Rethinking Role Theory in Foreign Policy Analysis: Introducing Positioning Theory to International Relations[1]

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Ever since 'roles' and role theory have been introduced in International Relations (IR), foreign policy analysts have grappled with the different roles that states and other political actors can play in international relations. In a wider context, symbolic interactionism found its way in IR making headway for social constructivism. But role theory can be criticized as being a too static concept in order to describe the way in which actors are actually experiencing and enacting upon their different roles. Within psychology, positioning theory emerged as a modification of role theory. The difference between roles and positions lies along a spectrum of flexibility: roles are fixed while positions are fluid, overlapping and ephemeral. Positioning theory has been widely used in a variety of disciplines within the social sciences and humanities, but its insights are so far absent in IR. The idea behind this paper is threefold. First, it seeks to introduce positioning theory in foreign policy analysis in order to revitalize the importance of role theory by looking at the assumed positions, the developed storylines and speech

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acts used by actors in international relations. Secondly, at a more meta-theoretical level, position theory challenges IR's 'conventional' social constructivism. This opens a space for more targeted interdisciplinary scholarship and productive debates between psychology and IR under the rubric of social constructivism. This will all be done by introducing the work of the philosopher and psychologist Rom Harré, which brings us to our final and cross-cutting argument: that the in IR largely unknown work of Harré provides ways to productively discuss progress in IR theorizing.

INTRODUCTION

'Roles' have been widely discussed in the social sciences and is a central concept in anthropology, psychology and sociology since the 1920s and 30s (Biddle 1979). Through the publication of an influential article of K.J. Holsti in 1970 it also found its way to International Relations (IR) and more specifically to one of its sub branches, Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA).[2] Since the 'constructivist turn' in IR at the very end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, the discussion on role theory has paired up with this important innovation in IR theorizing. Central to this has been the work of Alexander Wendt (1999), which has then been widely discussed by a variety of authors (Guzzini and Leander 2006, Zehfuss 2002). By now, we can say that almost all scholarship on role theory engages with social constructivism *to some extent*. But, there is still a wide space for engagement between the two, due to the contested conceptualization of social constructivism in IR which we will discuss in more detail.[3]

The purpose of the paper is to introduce a particular view on role theory from psychology, called positioning theory as conceptualized by Harré and several collaborators (Davies and Harré 1990, Harré and Van Langenhove 1999, Harré and Moghaddam 2003). The first aim of the paper is to show the added value of position(ing) compared to role. But

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[2] In political science (e.g. American politics and comparative politics, see Searing 1991, Mavid 1980 for entries into the different debates) the discussion on roles is older than 1970 where it is for instance used to describe the roles of politicians (e.g. minister, backbencher, etc.) but it is rather limited due to the dominance of the intellectual import in political science from economics in contrast to sociology (*homo economics* vs. *homo sociologicus*). In European Studies and EU FPA roles have been discussed without referring to role theory, in contrast 'actorness' is more in vogue (Sjöstedt 1977, Bretherton and Vogler 1999, Baert, Scaramagli and Söderbaum 2014: chapters 3-4).

[3] We speak of 'social constructivism' and not 'constructivism', as the latter can relate to debates and movements in art or child psychology. Another option was to aim for 'social constructionism' which is more broadly used outside of IR, but then we alienate ourselves from the discussions in IR, where social constructivism is vigorously debated. Haslanger (2003: 301) remarks that "*the variety of different uses of the term has made it increasingly difficult to determine what claim authors are using it to assert or deny and whether the parties to the debates really disagree*".

even more importantly, by doing this, we also aim to bring new elements to the discussions on the relationship between psychology and IR. This is possible because Rom Harré is not only the conceiver of 'positioning theory', but also a prolific author on many issues within the social sciences. Harré is indeed an influential figure in many disciplines of the social sciences, humanities and even the natural sciences, but especially in psychology and philosophy of science. But his work remains largely unnoticed by the IR academic community.

The overall cross-cutting argument of this paper is therefore to introduce the corpus of scholarship of Horace Romano (Rom) Harré to the students of IR. Harré has been a typical example of the author as a meticulous 'oeuvre builder'.[4] After more than five decades of scholarship, one can say that Harré has created a very complex (but accessible in style of writing) and diverse corpus that together can be regarded as an attempt to build a truly transdisciplinary approach to what he calls himself 'the study of people and their ways of life' (Harré 1990: 340). His work consists of three major concerns: (a) the development of a realist philosophy of science, (b) dealing with controversies in the philosophy of physics and (c) developing adequate theories and methodologies for the social sciences (Bhaskar 1990). As we aim to demonstrate below, he is a more central figure to much of the IR discussions then what many IR scholars currently acknowledge.

