

Dewey's Democratic Account of International Politics

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Abstract: Scholars of international political economy (IPE) confront major unexpected changes in the global economy, which challenge their understanding of their discipline's role and purpose. We argue that the discipline's existing blind spots come from the assumption that international relations scholarship should be useful to elite policy makers, and seek to reconstitute it along democratic lines, building on the ideas of John Dewey. We show how Dewey argues that social scientists should play a specific role – explicating and explaining complicated causal chains and inter-relationships so as to inform – and form – self-aware democratic publics. We then elucidate the specifically international implications of Dewey's arguments, showing how his account of democracy is explicitly intended to apply to problems of interdependence across existing state borders. This provides a better and more democratically grounded understanding of IPE than existing approaches which emphasize law-like abstractions over experimental inquiry and engagement with publics.

We are grateful to Bob Goodin for initial encouragement, and Deborah Avant, Sheri Berman, Adam Dean, Heather Hurlburt, Kathleen McNamara, Abraham Newman, Martin Rhodes, Cosma Shalizi, Chana Solomon-Schwartz, Elizabeth Saunders, Tamara Wittes and participants in seminars at Georgetown University, the University of Denver's Sie Center, and New America for comments on earlier drafts.

Writing commenced, January 20, 2017.

International relations – and in particular international political economy (IPE) – is undergoing a legitimacy crisis. This crisis has been precipitated by surging economic populism and the associated threat to the approach’s core understanding of global politics. A liberal world order that scholars associate with “unprecedented peace and prosperity” now seems under threat from illiberal competitors outside, and, more worrying, from the ordinary citizens of the rich industrial democracies (Lake, Martin and Risse 2018). David Lake, who once wrote about how mainstream international political economy helps bolster the popular case for trade, now attributes US populism to the exposure of low skilled workers to free trade, and the unresponsiveness of political elites to their plight (Lake 2018). Robert Keohane (2016) says that international relations scholars contributed directly to the plight of the liberal order.

Those of us who have celebrated as well as analyzed globalization share some responsibility for the rise of populism. We demonstrated that an institutional infrastructure was needed to facilitate globalization, but this infrastructure was constructed by and for economic elites. They pursued a path of action favored by academics such as [Keohane and Joseph Nye], building multilateral institutions to promote cooperation, but they built these institutions in a biased way. Global finance and global business had a privileged status, and there was little regard for the interests of ordinary workers.¹

The result was that:

We did not pay enough attention as global capitalism hijacked complex interdependence. There were multiple actors and multiple channels of contact, but overwhelmingly these were business actors and their connections ran both to each other and [to] governments. Ordinary people were left out (ibid).

It is difficult for IPE scholars to turn such criticisms into a practical agenda for change. The problems that they identify stem from deep intellectual and ethical commitments in the discipline of international relations. Typically, international relations scholars have justified the existence of their field by claiming that its findings are useful in real world policy debates. While scholars have exchanged broadsides over which kinds of research are useful, they have largely agreed about *how* and *to whom* it ought be useful (Farrell and Finnemore 2009) – by providing policy advice to elites. These commitments make it hard for these scholars to detach themselves from elite perspectives, and turn towards the problems of ‘ordinary people’ without seriously reconsidering the field’s underlying commitments and self-understanding.

In this article, we propose that IPE should reconstitute itself on democratic lines.² This claim will surely be highly uncomfortable for most scholars in the field. Not only have international relations scholars built much of their identity around their presumed relationship with policy elites, but they usually assume that democracy ends at the water’s edge.³

¹ See also Colgan and Keohane 2017.

² We focus our discussion on international political economy, both because of limitations of space, and because the difficulties of international political economy are particularly severe. However, our major criticisms apply *pari passu* to other areas of international relations such as international security. We return to this question in the conclusions.

³ Although there is a literature on international democracy; see for example Scholte (2012), Freyberg, Lavenex and Schimmelfennig (2017); it has more or less been ignored by the US-

Nonetheless, we argue that there is a strong warrant to rethink international relations' usefulness in the context of democracy across borders.

Specifically, we build on John Dewey's pragmatist account of democracy and international interdependence. Although many international relations scholars have turned towards pragmatism over the last several years, they have been primarily interested in its methodological implications. We look to a quite different aspect of Dewey's thought, recovering his radically democratic account of how changing interdependent relations leads to changing publics and changing political institutions. This account provides a foundation for arguing that international relations scholarship should not burnish mirrors for princes (Blaydes, Grimmer and McQueen forthcoming), but instead help build the knowledge through which new publics may come to identify their common interests, even when those interests span political borders.

Dewey's insights bring together current debates in international relations. Heated disagreements about the usefulness of different approaches to international relations conceal a tacit consensus over how international relations ought be useful, while pragmatist approaches to international relations are often less practically relevant than they might be. We argue that both of these blind spots can be remedied by a revival of Dewey's thought.

Specifically, social scientists, including international relations scholars, should devote their energies to uncovering the hidden interdependencies that shape social and political life, and making those interdependencies visible so as to help broader publics organize themselves around them. In making this case, we show how this pragmatist research agenda necessarily commits us to a radically democratic and egalitarian approach to problem-solving.

based mainstream of IPE scholarship. What scholarly attention there has been has largely focused on the interaction between domestic democracy and international institutions. See Moravcsik (2004), Keohane, Macedo and Moravcsik (2009).

Pragmatism and the usefulness of international relations

The last two decades have seen dueling polemics between scholars arguing that international relations scholarship is valuable when it addresses matters of direct interest to policy makers, and scholars arguing that it is valuable because it helps build up scientific knowledge about international affairs.⁴ The former often complain about the growing gap between policy makers and international relations scholars (Jentleson and Ratner 2011), which many of them blame on the abstracting tendencies of social science, and rebarbative statistical techniques that render findings incomprehensible to policy makers (Lepgold 1998, Lepgold and Nincic 2000, Nye 2008, Mearsheimer and Walt 2013, Avey and Desch 2014, Desch 2015). The latter argue that making international relations more policy relevant will require more rigorous theory and empirical work (Frieden and Lake 2005), and that international relations scholarship is often not taken up by policy makers because its findings are politically inconvenient (Rogowski 2013). They furthermore complain that traditional international relations debates are less aimed at confronting graspable mid-range problems than perpetuating schisms between rival theoretical cults, each with its own zealous sectaries and obscurantist theology (Lake 2011, 2013).

