to achieve their interest-based objectives. Since at the international and transnational levels norm-following behavior is challenged by the logics of strategic interaction and instrumental rationality, we should be skeptical of analogies from the domestic domain to world politics.<sup>36</sup>

Norms are indeed everywhere in world politics, but there are arguably so many ambiguous and conflicting norms that the implications for behavior are often unclear. As Paul Kowers and Jeffrey Legro write, because so many norms are relevant to behavior simultaneously, "it is difficult to predict which norms will be most influential. One can always identify, *post hoc*, a norm to explain a given behavior."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Johnston 2008: 211.

<sup>35</sup> Simmons 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Waltz 1979.

<sup>37</sup> Kowers and Legro 1996: 486.

The plethora of ambiguous and conflicting norms in world politics means that even fairly well-established norms are often violated. The result, again, is “organized hypocrisy,” which involves a “decoupling between principles and practices.” Norms associated with sovereignty – such as respect for the territorial integrity of states – do not predict actual practices. Behavior can be explained instead as a set of broadly rational responses to structures of interest and power in a competitive world.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, even for rationalist neo-utilitarian research programs, constitutive norms can be seen as important in world politics– not because they generate a coherent world culture but because they create *common knowledge*, which is essential for coordination.<sup>39</sup> Even if strong international and transnational constitutive norms are lacking, knowledge of the norms that various agents and groups hold is important in affecting the strategies that players employ. From this perspective, norms serve as an important source of background knowledge, which on most important issues does not *determine* behavior through a logic of appropriateness, but exercises a significant impact on actor strategies.

For norms to be consequential in world politics, they need advocates. For instance, human rights activists, often in powerful countries, operate both domestically and transnationally. They internalize norms of human rights, form advocacy groups, and lobby their governments to pursue pro-human rights policies.<sup>40</sup> When they overcome resistance and generate changes in policy, as occurred with the treaty banning land mines in the 1990s, it seems clear that norm-bearing agents have made an impact. Analytically, we can specify four different patterns of normative agency: 1) states acting as advocates; 2) non-state organizations acting as advocates; 3) international organizations as norm-agents; and 4) norms as focal points for decentralized networks of organizations and individuals.

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<sup>38</sup> Krasner 1999: 226, 59.

<sup>39</sup> Katzenstein et al. 1998: 682.

<sup>40</sup> Keck and Sikkink 1998.

*States as advocates.* States sometimes commit themselves to normative positions that then have implications for their policies, and that may imply substantial human and material costs. For example, in 1816 Great Britain bombarded Algiers to suppress piracy, at a cost of over one hundred men killed and over six hundred wounded – more as a proportion of those engaged in the battle than at Trafalgar. Yet Britain did not have significant material interests at stake: its shipping was not seriously disrupted by piracy and it did not have territorial objectives in Algiers. Its actions are more plausibly explained by invoking social norms. Britain was seeking to persuade other European governments to help it abolish the African slave trade, and feared being accused of double standards by not acting to end the “white slavery” practiced by the corsairs. The norms that conferred legitimacy on Britain’s leadership also mandated action against the pirates.<sup>41</sup>

*Transnational activism.* Kathryn Sikkink and her colleagues have shown, using a wide variety of examples, that transnational activists have often not only brought issues to the attention of governments and other organizations, but have exerted influence on governments.<sup>42</sup> Such campaigns are most effective when their advocates have sympathizers at high levels of government – people who have internalized the same norms. When powerful sympathetic governments join the activists, attempts to “shame” other states into conformity with better human rights practices can be combined with material sanctions, such as trade and aid, to do so.<sup>43</sup> These pressures, and their legalization in human rights treaties, affect domestic policy agendas and provide opportunities and resources for mobilization by domestic groups – but only when there is some domestic space for such activity. Simmons, for example, has amassed systematic evidence supporting a view earlier advocated by Andrew Moravcsik: that human rights treaties have their most important impact on transitional democracies, which have not yet institutionalized strong human

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<sup>41</sup> Lowenheim 2007: chapter four.

<sup>42</sup> Keck and Sikkink 1998; Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 1999.