For this paper we are mainly concerned with the discursive aspects of psychological phenomena which started to occupy a prominent role in Harré's work since the 1990s. This can be best be illustrated by works as *The Discursive Mind* (Harré and Gillet 1994) and *Discursive Psychology in Practice* (Harré and Stearns 1995). In the 1990s, Harré and collaborators developed a new interactionist theory of discursive 'positioning' in which social structure is conceived as fluid patterns of 'positioning' (Davies and Harré 1990, Harré and Van Langenhove 1999, Harré and Moghaddam 2003). Nonetheless, it is essential to see this work within the broader goal of his oeuvre to question the disciplinary divides with the social sciences and humanities and more in particular the dominance of positivism in psychology and beyond. This resulted in his (critical) realist approach to science through works as *Theories and Things* (1961), *The Principles of Scientific Thinking* (1970) and *Causal Powers* (Harré and Madden 1975), making headway for a social constructivist view on psychology (Lock and Strong 2010) and ultimately a new and consistent way to study psychological and

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[4] For critical examinations of Harré his work, see Bhaskar (1990), Rothbart (2004) and Van Langenhove (2011). For his influence on social constructivism, see Burr (2003) and Lock and Strong (2010: ch. 15).

social phenomena.[5] Harré sees psychology as becoming polarized around two seemingly irreconcilable schools of thought: the discursive approach and the neuro-biological approach. But for him, both approaches need to be developed simultaneously as psychology is to be regarded as a hybrid science. Harré's quest for developing a scientific psychology has thus also led him to criticize in a systematic way the mainstream methodologies of today's social sciences in general and to develop and advocate alternative methods of research. Three main issues have been part of this: (a) the introduction of an appropriate ontology for studying mental and social phenomena; (b) the development of a conceptual apparatus (e.g. concepts such as icons, model, grammars, meanings) that can be used to study social phenomena without reification; (c) the formulation of a systematic critique against the influence of covert positivistic assumptions need not lead to the extremes of relativistic postmodern approaches. Harré has developed a form of scientific realism of which he claims it to be the most adequate philosophy of science for the social sciences, and in which social reality is regarded as comprising an ever flowing stream of symbolic interactions. This specific philosophy of science together with the ontological claims and the conceptual apparatus are presented by Harré as valid for the whole social realm. Hence they should also apply to international relations and foreign policy. We therefore consider the work of Harré of relevance for IR and FPA. The discussion on role theory in IR allows us to develop this claim in some detail.

BEYOND THE FOG OF CONCEPTUAL SMOKE SCREENS

Role theory entered the debate in FPA through the work done by Holsti (1970) with his application of the concept of 'national role conceptions'. It was then further augmented and updated by scholars like Walker (1987). This was the starting point of an impressive list of empirical studies grounded in role theory which build up a conceptual tool box at hand (entries into the literature can be found in Harnisch, Frank and Maull, 2011, Thies, 2010 and Breuning 2019). This scholarship centralizes studies on foreign policy decision-making by opening the black box of state and IO decision-making processes.[6] These studies are mainly interested in how national elites perceive the role of their state in the international system. One would assume that this approach is very receptive of ideas from other social sciences like anthropology, psychology and sociology where roles are heatedly debated. But interestingly,

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[5] Realism in philosophy of science, should not be confused with 'political' Realism as an IR theory which is rooted in neopositivism (Jackson 2011).

[6] Excellent overviews on the FPA literature can be found in Hudson and Vore (1995) and a decade later in Hudson (2005).

the majority of role theory inspired FPA work is dominated by disciplinary concerns to engage with the discussion on domestic and bureaucratic politics and the so-called 'two-level game' (Putnam 1988) or refinements on the debate on the system level where the work done by Waltz (1979) is a citation classic. So, the debate on role theory, very much reflects the levels of analysis discussion in IR (Gould 1998). In this sense, it reflects what was expressed in the Secord and Harré quote at the beginning of this paper.