Sharp language conceals much implicit agreement. All sides agree that international relations ought to be useful. Lake (2011, 2013) grounds his call for a more rigorous approach to international relations theory in the argument that international politics is simply too important to get wrong in a world where “the human condition is precarious.” (Lake 2013:580. For Lake, as

⁴ See Jahn (2017) for a useful recent overview.

for other intelligent critics of traditional approaches, usefulness is a *sine qua non*. Fazal (2016) indeed argues that scholars who use quantitative methods are actually more likely to produce policy relevant research.

Both sides further assume that usefulness means usefulness to elite foreign policy actors, most particularly in the US. Nye (2008) discusses the problematic relationship between the academy and US policy makers. Frieden and Lake (138: 2005) speak of how universities can act as “repositories of country and policy experts ‘on call’ to buttress hard-pressed policy makers confronted with crises.” Lepgold and Nincic, Nye, Mearsheimer and Walt, and Avey and Desch all treat US policy makers as the assumed audience for academics.⁵

This tacit agreement has forestalled sustained inquiry into other understandings of usefulness, and arguably contributed to the pathologies of scholars identifying too much with elites that Keohane identifies. For example, questions of practical usefulness or what William James calls “cash value” are at the heart of pragmatist approaches to social scientific inquiry. However, there has been little overlap between the burgeoning pragmatist scholarship in international relations and the broader disciplinary debate over whether international relations is useful and how. This is not only because scholars concerned with usefulness have been inattentive to pragmatism. It is also because scholars concerned with pragmatism have been

⁵ A recent published seminar provides a couple of notable exceptions (Sjoberg 2015, Voeten 2015), while Erica Chenoweth (2014) more informally notes the importance of interaction between scholars and non-elites. These calls fit better with the agenda of non-international relations scholars (Putnam 2003, Smith 2004), for greater engagement between the political science academy and the public.

inattentive to usefulness. Most pragmatists have been more interested in enquiring into epistemology and methodology.

Thus, for example, many pragmatists justify their approach as an alternative to the worship of positivism that in their view afflicts the international relations mainstream (Jackson 2009, Friedrichs 2009). Others focus on the metatheoretic benefits of pragmatism as an alternative to intra-disciplinary ‘paradigm wars’ (Franke and Weber 2012, Owen 2002) or suggest that pragmatism’s benefits are largely methodological (Sil and Katzenstein 2010), or grounded in the benefits of ‘abduction’ (Friedrichs and Kratochwil 2009, Hellmann 2009).

While these accounts are valuable, they mostly emphasize pragmatism’s benefits for theory and explanation over its focus on usefulness. In Cochran’s (2012, 10) description, “[t]he majority of interventions on pragmatic themes, and the ones that resonate most in the discipline today, are those that aim to shed new light on the epistemological and methodological debates in which IR has been caught up since the 1970s.” Hence, they leave an important set of questions to one side. How does pragmatism help make international relations useful to a broader set of actors? Some of the pragmatist literature is self-defeatingly abstract. In Sil’s (2009, 648) frank description, “[e]qually problematic is the fact that what pragmatists have to say rarely seems intelligible, let alone relevant, to most mainstream IR scholars.”

Other scholarship invokes pragmatism as an explanation, arguing that real world actors’ approaches to the situations they find themselves in better resemble the kinds of muddling through and problem solving described by pragmatism than the stylized logics of more traditional accounts (Avant 2016, Dancy 2016). Their work partly converges with the ‘practice turn’ that characterizes a significant body of recent international relations scholarship (Pouliot 2008). This literature provides one answer to the question of usefulness, by looking to

demonstrate how pragmatism works in practice, but it does not explicitly draw out lessons for how international relations scholars should think of their work.

A different and less visible strand of pragmatist scholarship has inquired into the relationship between international relations scholarship and the public. Cochran (2012) notes that international relations was once less professionalized and more permeable to non scholars. Wesley Widmaier (2004) urges “a more explicit engagement with public concerns,” offering both Dewey and John Kenneth Galbraith as exemplars. Jonathan Isacoff (2015, 27) says that “most, if not all paradigms and models in IR have become academic exercises that are effectively irrelevant to the real world of human experience” and that Dewey provides international relations scholarship with a way to work towards the public good. Abraham and Abramson (2017, 27) similarly build on Dewey to argue that the vocation of pragmatist international relations is tied “to a specific political project: helping to constitute the public in an age of planetary governance.”

We argue that this final approach provides a good starting point to respond to Keohane’s critique of contemporary international relations scholarship, and to make international relations scholarship (and, in particular, IPE) useful to actors other than elites. Cochran (2002, 2012) reconstructs the historical relationship between international relations and pragmatism, to show that Dewey’s account of politics is deeply relevant both to international relations scholars’ self-understanding and their understanding of the world that they study. Isacoff (2015) and Abraham and Abramson (2017) argue that international relations pragmatism demands a clear orientation towards the “concrete human woes” (Dewey 1948,173) of the public and a systematic scholarly

effort to uncover hidden interdependencies, and hence help constitute informed international publics.⁶

John Dewey's political theory grounds this project because it is not an account of American democracy as many assume, but an account in which the current form of the state is a contingent and provisional product of changing interdependent relations. Dewey is not merely a theorist of American democracy but more generally a prophet of interdependence. Furthermore, he claims that the complex relations of interdependence imply a specific vocation for social scientists, whose job it is to elucidate these relationships to inform democratic publics, and indeed help them come into being. Hence, his ideas are well suited to explaining our current situation – and to helping international relations specialists to discover a scholarly vocation less apt to harness them to the purposes and preconceptions of foreign policy elites.

Pragmatism and usefulness

Dewey believes that social scientists will be highly useful when they elucidate the complex and often initially invisible interdependencies between the interactions of different human beings. Furthermore, his version of pragmatism is inseparably bound up with a democratic - and even radically democratic - account of human possibility. When social science discovers interdependencies, it allows human beings to themselves effectuate solutions to the complex problems in which they have embroiled themselves. On Dewey's account these solutions take the form of the establishment of appropriate political institutions (1948 [1920]).

⁶ See also Cochran's (2001) criticisms of Dryzek where she stresses the plurality of international publics, or, as she dubs them, 'international public spheres,' in contrast to Abraham and Abramson's suggestion that there should be a single international public.