<sup>43</sup> Hafner-Burton 2009.

rights norms but that do not repress dissent. She infers that much of the impact of human rights treaties comes through mobilizing domestic groups: that is, treaties create and empower norm-oriented agents.<sup>44</sup>

*International organizations as conveyers of norms.* International organizations, sometimes pressed by states or transnational activists, are major promoters of norms in world politics: indeed, much of what they do is to advocate and seek to formulate regulatory norms in a wide variety of issue-areas. Jeffrey Checkel has emphasized that “international institutions are social environments; participating in them may socialize states and state agents.” Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore focus more on international organizations as bureaucracies: “IOs are eager to spread the benefits of their expertise and often act as conveyor belts for the transmission of norms and models of good political behavior.”<sup>45</sup>

*Norms as focal points.* Internationally as well as domestically, people who work closely together on a variety of problems may find that they can be most effective if they accept a common set of social norms. That is, social norms can facilitate the operation of decentralized social networks, such as the governmental networks discussed by Anne-Marie Slaughter.<sup>46</sup> In the European Union (EU) and other international organizations, for instance, observers have identified the growth of informal norms that are at odds with the formal ones. Votes are often not taken even though elaborate procedures call for voting, as in the Montreal Protocol Fund that controls allocations for developing countries to deal with ozone-depleting chemicals. In the EU, the Presidency performs functions that are almost entirely structured by informal norms.<sup>47</sup> More generally, groups of like-minded people, such as scientists, may develop an “epistemic community,” which can generate tendencies to conform to group thinking.<sup>48</sup>

The crucial point is that when we ask about the impact of norms in world politics, we necessarily ask about the agents that promote the norms: norms have their greatest impact when they are promoted by

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<sup>44</sup> Simmons 2009; Moravcsik 2000.

<sup>45</sup> Checkel 2005: 815; Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 33.

<sup>46</sup> Slaughter 2004.

<sup>47</sup> Kleine unpublished.

<sup>48</sup> Haas 1992.

organizations or persistent networks of individuals and groups. Normative activity has the greatest long-term impact when agents – states, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, or domestic groups -- find the international norms strategically relevant for their own purposes. Norms do not act by themselves, but they both shape the conceptions of self-interest of agents and can be convenient, or inconvenient, as agents pursue their interests. Krasner's work is consistent with this argument, although I think it clarifies matters to be more explicit about the dependence of norms on agency.

## V. *A Missing Concept: Persuasion*

Steve Krasner is, fortunately, still in his intellectual prime. It therefore seems appropriate to conclude by discussing a concept that is largely missing from Krasner's work: *persuasion*. The literature on persuasion in world politics is fairly rudimentary, and it seems to me that Steve Krasner, with his combination of skepticism, intellectual rigor, and conceptual creativity, could make a significant contribution to it. So in this final section of the paper I put forward some ideas of my own about persuasion in an attempt to provoke him, or others, into a response.

Persuasion can be defined as the use of argument by one or more persons to influence the actions of one or more other people, without using or threatening force, or providing incentives. As Martha Finnemore says, "being persuasive means grounding claims in existing norms in ways that emphasize normative congruence and coherence."<sup>49</sup> *Political persuasion is persuasion with respect to issues involving authoritative collective decision-making.*<sup>50</sup> This definition of persuasion distinguishes it from three other types of social influence: *coercion*, involving the use or threat of force; *bargaining*, involving

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<sup>49</sup> Finnemore 1996: 141.

<sup>50</sup> This definition is broader than that typical in social psychology, where persuasion is defined as "influence designed to change beliefs." In this literature, persuasion focuses on beliefs, whereas negotiation emphasizes behavior with little regard for beliefs. Chaiken et al. 2000. For a more elaborate discussion of persuasion from the standpoint of social psychology, see Chaiken et al. 1996. New York: Guilford Press, 1996: 702-742.

offers of rewards and threats of punishment; and *emulation*, implying soft power as defined by Joseph S. Nye.<sup>51</sup> We can also distinguish direct from indirect persuasion.

### *Direct Persuasion*

We can identify four causal pathways for direct persuasion

Persuasion can involve appeals to interest, rightly understood. In this form of persuasion, the persuader provides information that may reduce the uncertainty of the persuadee about the situation she faces, including the “types” of other players, or about causal processes. This is the type of information emphasized in theories of instrumental rationality, as in game theory.

Persuasion can also involve appeals to principles, such as justice or reciprocity. This form of persuasion is naturally most effective when the principles are already accepted, so that only their relevance to a decision problem needs to be demonstrated. It also depends on the parties being motivated to seek the truth: what social psychologists refer to as “accuracy motivations.”<sup>52</sup>

Constructivist analysis suggests a third mechanism: appeals to norms that are linked to roles or to identity. Behavior may result from what James March and Johan Olsen call “the logic of appropriateness,” in which action involves “evoking an identity or role and matching the obligations of that identity or role to a specific situation.”<sup>53</sup>

Identity, in turn, involves “mutually constructed and evolving images of self and other.”<sup>54</sup> Collective identities may be shaped through rhetorical action; in turn, persuasion may be based on appeals to these identities.<sup>55</sup>

Cognitive psychology provides a fourth mechanism: persuasion as a result of the *framing* of issues in particular ways. Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman showed in a series of brilliant experiments that the way in which decision problems are presented to subjects decisively affects their

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<sup>51</sup> I am indebted for these distinctions to Ruth W. Grant and to Grant 2006.