Even, the constructivist turn in FPA should be read along 'Waltzian' lines which is better understood if one focusses on the Wendtian account of social constructivism (Wendt, 1999). Or as Guzzini and Leander (2006, p. 73) argue: "*Yet he makes his argument for a theoretical heterodoxy by consciously staying within the disciplinary orthodoxy*". Through Wendt's work, role theory has been aligned with social constructivism and critical realism but in a contested way. IR and the wider FPA role theory community are still 'recovering' one could say from the many inconsistencies in his work. For the purpose of this paper, we identified three shortcomings:

1) *Role theory still needs 'grounding'.* Role theory is not a general theory (Biddle 1986, p. 86). Or as Searing (1991, p.1243) notes "*What is usually called 'role theory' are frameworks consisting of topics, concepts, and assumptions*". Role theory is a set of guiding concepts which still need to be matched with ontological, epistemological, methodological and theoretical discussions. What at the end of the day is advocated in the current FPA discussion on role theory is a neopositivist view on FPA in general, and role theory in particular. This is best exemplified by a recent new edited volume advocating 'neobevarioralism' in FPA (Walker, Malici & Schafer, 2011, see also Breuning, 2011). With our emphasis on positioning theory, which is by the way also not a general theory, we align ourselves with the discussion on social constructivism which emphasizes agency through the analysis of rules, speech acts, institutions, discourse, etc., within IR this through the social constructivism advocated by Onuf and the so-called Miami school (Onuf 1989, 2013; Kubalkova, Onuf & Kowert, 1998) who have embraced the linguistic turn in the social sciences and humanities as originated by Wittgenstein. This brings us to the famous discussion on agent and structure.

2) *Does role theory really solve the agency-structure debate?*

Advocates of role theory like Harnisch et al., 2011, p. 1) indicate that one of its most promising advantages is it potential to overcome the agent-structure debate – a debate which seems to haunt the social sciences for over a century. Role theory is essentially focused on bringing agency upfront, but how it is now applied by FPA role theorists, structure dominates the debate (Breuning, 2011). We would argue that there is a lot of potential to upgrade agency. So far, role theory has definitely punched below its weight. Through our application of positioning theory, agency becomes more prominent. For Harré the existence of independent structure is a myth. *"People are the effective agents who are creating the social world, creating social structures in accordance with the rules and conventions that have come to them historically, and, for the most part, are immanent in social practice"*. (Harré, 2002). This very much resembles Onuf's view (Onuf, 1989, 1995; Gould 1998) on the matter. The important point to remember is that structure is what observers see, while institutions are what agents act within. (Onuf 1998, p. 62). Instead of structure, Onuf proposes to talk about 'social arrangements'.

But their theoretical work is rooted in a different meta-theoretical debate. Whereas Harré is an initiator of (critical) realism within the social sciences, Onuf should be situated in what Jackson (2011) refers to as 'analyticism'. It is important to note that the realism as advocated by Harré is at crucial points for this paper in disagreement with the work of authors like Bhaskar and Archer (and Giddens) through whom IR got acquainted to critical realism.[7] The most important one, that social structures have no causal powers, only agents have. There is a longstanding and ongoing discussion if 'Bhaskarian' critical realism can be matched to social constructivism at all (Elder-Vass 2012). But we think this is more the case with the Harréian variant which features prominently in overview works of social constructivism in psychology (Burr 2003, Lock and Strong 2010).

3) *What does interaction really mean?*

Roles do not determine behavior. So, where role theory can give us some further ideas about how policy elites define their roles, we are still puzzled about how this effects

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[7] It is through these people that Wendt and some others like Wight, Kurki and Patomäki discuss critical realism in IR (Jackson 2011, Patomäki and Wight 2000).

their behavior. For Wendt (1999) roles are predefined in his assessment of symbolic interactionism. This has been rightly criticized by McCourt (2012) who went back to the original text of G.H. Mead (1934). We sympathize with this, but this find this narrow view on interactionism solely based on Mead unconvincing. Harré started the development of a non-positivist take on social reality with introducing rule-role models that explained social behaviour. Behind this was a dramaturgical model of the interactions between people. But he increasingly felt dissatisfied with role theory which he initially supported. Role theorists like Wendt (1999) or Harnisch (2011, p.40) indicate that language is an important aspect of social interaction but nonetheless further completely ignore it (Nabers, 2011, p. 80-81; Zehfuss 2002).