Dewey's understanding of cooperation and interdependence begins in his early arguments that human beings are fundamentally social, so that it is impossible for individuals to think of themselves in pure isolation (2016 [1908], 268). Especially in his early writings, Dewey is overweeningly optimistic about the possibility of resolving social problems through cooperation. However, as his work progresses he increasingly recognizes that different groups will disagree, and that powerful individuals' understanding of politics are likely to be grossly distorted by their interests and privileges. In *The Public and Its Problems*, he treats human interdependence as the

objective fact that human acts have consequences upon others, that some of these consequences are perceived, and that their perception leads to subsequent effort to control action so as to secure some consequences and avoid others. Following this clew, we are led to remark that the consequences are of two kinds, those which affect the persons directly engaged in a transaction, and those which affect others beyond those immediately concerned.” (2016 [1927], 66)

Consequences of the former kind are not relevant to politics, since their effects are usually immediately visible and limited to the small number of actors directly involved. Consequences of the latter sort, are, in contrast, what politics is all about. They may involve very many people, who may be unaware of their implications and scale.

For Dewey, then, the core questions of modern politics involve the indirect consequences of ‘conjoint action.’ The relevant public for a particular kind of action is formed of those who are “indirectly and seriously affected for good or for evil” by such actions (2016 [1927], 84). However, to become a true public, those actors who are indirectly affected by a given set of

consequences need to be informed about it. A lively intelligence about their situation and shared interests translates an inchoate grouping of people into a public - an organized entity that can reason collectively about its shared interests and how to promote them.

The state is the agency through which the public may prosecute its interests. Dewey objects to accounts in which the state is a mere “mask for private desires for power and position” or a fraud, although he recognizes that state actors are often driven by the desire for peculation. Instead, the state is a set of “special agencies and measures” or an “existing group” that takes on new responsibilities, in order to remake the conditions of behavior so as to shape consequences. The state is that specialized entity, involving officials, through which a public organizes itself. “Somewhere between associations that are narrow, close and intimate and those which are so remote as to have only infrequent and casual contact lies, then, the province of a state.” (Dewey 2016 [1927], 90-91)

This account notably does not derive states (by which Dewey sometimes means something more like what a modern social scientist would call ‘organizations’ or ‘institutions’) from the existing system of nation states or anything like it. Instead, one may expect to encounter many different forms of the ‘state,’ depending on the extent to which a self-identified public has come into being, that public’s particular needs, and existing political conditions allow the public to become self-aware and active. The extent to which a given political organization *actually reflects* the needs of a given public is historically contingent.

States may come into being because of mistaken understandings of how to solve problems. Furthermore, “the power and prestige which attend command of official position render rule something to be grasped and exploited for its own sake.” (Dewey 2016 [1927], 80). Publics may long remain disorganized because they cannot “use inherited political agencies” that

not only reflect defunct understandings of social problems, but also may actively organize themselves so as to prevent new and better fitted states from arising (ibid). Even as the public that generated the original state disappears (because, perhaps the nature of the problem has changed), the officials and agencies of that state look to retard other developments because of “the power and lust of possession.” (Dewey 2016 [1927], 81) It is for that reason that “change of the form of states is so often effected only by revolution” (Ibid).

In these last observations Dewey identifies the crucial role that power relationships play in explanations of social interdependencies. On his account, while politics can be best interpreted as the efforts of interdependent actors to find institutional solutions to the problems that they collectively face, we must always take account of the conflicts that characterize and often distort those efforts. Failure to unmask the effects of such power asymmetries will undermine our efforts to adequately understand the situation.

Dewey’s account also differs from traditional liberal accounts of politics, which often seek to limit the state so that it does not encroach upon the liberties of individuals (Knight 2001). Dewey recognizes no *a priori* separation between areas where the state should intervene and areas where it should not, instead arguing that the limits of state intervention should depend on its usefulness rather than individualistic theories. Where the conjoint behavior of a group creates a large public interest, it may be necessary to reconstruct that group, whether it be a church, trade union, business corporation or family institution.

Dewey suggests that the most effective means of resolving problems are those that will make the best use of these publics’ abilities, knowledge and resources. All this is baked into Dewey’s theoretical approach, which is one of exploration and bold, persistent experimentation. Dewey characterizes this experimentation in a manner that justifies both free and equal

participation for all members of these publics as well as democratic decision-making in the resolution process:

The best guarantee of collective efficiency and power is liberation and use of the diversity of individual capacities in initiative, planning, foresight, vigor and endurance.... Full education comes only when there is a responsible share on the part of each person, in proportion to capacity, in shaping the aims and policies of the social groups to which he belongs. This fact fixes the significance of democracy.... It is but a name for the fact that human nature is developed only when its elements take part in directing things which are common, things for the sake of which men and women form groups---families, industrial companies, governments, churches, scientific associations and so on. (1948, 209)

This characterization implies strong normative commitments that are at odds with the implicit direction of much empirically focused political science scholarship. However, it reflects Dewey's underlying pragmatic view of how social inquiry should be useful, and how usefulness entails a guarantee of the political conditions for effective experimentation (Knight and Johnson 2011). Effective problem-solving, on Dewey's account, requires that we guarantee that all participate to the full extent of their abilities. And this requires attention to the asymmetries of power that might hinder participation and thus distort experimentation. The commitment to problem-solving and experimentation entails a deep commitment to power equality and to *democratic* forms of problem solving that map directly onto the problems of interdependence and the publics they give rise to. In this way Dewey's normative conclusions follow directly from the logic of his explanatory goals.

Finally, this account of how publics form and organize themselves implies a strong relationship between social science and politics. If the ever-changing boundaries of the public depend on an understanding of the indirect consequences of certain kinds of behavior, then mapping out these consequences will have formative consequences for the public. To discover (and, crucially, to disseminate knowledge of that discovery) that a certain kind of behavior has unperceived broad consequences is to change the boundaries of a public, or perhaps even to create one. Dewey argues that:

[o]pinions and beliefs concerning the public presuppose effective and organized inquiry. Unless there are methods for detecting the energies which are at work and tracing them through an intricate network of interactions to their consequences, what passes as public opinion will be “opinion” in its derogatory sense rather than truly public, no matter how widespread the opinion is.” (2016 [1927], 199)

The crucial engine creating indirect consequential relationships among people in modern society is technological and economic change. Yet these effects and relationships are not sufficient on their own to create publics, unless these publics have reasonably accurate knowledge of the specific ways in which they rework human relationships, More broadly, to constitute a proper public means ensuring that it is well informed about the manifold and complex causal relationships that connect actions to their indirect (and sometimes likely unintended) consequences. Dewey puts it as follows:

What actually happens in consequence of industrial forces is dependent upon the presence or absence of perception and communication of consequences, upon foresight and its effect upon desire and endeavor. Economic agencies produce one result when they are left to work themselves out on the merely physical level, or on that level modified only as the knowledge, skill and technique which the community has accumulated are transmitted to its members unequally and by chance. They have a different outcome in the degree in which knowledge of consequences is equitably distributed, and action is animated by an informed and lively sense of a shared interest” (2016 [1927], 181)

This is why Dewey believes that a reformed social science can play a crucial role as guide to public debate, and as an alternative to the triviality of conventional media. Dewey claims that the social sciences currently play a largely ideological role. They provide “an organized justification of the main structures of society as they exist” so that “[c]lassical political science becomes a recluse from the world of affairs and alternates between a pedantic conservatism and a complacent acceptance of any brute change which happens, if only a decent time be allowed to elapse.” (1918b, 384). This is because the social sciences start from assumed abstract general laws, under which, “mere empirical facts cannot figure except as they are framed within a concept or trimmed down to be an illustration of a law, in either, dislocated from their every day context” (1918b, 383).