<sup>52</sup> Risse 2000: 6.

<sup>53</sup> March and Olsen 1998: 951.

<sup>54</sup> Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996: 59.

<sup>55</sup> Cruz 2000.

judgments. Human beings do not carry in their heads fully developed, consistent and articulated views of the world. As a result, how problems are “framed” is often critical in choice.<sup>56</sup> It follows that one way to persuade people is to frame a problem in a particular way.<sup>57</sup>

Appeals to interest are obviously consistent with a rational-choice conception of cognition, defined as to a process of cognition in which agents choose actions calculated to yield the best feasible outcomes given their beliefs, and in which they in a relatively unbiased way seek information to evaluate the relationship between goals and strategies.<sup>58</sup> Using this conception of rationality, which does not conflate it with selfishness, appeals to principle are also consistent with rationality.

Appeals to norms of identity can be consistent with rationality if the implications of those appeals are consistent with self-interest and principle, but not if an identity-based “logic of appropriateness” overrides concern for consequences. As Krasner argues, in world politics the logic of consequences generally prevails. Finally, persuasion through framing is not necessarily consistent with rational choice conceptions, as Tversky and Kahneman have shown. Indeed, it may disrupt a focus on the consequences of action.

For all four forms of persuasion, what changes is the *information* available to the persuadee. This information seems to be of three types:

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<sup>56</sup>Tversky and Kahneman 1986.

<sup>57</sup> Consider the problem of how to use radiation to kill an inoperable tumor, when rays with a sufficiently high intensity to kill the tumor would also kill vital organs in the process. Some subjects were given a story about the capture of a fortress with many narrow roads leading to it, in which the attacking general attacked by dividing his forces. These subjects more readily came up with the solution to the radiation problem of bombarding the tumor with several relatively weak rays, converging on the tumor from several directions, than subjects not given this set of cues. That is, the analogy had framed the issue in a way that facilitated a solution to the problem. John Holland, Keith Holyoak, and Richard Nisbet., “Analogy,” in Holland, Holyoak, and Nisbet 1989.

<sup>58</sup> Jan Elster (1989:30) gives a similar definition, but he uses language of “optimality,” which seems to me to create an unrealistic standard and to make rationality entirely into an ideal type, so that no real action could be described as rational.

*Information about identity, interests and principles themselves.* For example, the persuader may have introduced new beliefs about identity (“we are all Croats”), new causal beliefs (“deficit spending will end the depression”), or new principled beliefs (“slavery is wrong”).<sup>59</sup>

*Information about the consistency of the persuadee’s behavior with her identities, interests or principles.* Rational individuals seek to make their behavior consistent with their identities, interests and principles. Hence if it is pointed out that her behavior is inconsistent with her interests, and principles, the rational persuadee should be motivated to change either her behavior or her beliefs.<sup>60</sup>

*Information that reminds the persuadee of facts previously ignored, or that constructs a situation that highlights the significance of certain facts, or interpretations, over others.* Such information involves the “framing” of choice discussed above.

### *Indirect Persuasion*

Much persuasion is indirect. The speaker seeks to influence an agent who will be responsive to the speaker’s audience: the speaker influences the agent through the audience. Focusing on indirect persuasion alerts us to a distinction between two different types of actors: those who can be expected to behave strategically, since their actions have discernable impacts on others; and those (such as members of mass publics) who should not be expected to behave strategically. Even if they are both rational, actors of these two types will behave in profoundly different ways. Elites will seek a great deal of information and will typically have a stake in ensuring that their beliefs conform with reality. Members of mass publics – who may be the same people playing different roles on different issues -- may be “rationally ignorant,” as theories of mass voting suggest. Indirect attempts at persuasion in politics often involve efforts by strategic actors to persuade non-strategic actors, employing emotional appeals designed to appeal to people who are using heuristic information processing. The strategic actors seek not to persuade

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<sup>59</sup> Goldstein and Keohane 1993.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Risse’s pioneering work on persuasion in international relations relies heavily, it seems to me, on the logic of consistency. As Risse paraphrases the question posed by human rights advocates of governments nominally respecting human rights but actually violating them: “If you say that you accept human rights, then why do you systematically violate them?” Risse 2000: 32.



behavior of policy-making elites directly, but to influence the attitudes of mass publics, whose views will in turn affect the behavior of policy-makers. In a democracy, one need not convince politicians of the merits of one's position in order to induce changes in their behavior; one may only need to persuade them that their electoral fortunes will be enhanced by such changes.