Positioning theory can contribute to overcome these shortcomings. Before introducing the basic tenets of this theory, a word of caution on the concept of 'position'. This concept has been used in the seminal article by Holsti (1970) but his use should not be confused with our approach. He refers to position as status, supported by a definition from Linton: "A role represents the dynamic aspect of a status. The individual is socially assigned a status and occupies it with relation to other statuses. When he puts the rights and duties which constitute the status into effect, he is performing a role" (Linton, 1936, p.114 cit. in Holsti, 1970, p. 239). Or more concretely to position as "a system of role prescriptions by Alter" (Holsti 1970, p. 240). In the context of international relations, position here refers to e.g. president of the US, soldier, terrorist, hedge fund trader, etc. These are recognized sets of people with a particular social status. But when we discuss position(ing), it refers to the work done in discursive psychology and more in particular to the work done by Rom Harré and his collaborators. Following Wittgenstein, we will not fall into the fallacy of semantic essentialism by trying to find a semantic correspondence between both usages of the term position.

An additional concept that often is confused with role, is that of identity (Nabers 2011). But as Kratochwil (2006, p.19) notes, "identity is that notion of sameness that gives our lives coherence, despite the many roles we play over the course of them. It is therefore problematic at the conceptual level to conflate the inherently social concept of role with that of identity, which is explicitly individualist in nature".
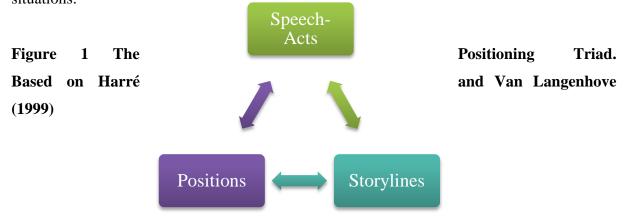
INTRODUCING POSITIONING THEORY

The philosopher of science and psychologist Rom Harré and a group of collaborators started to develop a theoretical and analytical corpus around the positioning concept with the aim to offer a discourse-based interactional approach to selves and identities. Davis and Harré (1990) regarded positions as constructs for the discursive production of selves, *whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story-line*s (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 48). By presenting positions, speech acts and story-lines as 'a mutually determining triad', the concept of position became part of an approach that can be situated in social constructivism's ontological position of *Verstehen* (Adler, 1997, p. 326). Direct inspiration has been found in the work of Foucault (1972) who coined the concept of 'subject position' in order to describe how discourses position people in terms of status and power. Hollway (1984) introduced 'positioning' as a concept in social psychology with her study on gendered subjectivities.

Role theory has some limits as discussed above. One of the key aspects of positioning theory is indeed that it claims to be *a* dynamic alternative to the more static concept of role (Harré & Van Langenhove 1990). In Harré and Van Langenhove (1990, p.196) this claim is further developed by referring to the Johnsonian notion of determinables and determinants. Roles are determinants, positions are determinants. That is, 'a role' is to 'a position' as 'color' is to red'. Adopting or being assigned a role fixes only a range of positions, positions compatible with the role'. And furthermore, the positions are linked to the unfolding of (conversational) interactions. It is based upon the idea that during conversational interactions, people use narratives or 'storylines' to make their words and actions meaningful to themselves and others. Metaphorically, they can be thought of as presenting themselves and others as actors in a drama, with different 'positions' assigned to the players. In this theory, the term 'position' refers to 'the momentary clusters of rights and duties to speak and act in a certain way' (Van Langenhove 2010, p.67). In combination with the speech-acts and the storylines[8] of a conversation, the positions form a mutually influencing triangle (see figure 1). The positions are the parts being performed by the participants. The actions (including speech) of the participants are given meaning by the storyline and the positioning of those involved. Being positioned in a certain way carries obligations or expectations about how to behave. Positions may also carry rights, such as the right to intervene or to speak. At a more abstract level positions can be seen as related to moral orders: sets of rights and duties that

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[8] Acts refer to the 'social meaning of actions' while storylines represent 'a loose cluster of narrative conventions according to which a social episode unfolds and positions arise' (Moghaddam, Harré and Lee 2008, p. 293-4).

apply to given situations As such, positioning theory opens perspectives for detailed analysis of discourses and it is now widely used as an analytical tool to study all kinds of social situations.