Instead, Dewey advocates an “experimental science” which would start from what is actually going on rather than from abstract propositions, and end with problem solving rather than an edifice of law-like generalizations. In arguing for the reconstruction of social and political philosophy writ large, Dewey emphasizes the need to refocus the social sciences: “In

the question of methods concerned with reconstruction of special situations rather than any refinements in the general concepts of institution, individuality, state, freedom, law, order, progress, etc., lies the true impact of philosophical reconstruction.” (1948, 193)

Notably, contrary to many international relations pragmatists, Dewey’s experimental science does not entail suspicion of standard social scientific methodologies. Instead, social scientists should employ whatever methodologies reap better explanations of the relevant social interdependencies. For example, strategic analysis is often looked upon with suspicion by many pragmatist social scientists, but may be employed to undermine the kinds of generalizing economistic claims that Dewey deplored (Johnson 2010). Properly employed, strategic analysis can offer important insights into the nature of social interdependencies as well as into the influences of asymmetries of power that undermine progress in resolving many existing problems. Equally, sophisticated statistical techniques can be extraordinarily valuable when they elucidate subtle causal relationships that would otherwise be invisible.

However, Dewey’s emphasis on problem-focused social inquiry does have specific implications for both the subject-matter and audience of social science research. He advocates a science that starts from observed relationships, and the ways in which they change, rather than posited general laws. He further argues against claims that social science ought limit its guidance to political elites, as the only actors capable of comprehending the general interest and acting on it. Instead, the role of social scientists is simultaneously more public facing and more limited. Rather than building the knowledge that allows elites to govern, social scientists should look to discover the hidden and complex causal relationships that characterize political interdependence, and hence help publics come into being.

In Dewey's description, political science needs to cease being an "idle spectator" of events and engage with actual politics (Farr 1999). This does not mean that scholars should become activists, but that they need to engage directly in public debate so as to elucidate and *publicly* explain the "intricate network of interactions" through which human actions have complex consequences, as well as learning what people actually believe and are concerned with.

[I]t may well sound ridiculous to say that a genuine social science would manifest its reality in the daily press, while learned books and articles supply and polish tools of inquiry. But the inquiry which alone can furnish knowledge as a precondition of public judgments must be contemporary and quotidian. Even if social sciences as a specialized apparatus of inquiry were more advanced than they are, they would be comparatively impotent in the office of directing opinion on matters of concern to the public as long as they are remote from application in the daily and unremitting assembly and interpretation of "news." On the other hand, the tools of social inquiry will be clumsy as long as they are forged in places and under conditions remote from contemporary events. (2016 [1927], 201)

While social scientists and other experts can play a key role in explicating complex relations of interdependence, and discovering best how to solve them, they should provide technical advice rather than grand schemes of reform. "The man who wears the shoe knows best that it pinches and where it pinches, even if the expert shoemaker is the best judge of how the trouble is to be remedied." (2016 [1927], 224)

In short, Dewey offers a novel, and valuable understanding of exactly how social science can be useful, and to whom. It can make itself useful by providing an understanding of the complex webs of interdependence, their implications, and (once needs have been initially identified), the best apparent ways of solving them. This will be useful to publics - both nascent publics that might not identify their common interests at all, were it not for the initial impetus of grounded and accessible social science research, and existing publics, whom social scientists ought engage in a continuing dialogue where goals and the best means to achieve those goals are defined and redefined in response to experience.

Dewey and International Politics

Dewey is traditionally interpreted as an observer of American democracy, and indeed his arguments about the role of social science are not aimed specifically at the discipline of international relations, which had not properly been articulated as a distinct approach when Dewey was writing (Cochran 2012). Yet Dewey's account of publics and their problems is squarely aimed at international as well as US domestic politics.

As Dewey argues, problems arise from the interdependence of human action, shaping both the publics that become aware of them and the state institutions that these publics might build to resolve them. As the world becomes more complex and interconnected, there will be more problems of conjoint action that flow across existing state borders rather than being dammed up behind them. This is not only readily accommodated by Dewey's argument; it is explicitly anticipated by it.

In actuality we are part of the same world as that in which Europe exists and into which Asia is coming. Industry and commerce have interwoven our destinies. To maintain our older state of mind is to cultivate a dangerous illusion (1916, 193).

Hence, Dewey's understanding of interdependence between the actions of human beings begins to converge with the international relations scholarship on interdependence, which treats it as "reciprocal effects among countries or among actors in different countries." (Keohane and Nye 2001, 7). Consider Dewey's own understanding of the implications of his arguments for the transnational nature of a problem-focused inquiry:

The other concrete fact is the opposition between the claim of independent sovereignty in behalf of the territorial national state and the growth of international and what have well been called transnational interests. The weal and woe of any modern state is bound up with that of others. Weakness, disorder, false principles on the part of any state are not confined within its boundaries. They spread and infect other states. (1948, 204)

There is, for Dewey, no *a priori* reason why we need deal with problems only through the existing state system. Indeed, he sees this system as a survival from a previous set of notions about the relevant publics, which is poorly constituted for current tasks:

Internationalism is not an aspiration but affect, not a sentimental ideal but a force. Yet these interests are cut across and thrown out of gear by the traditional doctrine of exclusive national sovereignty. It is the vogue of this doctrine or dogma that presents the

strongest barrier to the effective formation of an international mind which alone agrees with the moving forces of present-day labor, commerce, science, art and religion. (1948, 205)

Dewey understood that an international focus followed explicitly from his analysis of the appropriate nature of social science research. And it was reinforced by his broader political commitments. Much of Dewey's work as a public intellectual was devoted to international causes, sometimes problematic (such as the World War I jingoism that led Randolph Bourne to attack Dewey in a series of devastating essays), or quixotic (as in his brief attachment to a group of intellectuals calling for war to be declared illegal under international law). He disliked traditional diplomacy and power politics, which he connected to European conservatism, advocating instead for a variety of international arrangements intended to limit or replace them. During World War I and its immediate aftermath, Dewey believed that the US was uniquely free among the great powers of status-seeking conservatism, being instead committed "most completely to the ethics of industry and exchange." (Dewey 1918a, 341) This led him to adopt a cheery optimism about America's commitment to World War I, and its efforts to set up a League of Nations, that might protect (as Dewey saw it) weaker states like China from the depredations of the old powers. This optimism was swiftly undermined by the post World War I order, the refusal of the US to participate in the League of Nations and that organization's powerlessness, and the unsurprising revelation that the US could be quite as self-interested as any other state in its international dealings.