Narratives seem to have a substantial power to persuade. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, famous "I have a Dream" speech in 1963 evoked deeply held beliefs in equality in a rhetorically moving way. King did not make *arguments* for equality. He assumed that his hearers were already convinced that racial inequality was unjust. He needed to move them to action, particularly to persuade others: that is, to frame the issue as one requiring immediate action, not merely passive complaint. King's words were so eloquent, and broadcast so many times, that his hearers knew that others had also heard them. King's "dream" was therefore common knowledge: "everyone knows it, everyone knows that everyone knows it, everyone knows that everyone knows that everyone knows it, and so on."<sup>61</sup> Common knowledge facilitates coordination of behavior, as long as each person's motivation to participate increases the more others are inclined to participate.

To use another American example of rhetorical brilliance, Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" provides a short and compelling narrative designed to reinforce the belief of his audience (which included people not at Gettysburg that day in November 1863) that the Union, based on worthy moral principles, was worth fighting for. Lincoln's three-minute speech follows the pattern of classic Greek orations, in which "suppressing particulars makes these works oddly moving despite their impersonal air."<sup>62</sup> It is a narrative with a beginning – the founding of the United States – a middle – the "great civil war" – and an end – "that this nation shall have a new birth of freedom." Implicit is the appeal that if that foreseen goal is to be attained, his audience must be "dedicated to the great task remaining before us." As in King's "I have a Dream" speech, there is no attempt to convince the audience of anything through logic, but rather to deepen the audience's conviction that they must be

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<sup>61</sup> Chwe 2001.

<sup>62</sup> Wills 1992: 53.

willing to sacrifice for a great cause. Lincoln's speech was also designed to facilitate coordination of action by providing a base of common knowledge.

Narrative appeals cannot be expected to be very important in direct persuasion of policy-makers in world politics. But they may be important as part of a process of *indirect* persuasion. For both King and Lincoln, people who were not in physical proximity to them were probably more important audiences than the few who were. King could reach these people directly through television and radio, whereas Lincoln had to rely on the print media. Both speakers, however, presumably hoped that much of their persuasion would be indirect: that people who heard them would persuade others, and so on. King, in particular, was trying to bring pressure on the administration of President John F. Kennedy to take stronger action on civil rights. He was seeking not to persuade Kennedy directly of the merits of his cause, but to persuade him indirectly that he could gain popularity and electoral support by responding to demands for civil rights.

A rationalist understanding of persuasion – direct and indirect – seems plausible for some aspects of the process, but incomplete. Cognitions, identities and beliefs – concepts emphasized by constructivists – will also be important. Progress in understanding persuasion is likely to be made, as Krasner made progress in analyzing sovereignty, both by adopting multiple perspectives and by moving back and forth between real-world situations and pure conceptualization.

## *Conclusion*

Steve Krasner's work calls our attention once again to the importance of the concepts we use. Concepts imply distinctions. Unless different dimensions of concepts are distinguished from another, their use in both theoretical and empirical work will lead to confusion. Krasner is a master of conceptualization, both because of the clarity of his thought and his willingness to experiment in innovative ways. He is grounded in his Realism but not hamstrung by it. Indeed, he has also made significant contributions to institutionalist and constructivist international relations theory. His own work refutes the notion that these approaches to understanding world politics are mutually exclusive. In a variety of ways he is truly a subversive Realist.

Krasner has helped us to understand the relationships between power structures and institutions, and the multiple dimensions of sovereignty. He has made fascinating contributions to the study of ideology and authority, and his work on sovereignty throws light on complex issues of social norms. For Krasner, norms are not trumps: leaders of states devise policies based on calculations about consequences. Norms do not predict state behavior: this is what "organized hypocrisy" is all about. But norms can be important when they have advocates, whose values and interests prompt them to promote norms or to give them incentives, to some extent to follow these norms themselves.

In the last section of this paper I have discussed the concept of persuasion. Much persuasion in world politics is indirect, interacting with interests, institutions, and prevailing ideas. Understanding persuasion will therefore require the creative synthesis of theoretical perspectives, with the rigor and imagination for which Stephen D. Krasner is justly famous.

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