Figure 1 The   **Positioning Triad.**
Based on Harré   **and Van Langenhove**
(1999)

The three constitutive elements of the positioning triangle – speech-acts, positions and storylines – reflect the necessary conditions for the meaningfulness of a flow of interactions. Speech-acts can have different meanings according to the context, for instance, the phrase 'I am sorry' can refer to an apology or can – in the UK – be a request to repeat something what has just been said (Moghaddam, Harré & Lee 2008, p. 10-11). A *position* is the cluster of rights and duties that limits the possible social acts of an entity as it is positioned. It largely determines what an actor is entitled to say given his/her position. Traditions and customs are important sources in the constitution of positions (Moghaddam, Harré & Lee, 2008, p. 11). The third corner of the triangle is occupied by the *storylines* which structure the flow of actions and interactions in a particular conversation. It relates the positions of two actors who exchange speech-acts to each other and creates a certain dynamic of these interactions. Sources of storylines can be histories, persistent media presentations or traditional plots. An example of a storyline is the discourse surrounding 'good guys' and 'bad guys'. It is narratology which studies the origins of the storylines used in a certain culture (Moghaddam, Harré & Lee, 2008, p. 12). In the triangle metaphor, the elements mutually determine one

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another. The position – the presumptions of rights and duties – influences the meaning given to certain speech-acts, while the position and the speech-acts influence and are influenced by the storyline (Moghaddam, Harré & Lee 2008, p.12).

BRIDGING PSYCHOLOGY AND IR THROUGH SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Positioning theory was originally conceived to be applied mainly to inter-personal relations but is now also used to understand inter-group relations as well as the interactions between states. Positioning theory's relevance for the study of international relations is twofold: it can be used as a tool to explore the cognitive processes of the actors involved in global politics and it can be used as a metaphor to understand relations between states and other actors. This can refer, for instance, to the discursive institutions through which acts of war are given meaning in a framework of rights and duties by the public media (TV and radio, newspaper articles etc.) (Harré et al, 2009: 6). Slocum-Bradley (2008), for instance, has used inter-group positioning for an analysis of the discursive production of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide. In her article, it is demonstrated that in the discourse of the RTLM[9] radio broadcasts, Tutsi were positioned as evil and Hutu as good. The storyline was then that God is on the Hutu's side and wants Tutsi to perish (Slocum-Bradley, 2008, p. 213). This discourse was thus deployed to legitimate the massacres and to position the two parties to mass murder. Another example of uses of positioning theory that go beyond the study of personal interactions is provided by Moghaddam and Kavulich (2008, p. 249). These authors explore the positioning that takes place involving Iran, the US and the EU over the 'nuclear issue'. It is argued that the dispute among these actors over nuclear power is caused by 'supererogatory duties', i.e. duties that groups are not obliged to execute, but they get credit for it when they do accomplish them (Harré et al., 2009, p. 28). For instance, states are not obliged to replace fossil fuels into renewable energies in public transportation systems, but such conversion is applauded and can be seen as carrying out supererogatory duties. The problem is that Iran tries to present its 'voluntary suspension' of uranium enrichment as the fulfilment of a supererogatory duty, and therefore as something admirable. The US and its allies, on the other hand, try to position Iran as the 'black sheep' of the 'family of nations' which cannot be

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[9] Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines was a Rwandan radio station that played a significant role during the Rwandan Genocide in 1994.

trusted with technology that could serve to make dangerous weapons and therefore not entitled to have its actions understood as fulfilling supererogatory duties. Also, following its focus on narratives and discourses, positioning theory is an appropriate conceptual tool for a social constructivist approach to IR. James (2014) used positioning theory to look at intergovernmental public communication between Indonesia and Australia. The project examined how two countries, Indonesia and Australia, positioned themselves in a political public relations context over a one-week period. It was a week when the two countries' politicians, officials and commentators were speaking publicly about the implications of a new policy proposed by Australia relating to asylum seekers. The exercise showed that positioning analysis in "real time", that is, as the episode was unfolding, helped to reveal the topics around which public communication challenges in international relations contexts emerge. It also helped to identify where interventions may be applied in future encounters. Positioning analysis undertaken retrospectively shed light on how positioning was undertaken, how positions were constructed and what if any impact certain interventions had on the episode. Such an analysis furthers understanding of international state's positioning efforts but can also guide practitioners and students in learning to understand how a positioning strategy could be developed. From an international public communication perspective, the issue at the episode's center could be challenged more effectively if the premises of the episode and the legitimacy of the issue had been challenged through a positioning analysis. At a more general level one can say that the relevance of positioning theory for foreign policy analysis and international relations is that it enables a better understanding of the complexity and dynamics of world politics without being state-centric and a combination of a macro- and a micro-perspective on how states and other actors interact and shape the world order. This is in line with Searle's assertion that the "internal micro-level is ontologically primary" (Searle 1995, p.98) and aims to answer to Koenig-Archibugi's observation that research on global issues (and thus world politics) has been obscured by an exclusive reliance on state-centric assumptions (Koenig-Archibugi 2010, p.25).