The arguments developed in *The Public and Its Problems* are internationalist but do not depend on US exceptionalism or call for the outlawry of war. Dewey begins from a more

realistic assessment of the difficulties of creating new arrangements. First, he notes that technological change means that politics has escaped from genuine community life. This has consequences for the internal constitution of countries like the US which can no longer be a “congeries of self-governing communities.” Yet these changes also have great consequences for international relations too. New technologies of transport and communication have destroyed distance, with the consequence that people who were previously disconnected from each other, in the sense that their actions had little consequence for each other, now find themselves in a situation of interdependence that is liable to lead to conflict. The interdependence between conjoint actions that Dewey sees as crucial to the formation of publics, is not confined inside the boundaries of nation states.

Nor is the importance of technological development confined to domestic issues, great as it is in this field. The enormously increased destructiveness of war, previously mentioned, is the immediate outcome of modern technological developments. And the frictions and conflicts which are the immediate occasions of wars are due to the *infinitely multiplied and more intricate points of contact between peoples which are in turn the direct result of technological developments.*” [2016 [1927], 53; our italics]

When Dewey looks for a specific and urgent example of how interdependence has outstripped existing institutions, he turns not to American politics but international relations. The “Great War” - World War I - shows how this increase in interdependence can have enormously important consequences for world affairs.

“We think of all wars as much the same thing, only the last one was horrible beyond others. ... Literally every continent upon the globe was involved. Indirect effects were as broad as they were direct [sic]. Not merely soldiers, but finance, industry and opinion were mobilized and consolidated. Neutrality was a precarious affair. There was a critical epoch in the history of the world when the Roman Empire assembled in itself the lands and peoples of the Mediterranean basin. The World War stands out as an indubitable proof that what happened for a region has now happened for the world, only there is now no comprehensive political organization to include the various divided yet interdependent countries. ... Extensive, enduring, intricate and serious indirect consequences of the conjoint activity of a comparatively few persons traverse the globe.” (2016 [1927], 158)

However, the causal connections through which these effects traveled are often obscure and difficult to discern,

The connections and ties which transferred energies set in motion in one spot to all parts of the earth were not tangible and visible; they do not stand out as do politically bounded states. But the war is there to show that they are as real, and to prove that they are not organized and regulated. (2016 [1927], 159)

Addressing and regulating such connections will require new institutional arrangements; in effect, new publics and new states that are not organized according to existing national boundaries, but which reorganize themselves around the new problems that have been identified.

existing political and legal forms and arrangements are incompetent to deal with the situation. For the latter is the joint product of the existing constitution of the political state and the working of non-political forces not adjusted to political forms. We cannot expect the causes of a disease to combine effectually to cure the disease they create. The need is that the non-political forces organize themselves to transform existing structures: that the divided and troubled publics integrate. (2016 [1927], 159)

Thus Dewey's arguments explicitly point to a re-organization of the existing system of politics and states so that new publics address the interdependent relations that have sprung up across existing national boundaries, and new 'states' (or, more prosaically, institutions) make these publics effectual. This proposal stems from the same equalizing and democratic impulse as Dewey's other proposals for reform, looking to integrate and empower democratic publics that would otherwise be stunted.

The international aspect of Dewey's thought is habitually neglected. However, its importance to Dewey himself is clear. When the book was re-issued twenty years after its initial publication, its new Introduction was largely devoted to discussing the United Nations, which Dewey saw as evidence that "isolationism" was dwindling, and that "there is developing the sense that relations between nations are taking on the properties that constitute a public, and hence call for some measure of political organization" (2016 [1927], 50). Dewey was deliberately imprecise about the form that this organization should take - he considered this to be a pragmatic question rather than one that should be settled *a priori*. By analogy, he suggested that the question of where the line ought to be drawn between national affairs and international ones is similar to the line between "affairs left to private consideration and those subject to

political adjudication.” (2016 [1927], 51) While the question is formally universal, it is, in application, a practical and concrete one, that ought be addressed with respect to the particulars of a given situation. Finally, Dewey re-emphasized the need for “steady and systematic effort to develop that effective intelligence named scientific method in the case of human transactions” (2016 [1927], 55).

In short, Dewey’s understanding of the relationship between domestic and international politics is, unlike much existing work in both international relations and political theory, contingent upon the underlying context of interdependent relations. He does not posit any sharp distinction between the two, such that international politics and domestic politics are governed by fundamentally different logics, or that our relations to our fellow citizens are profoundly different to our relations to the citizens of other countries, or, for that matter, that we owe any universal duties and obligations to others such that closer bonds are irrelevant. Instead, he treats all these relationships as the provisional consequence of changing technologies, which bring people into closer contact or not, depending on their particular modalities.

As technologies of transportation and communication improve, we may expect that people’s actions will come to have greater indirect consequences for a far wider circle of others. In traditional communities, one may know nearly everyone who is affected by one’s actions in more than a tangential way. As communication and transport improve though, so to too does the sphere of conjoint action expand, so that one’s joint and separate actions may have consequences for a far wider circle of people, with whom one may not be even slightly intimate. Greater ties of communication and transportation between countries may be expected to increase the interdependence of people across borders, as national boundaries correspond less and less with

the complex social and economic relationships through which people have intercourse with each other.

Dewey, in his later work, does not spell out what these institutions should look like, in part because of his pragmatism, and in part because his earlier enthusiasm has been at least partly tempered by unhappy experience. Nor is he specific about the processes through which they come about, although he does identify the great barriers that existing institutions, and those who benefit from them, may pose for those who want to help foster new publics and new ways of solving problems. Yet he makes it clear that increased international interdependence implies the need for new publics, which are aware of the benefits and problems of conjoint actions across borders, and arm themselves with the necessary institutions to regulate this conjoint action.