There are several reasons to advocate for the application of a positioning theory approach to world politics. First of all, there is a recognised *need* to further develop the social constructivist paradigm within IR, and positioning theory is a much more advanced perspective than these currently used by IR scholars. Secondly, positioning theory has the *advantage* to theorise people as 'actors' who operate in such a way that structures emerge. Given the fact that states can metaphorically be regarded as persons, this allows to reconsider

the classical agent-structure debate in a much more sophisticated way. Thirdly, the framework of positioning theory is one of the few that allow to link actorness to the *empirical study* of actors' discourses as well as to their performative powers resulting of their discursive acts. What is still lacking is the development of a systematic positioning theory framework for understanding world politics as well as a demonstration of how that framework can be applied to empirical studies.

It is proposed to analyse and theorise world politics as a part of the social realm that is mutually constituted by:

a) The *positions* and identities evoked and attributed to and by different actors;

b) The unfolding *story-lines* of world political events that are invoked in specific institutional contexts;

c) The attribution of sets of *rights and duties* to actors within the evoked contexts; and

d) The occurrence of performative *speech acts* to evoke the above social norms.

This approach will allow looking at the agent-structure relation from a new perspective. As rightly mentioned by Wight, the debate so far has failed to "unpack the dynamic nature of the relationship between agents over time and space" (Wight 2005, p.3-9). This is exactly what positioning theory offers by framing the acts of actors in the context of changing positions and unfolding storylines.

Within IR, social constructivism is a paradigm that focuses upon the discursive aspects of international relations. This school has its roots in a broader theoretical and methodological approach to social sciences that emphasises that most – if not all – aspects of the social realm are the result of interactions and conversations between people (Berger & Luckmann 1966). The main issue is thus the primacy of discursive phenomena in both the constitution and the explanation of social phenomena. Sometimes labelled the 'linguistic turn' or 'the discursive turn', it boils down to studying how language and other uses of symbols are put to use by social actors as they construct the world. Hence the need to start any analysis of the social realm with a study of conversations, which are the essence of our interactions. It is within conversations that ideas and norms emerge and are being spread. Another key element of social constructivism is that it relates to a critique of studying the social realm from a positivist perspective: the focus is on understanding the *meaning* of phenomena rather than on

causality. This in turn relates to the old debate between 'explaining' and 'understanding' (Hollis & Smith 1990).

The most advanced version of a social constructionist view on IR is certainly Wendt's "Social Theory of International Politics", published in 1999. Wendt has defended a 'moderate' version of social constructivism that draws upon structurationist and symbolic interactionist sociology. However, seminal Wendt's contribution has been, there are also a number of flows (Guzzini & Leander, 2006). This might be related to a major paradox in the work of Wendt. On the one hand, he refers to the symbolic interactionist school of Mead to develop a social-constructivist theory on IR. But on the other hand, he remains very much committed to positivism (Wendt, 1999, p. 39). These two positions do not go together. As convincingly argued by Harré and Secord, social construction goes hand in hand with non-positivist approaches to research (Harré & Secord 1972; Smith, Harré & Van Langenhove 1995).

CONCLUSION

There seems to be a general awareness that discourse matters in understanding IR, but few scholars study how and why discursive processes matter. This point has been eloquently made by Smith when stating that the current literature on social constructionism in International Relations is "more united on what is being rejected than on what is being proposed" (Smith 1999, p. 683). Risse (2004, p.174), in reviewing the contribution of social constructivism to understanding European integration, concluded: "it is true that social constructivism has not (yet?) generated a set of mid-range propositions that could compete with conventional integration theories such as neofunctionalism or liberal intergovernmentalism". The observation made by Checkel (1998, p.346) that constructivist theorisation is in a state of disarray also remain valid, and the proposed research programme aims to respond to his call to constructivists to "theorize the varying processes through which social construction occurs". That there is still a need for such an endeavour was recently noted again by Hurd who wrote in the *Oxford Handbook of International Relations* that although social constructivism is now broadly accepted, it remains contestable "how (not whether) this insight affects the study of world politics, both in its methodology and its substance" (Hurd, 2008, p. 302). Positioning theory has the potential to help to reposition social constructivism in IR and therefore provide a valuable lens through which to examine IR within a discursive

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context. And if combined with Social Representation Theory, Positioning Theory could open a totally new window for the study of Foreign Affairs and International Relations as it would allow to study images of the international realm and the world order with how the actors operate in their own and others moral orders.

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