This diagnosis of the problems of international and domestic politics lies behind his claim that social scientists ought to orient themselves towards these problems and implies that international relations scholars might have a particular role. Political scientists in general need to reorient themselves away from a search for general laws that serve only to justify existing arrangements, and towards more a specific understanding of the contingencies of interdependent choices and actions. International relations scholars, by extension, might valuably look to identify the *cross-national interdependencies* that result from technological and other changes, helping explain these to a broad audience across different borders, and hence providing the necessary information that might help a self-aware public to form around these interdependencies.

It is important to note that Dewey's agenda does not necessarily imply immediate and radical change in the structures and institutions governing international politics. Pragmatism could hardly insist on a general and uniform rule for problem solving regardless of its political

valence. However, Dewey emphasizes the importance of transnational interdependence and cautions against the negative effects of power imbalances. While he occasionally entertained semi-utopian notions of reform, his persistent concerns are practical and pragmatic ones.

Whenever he applies himself to concrete questions - the situation of China, the foreign policy of the US - he wishes to build from what is already there to discover what may be better, while recognizing that there will inevitably be strong opposition to reform from well-entrenched actors. Building a new 'state' - that is, reformed political institutions - will only be possible when the state reflects the needs of a new public. There is no necessary reason why such a new set of institutions must completely supplant existing arrangements, especially if these arrangements still reflect the needs and wants of existing publics.

Thus, while Dewey's arguments have some features in common with functionalists such as Mitrany (1948) and integrationists such as Deutsch (1953) he does not presuppose any necessary transition from a world of individual states to a more unified polity. There is a broad spectrum of possible arrangements through which interdependencies across national borders could be recognized and better handled - assessing which ones are better or worse is more plausibly discovered through intelligent experimentation than preconceived schemes, and should always be subject to democratic assessment and revision. Dewey's radicalism is not one of grand plans, but rather one of persistent and continuous applied inquiry into the relations between states and the publics they serve, and of how state forms may change, when appropriate, to better serve these publics.

Pragmatist international political economy

Dewey's arguments thus provide a very different account of the role and responsibilities of social science than do existing accounts of international relations. Instead of starting from posited abstract rules and general laws, international scholars should engage directly with the complex causal relations that constitute an interdependent world. Instead of guiding elite foreign policy actors in their own countries, they should provide (sometimes nascent and sometimes cross-national) publics with knowledge concerning complex causal relationships. Thus, they should see themselves as engaged in a fundamentally democratic project, of providing publics with expertise that will help them to identify their common problems, and, in dialogue with those publics, considering small or great institutional reforms that could address these problems.

This framework provides the basis for a specific critique of IPE (and *pari passu*, other areas of international relations). The existing field of IPE has largely been built on the foundations of two abstracting assumptions. The first is that international institutions are relatively efficient means to solve collective problems. The second is that the common interest is expressed by the interests of the average consumer, who will always benefit from freer and more open economic exchange (and whose interests are impeded by special interests who look to preserve economic rents by preventing openness and stymieing competition). These abstractions have allowed scholars to defend the dominant features of the international political economy – international institutions and economic openness - as democratically justified forms of delegation that serve demonstrable public needs, and made it more difficult to engage with public needs that their theoretical tools occlude.

The first stems from the history of modern IPE, which largely arose in competition with realist-dominated accounts of international security. Early work on transnationalism and complex interdependence (Keohane and Nye 1972, 1977) examined how the emerging global

international liberal order provided opportunities for non-state actors to cooperate and engage in global politics, creating problems of interdependence and possible cooperative solutions. However, it was notably stronger at describing the global liberal order than theorizing it (Keohane 2009), exposing it to pressure from neo-realism (Waltz 1979), which claimed to provide a general theory of international politics. This led international political economy scholars to look for their own abstract theory. They found it in transaction cost economics (Coase, Williamson 1975, 1985) and “folk theorem” and evolutionary game theoretic results about the possibility of cooperation (Keohane 1982, 1984, Axelrod and Keohane 1985).

These allowed “neo-liberal institutionalists” to incorporate Waltz’s argument and aspirations towards generalization but to turn it to explaining “cooperation under anarchy” (Oye 1986). As Keohane and Martin observed, “one of the most striking features of institutional theory ... is that it embraces so much of the hard core of realism.” (Keohane and Martin 1995, p. 75). If realists insisted that international politics was an information poor environment, where states could never trust each other, neo-liberal institutions argued that states constructed institutions exactly to create the necessary information to lower transaction costs and support cooperation.

This reorientation directed inquiry away from concrete transnational interdependence towards the construction of an abstract general theory of relations between states. Power relations were discounted in favor of functionalist arguments about institutions (Krasner 1990), while practical inquiries into power, such as the work of Susan Strange (1996) fell out of fashion in mainstream IPE (Sell 2016, Seabrooke and Young 2017).

The second stemmed both from the limitations of the first and the need to understand new economic phenomena. As Robert Keohane and Lisa Martin (1995) acknowledged, their approach

to IPE failed to properly incorporate domestic actors and domestic interests. This made it hard to understand the 1990s push towards breaking down barriers that impeded global flows of trade and capital, which was facilitated by international institutions but hardly caused by them. A new literature built on arguments such as Rogowski's (1987), borrowing microfoundations from economic theory to explain the move towards greater openness.⁷ The economic account of comparative advantage implied that the puzzle was why states had maintained these barriers for so long. Scholars used Stolper-Samuelson and Ricardo-Viner approaches to trade to explain how particular sectors or asset holders might support or oppose greater openness, and veto power accounts to explain how they might succeed or fail in getting governments to implement their interests. This "open economy politics" (OEP) account posited a bottom-up process in which interest group preferences were aggregated through political institutions, hence shaping national negotiating positions. The approach predicted that increased openness would create an upward ratchet effect, undermining opponents of free trade.

Over time, in turn, free trade has systematically harmed scarce factors of production and shrunk their political strength, as witnessed by the declining labor movements of most industrialized countries; correspondingly, comparatively disadvantaged industries have slowly disappeared, as in the footwear industry in North America, once a vibrant force in the protectionist coalition. In this way, the WTO and the free trade regime it supports have fundamentally reshaped the economic and political structures of its members in

⁷ Here, we rely extensively on Lake's (2010) reconstruction. Although Lake is sympathetic to OEP he does not consider himself a card-carrying practitioner. <http://www.theory-talks.org/2012/01/theory-talk-46.html>.

ways that expand and strengthen groups supportive of free trade and shrink and weaken the forces of protectionism (Lake 2009, 238).⁸

Both neo-liberal institutionalism and OEP relied on grand abstractions. Neo-liberal institutionalists built their own variant of Waltz's highly abstract general theory of international politics, varying the key assumption of information to make room for institution-fostered cooperation. OEP scholars assumed away complex cross-national interdependence and systemic factors (Oatley 2011), using economists' generalizing approach to build a linear model of how trade preferences were formed, aggregated and had consequence (Milner 1998).

Notably, these abstractions were combined with strong normative commitments. Neo-liberal institutionalists' organizing assumption was that international institutions supported beneficial cooperation. These institutions resembled the constitutional arrangements of domestic states, limiting the powerful to support peaceful exchange while socializing powerful states such as China towards more liberal values (Ikenberry 2008, 2011). OEP scholars thought similarly. Since open trade was in the general interest of consumers, it was only impeded when well organized special interests prevailed over the disorganized general population. If ordinary consumers were ever allowed a straight up-or-down vote on open trade, they would surely vote in favor (Lake 2010). More generally, cooperation-fostering institutions combined with open trade and capital flows to build an "international liberal order" benefiting the states and citizens that belonged to it (Ikenberry 2011).

⁸ However, some historically minded practitioners of the approach (Frieden 2007) were well aware the coalitions supporting free trade had been fragile in previous eras, and might well fall apart again.

IPE scholars could play an important political role in supporting this liberal order. They could supplement the work of economists by providing a more precise understanding of the political underpinnings of free trade and global liberalism. The public failed to understand the benefits of global liberalism and free exchange.

No issue divides economists and mere Muggles more than the debate over globalization and international trade. Where the high priests of the dismal science see opportunity through the magic of the market's invisible hand, Joe Sixpack sees a threat to his livelihood.⁹

Hence, scholars focused on building the intellectual underpinnings for an elite consensus. In the description of Frieden and Lake (2005, 144):

Another effect of the establishment of a more or less consensual academic view of trade policy has been its transmission to policy makers, observers, and other participants. Today, popular, policy, and journalistic analyses of trade policy issues simply take as given the hard-fought arguments and findings of the scholarly community: protection responds to interest-group pressures, economic characteristics of industries and products affect their ability and willingness to organize and receive favorable trade policies, organized consumers can mitigate pressures for protection, and so on. *More than the specifics of the theories and findings, however, the general approach to trade policy is taken as a given by most* (our italics).

They played a self-conscious role in forging this understanding. As Helen Milner (1998, 786) described it, by contributing to the understanding of “how the WTO can best promote freer trade, [international relations studies] could have major benefits” for policy makers.

According to scholars like Keohane, Stephen Macedo and Andrew Moravcsik, these benefits meant that international institutions and trade arrangements were democratically justifiable (Moravcsik 2004, Keohane, Macedo and Moravcsik 2011, Keohane 2011). Their overlapping accounts treated democracy as a national level question, stressing the analogy between international institutions and domestic arrangements that secured cooperation so as to reflect the assumed trade preferences of the median voter.

Moravcsik (2004) argued that delegation to international organizations was democratically justified just as delegation to domestic institutions was. It helped prevent, for example, “the capture of government policy by narrow but powerful interest groups opposed to the interests of majorities with diffuse, longer-term, less self-conscious concerns,” such as consumers and firms that would benefit from free trade (Moravcsik 2004, 346). Institutions such as “fast track” trade authority, which isolated trade decisions from the give-and-take of political bargaining allowed governments to “override powerful particularistic interests in the name of the national (or median) interest.” (ibid, see also Lohmann and O’Halloran 1994, Keohane 2011). Exactly because they were more insulated, they better represented citizen concerns than more directly democratic institutions would have (ibid). Keohane, Macedo and Moravcsik (2011, 9) extended these claims into a general argument that “multilateralism helps combat dominant factions, protects vulnerable minorities, and enhances democracy’s epistemic virtues.” Again,

⁹ N. Gregory Mankiw, “Beyond the Noise on Free Trade,” *New York Times* March 16, 2008.

they stressed the benefits of trade liberalization for the median voter. While they acknowledged that it would be undemocratic for an “elite multilateral institution ... to override repeated demonstrations of informed, rights-regarding, fairly represented popular will,” they also

insist[ed] ... that properly authorized multilateral institutions such[sic] as other commonplace constitutional institutions may be justified in imposing checks, constraints, and corrections that are not well-informed, rights-regarding, or fairly represented [so that] proper policy outcomes cannot be read directly from expressions of public preference.

(ibid)

Although scholars studied the waxing and waning of popular support for trade, a combination of abstract assumptions – cooperation-enhancing international institutions; the need to protect poorly organized consumers against special interests; the justifiability of insulation – provided the intellectual foundations for a “monocultural” (McNamara 2009) approach to international political economy, that in turn was deployed to support elite assumptions about the broad benefits of globalization. The functionalist account of institutions precluded serious research on how they were shaped by power relations and different distributional interests (Voeten unpublished). Scholarship, for example, on Investor-State Dispute Resolution (Büthe and Milner 2008) treated these arrangements as efficiency-enhancing institutional arrangements to ‘tie the king’s hands’ (Simmons and Danner 2010, North and Weingast 1999), ignoring distributional questions (Sweetland Edwards 2016, Tucker 2017), that eventually led to a “deep crisis of legitimacy” in the ISDS regime (Peinhardt and Wellhausen 2016). Nor was there any

sustained attention to how ‘insulated’ institutions such as fast track trade negotiation procedures could benefit other narrow interests (Rodrik 2018). International relations scholars largely ignored research suggesting that delegation to international institutions could help domestic political actors duck responsibility for awkward problems (Mair 2013), that many of the architects of multilateralism, far from wanting to enhance democracy, sought actively to constrain it (Slobodian 2018), and that international economic decision making was increasingly dominated by cross-national networks of individuals and institutions (Tooze 2018).

Finally, this body of scholarship more or less systematically ignored the profusion of cross-national power relations that had sprung up as globalization provided new opportunities for mobile actors to reshape domestic and international institutions to their benefit (Farrell and Newman 2014). As Dewey warned, these “empirical facts” did not figure in mainstream IPE, because they could neither be framed within its organizing concepts or readily be trimmed down to illustrate the laws that it sought to discover.

The disciplinary travails of IPE do not explain the upsurge of political populism. However, they do explain the intellectual difficulties that international political economy scholars face in reorienting themselves.

Truly beginning to understand the emerging global political economy will require a profound reorientation on three levels. First, international relations scholars will need to disassociate themselves from the articulation and defense of an elite perspective on the world economy that is no longer plausible. Second, they will need to begin to investigate phenomena that their existing theoretical and normative commitments have marginalized. Finally, they will have to justify their usefulness in different ways.

While we cannot provide a complete program (nor should we, given our pragmatist commitments, nor would we want to) for doing this, our Deweyan perspective points the way towards a different understanding of international political economy. In the short term, rather than identifying with elites, scholars should identify with a public that is increasingly cut out of decision making, even in democracies, by elites that have often sought to insulate themselves from democratic pressures. Rather than beginning from *a priori* assumptions about the benefits of global openness and international institutions, they would practically investigate the causal relations of globalization that have been systematically occluded both by existing approaches and the elite consensus that they inform. This would entail, for example, investigation of the consequences of globalization for the fabric of domestic communities (Frieden 2018, Dean 2018a, unpublished), or of the consequences of free movement of global capital for taxation (Piketty 2014, Zucman 2015) and domestic corruption (Milanovic 2016).

This process of inquiry would be undertaken in dialogue with nascent or existing domestic or transnational publics, seeking to inform them and be informed by them rather than simply inferring their interests. There are some reasons for believing that this could provide real benefits. For example, opposition to ISDS has created an active transnational public in Europe (Chan and Crawford 2017), and there is an important (albeit overly idealistic) tradition of engagement between international relations experts and broad publics in the US that could be pragmatically revived (Bessner and Wertheim 2017). Nor need such dialogue be confined to groups on the left, or to cross-national (or for that matter to national or international) publics. The fundamental pragmatist commitment is to democracy and equality of voice, rather than to particular voices within democracy, or levels on which democracy ought necessarily be instantiated.

A genuinely pragmatist IPE would thus justify itself through its usefulness to a variety of publics. Given the contentious nature of many international issues, and deep disagreements over whether they should be solved domestically, or internationally, it is unlikely that this would lead to any consensus among those publics, yet by clarifying the nature of the interdependent conditions through which publics come into being, and helping publics articulate the space of possible solutions, it could at least contribute to making likely disagreements more useful and more likely to be fruitful of possible resolutions.

Conclusion

International relations scholars have always worried about the usefulness of their research. Now, they furthermore fear that they have helped to build knowledge and institutions that have reinforced the barriers between ordinary people and elites that is challenging the liberal order. In this article, we have set out an alternative account of how international relations can be useful and can contribute to a democratic reimagining of world politics, building on the work of John Dewey.

For Dewey, international relations scholarship, like other social science scholarship, is useful when it uncovers otherwise obscured causal relations between individuals, exposing the channels of conjoint action to scrutiny. The ‘whom’ to which it is useful are publics rather than elites, helping these publics to understand their shared and conflicting interests, and to think through institutional changes that might address the interdependencies of action.

This account provides a plausible set of underpinnings for international relations theory in a globalizing world, since Dewey was quite explicitly concerned with the question of how institutions change, as interdependencies begin to work across borders. Most modern interpretations of Dewey discount or ignore this aspect of his thought - yet it is not only unambiguously expressed across a wide variety of texts, but of fundamental importance to his understanding of politics and democracy. As interdependencies increase across borders, purely nationally focused institutions will increasingly fall out of tune with the actual publics, whether conscious or dormant, that are formed by the unplanned consequences of conjoint action. We have shown how these arguments apply to the current crisis of IPE, and demonstrated that they potentially generate a different way of thinking about the usefulness of international relations in revealing otherwise obscure forms of conjoint action, and hence helping facilitate the birth of new publics.

Our account addresses IPE. It may usefully be applied to other aspects of international relations, especially as international and domestic politics become increasingly intertwined in ways that undermine existing *a priori* approaches. Thus, for example, international security is increasingly not so much a matter of states facing off against other states in the international realm, as of a complex realm of cross-national interactions, where states, non-state actors and ordinary citizens interact (Wright 2017).

We do not discuss at all the most crucial current issue in which domestic and international politics are intertwined: global warming. Jessica Green (2018) calls for international relations scholars to profoundly re-imagine the ways in which they think about climate politics, so that instead of ignoring the aspects that do not fit into previously conceived theories, scholars engage in a frankly political analysis where they “lay bare the entrenched

economic interests that prevent us from a transition to fossil-free energy.” She insists that rather than speaking to fellow academics, scholars need to engage with publics, and with “making complex ideas readily digestible to a lay audience.” Green’s call for a problem-and-public focused approach to international relations provides an urgent and explicit parallel argument to our own, raising the stakes for scholars who would prefer to stay outside the fray.

We conclude by addressing three potential misunderstandings. First, Dewey’s commitment (and ours) is to democracy rather than to a specific set of policies that we believe will best meet the need of global publics. While our account is notably critical of the dominant approach to IPE, its criticisms focus on the *a priori* nature of its assumptions, and how these assumptions forestall investigations of the complex politics of interdependence, of power, and of how or whether existing institutions meet the needs of democratic publics. How flows of trade, investment and money should be structured is a matter for empirical inquiry and investigation by experts in dialogue with publics rather than *ex cathedra* pronouncements, from us just as much as from anyone else. Investigation might, for example, discover unrecognized advantages to current approaches.

Second, our arguments are orthogonal to many bitter disputes over usefulness in international relations. Specifically, our arguments imply no particular position as to whether statistical or qualitative methods are most appropriate. Under some circumstances, qualitative process tracing will best disentangle complex causal relations, while under others, sophisticated statistical techniques will be more apt for the purpose. Nonetheless, pragmatism will typically imply a preference for mid-range inquiry of the kind suggested by Lake (2011) instead of grand exercises in theory construction, even if this is sometimes mid-range inquiry into large scale problems. Our investigations will inevitably be provisional and contingent.

Finally, we again emphasize that a commitment to pragmatism goes hand-in-hand with a strong normative commitment to democracy. Dewey identifies democracy and equality as the key enabling conditions for proper pragmatist inquiry. The ways in which this article blends normative and empirical claims may seem unorthodox to some scholars of political science. Yet equally strong normative commitments are tacitly embedded in the existing assumptions of the mainstream of IPE. Explicitly acknowledging such commitments – and subjecting them to continual testing and re-examination in the light of experience – seems to us a better path forward than ignoring them or treating them as givens.

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