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'*Wahn, Wahn, Überall Wahn*': A reply to Jahn's critique of liberal internationalism[1]

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The central claim of liberal international relations (IR) theory, which clearly distinguishes it from other IR paradigms, is this: variation in 'preferences' is the fundamental cause of state behavior in world politics. Paradigms like realism or institutionalism stress the variation in capabilities and information, while treating preferences as constant or exogenous. Liberalism reverses this perspective: variation in ends, not means, matters.

Why does liberal theory place so much emphasis on variation in state preferences? From the liberal perspective, globalization is a universal condition of world politics. Individuals and groups are the fundamental actors in politics, even though what we are trying to explain is the behavior of states. Individuals and groups are embedded in domestic and transnational society, which creates diverse incentives for them to interact across borders – economically, socially, and culturally. This in turn creates private demands on the state from influential subsets of the population – 'selectorates' – to further or block such activity. These demands are transmitted through representative institutions. The result is a distribution of varied state preferences across the international system. This variation in preferences captures the essential 'social embeddedness' of world politics.

Preferences give each state an underlying stake in the international issues it faces. At one extreme, where the magnitude of globalization is

[1] This article is a response to Beate Jahn, 'Liberal internationalism: from ideology to empirical theory – and back again', *International Theory* (2009), 1(3): 409–438. I am grateful to Mareike Kleine for indefatigable research assistance, detailed editing and sound advice on this article, the scope and quality of which went well beyond the norm. 'Wahn, Wahn, überall Wahn', the most famous phrase from Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, opens the Act III monologue by the wise cobbler Hans Sachs. It is difficult to translate. A close rendering would be 'Folly, folly, everywhere folly', but with the deeper, slightly archaic resonance of 'human folly' and an additional connotation of madness, delusion, and self-deception.

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minimal, a rational state has little incentive to engage in world politics, at all, but simply devotes its resources to an autarkic and isolated existence. At the other extreme, where the magnitude of globalization is high, a rational state is consumed entirely by foreign policy and international relations. In between, the precise cross-national configuration of preference-based incentives varies greatly over space and time. This variation, liberals argue, is a fundamental cause of state behavior in world politics.

These core assumptions are shared by three broad strands of theory, defined by their particular definition of state preferences. Each has always been important in world politics, but is increasingly recognized as such in contemporary scholarship. *Ideational* liberal theories trace state behavior to varied conceptions of legitimate cultural, political, and socioeconomic order. These ideals vary from conceptions of the nation through specific political ideologies to the defense of particular national regulatory and welfare standards. *Commercial* liberal theories stress varied patterns of economic interdependence and the incentives they create to support and oppose cross-border exchanges. *Republican* liberal theories stress the varied forms of domestic representative institutions, elite and leadership dynamics, and executive–legislative relations, and the way they shape the nature of the selectorate. Such theories were first conceived by prescient liberals such as Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, John Hobson, Woodrow Wilson, and John Maynard Keynes – writing well before the independent variables they stressed such as democratization, industrialization, nationalism, and welfare provision, were widespread. They have been further developed by contemporary social scientists.

Recent trends in empirical work suggest that the liberal research program, focusing on the effects of these variables on state behavior, is a promising one. My articles outlining the liberal paradigm are not designed to 'test' the paradigm but to present a selection of this research and to show that the paradigm, as I define it, provides a coherent account of that work. They constitute, in a Lakatosian sense, an *ex post* reconstruction of a theoretical trend in the field.[2] The precise scope of the liberal paradigm's explanatory power, I have consistently stressed, remains an empirical issue for future researchers to resolve.[3] My conclusion to date is thus modest: Liberal international theory – or whatever name one prefers to give the study of 'state preferences' – deserves to be treated as an empirically promising paradigm that is in certain respects analytically more fundamental than realism, institutionalism, certain variants of constructivism, and other existing paradigms.

[2] Moravcsik (1992, 1997, 2003, 2008a).
[3] Moravcsik (1997: 541).

Beate Jahn disagrees. Her recent commentary on my reformulation of the liberal paradigm advances a number of criticisms. Four stand out. First, the liberal claim that variation in state preferences drives state behavior is not paradigmatically distinctive. Second, the mid-range claims of liberal theory are arbitrary because they are not rigorously derived from core paradigmatic assumptions. Third, the empirical evidence presented in favor of the liberal paradigm is biased and moreover, must be so, because all 'universal' social scientific theories are inherently 'ideological'. Fourth, the normative implications of the liberal framework are undesirable because they propagate the spread of liberalism to the non-liberal world.

These are bold and provocative assertions. Unfortunately, they are also incorrect. This is so, not primarily because the criticisms themselves are invalid, though that is also true, but because most of the criticisms respond to positions I (and other liberals) simply do not hold. Jahn attributes arguments to me I have never advanced, while overlooking obvious and relevant arguments I have made. In addition, she badly misconstrues debates in general liberal IR theory, philosophy of social science, and policy. Jahn's misunderstandings do not simply reflect an unwillingness to engage in subtle or sympathetic interpretation, although both are sadly lacking. They are misreadings and oversights of a flagrant nature, unambiguously documentable.[4]

Moreover, Jahn sketches an untenable and unattractive alternative, which comes close to an outright rejection of inter-subjectively valid empirical research in the social sciences. Her epistemology, drawn from Karl Mannheim, contends that all who do generalizable social science are carriers of social 'ideologies' that falsely obscure progressive change. Liberal theory is singled out as representative of this misguided 'positivist' endeavor. Jahn believes it is the job of critical theorists, such as herself, to criticize social scientific ideologues, such as myself, by exposing the particularity and contradictions in their knowledge. I find Jahn's formulation of this position at best vague and contradictory, and at worst deeply troubling. In practice, it permits her to read others against their stated meaning, and to criticize them for failing to meet methodological standards she herself cannot meet. Unfortunately, all this constitutes a missed

[4] I have written four papers on liberal theory, one devoted to the philosophy of science issues about which Jahn is concerned. Jahn consults only one. She criticizes my policy positions without consulting my extensive (over 100) policy writings, and my views on the application of theories without consulting my applied theoretical work. All of these written materials are prominently available and labeled on my website. Moreover, in contrast to normal scholarly practice, Jahn never contacted me before submitting this article for publication. In the one article she consults, she misstates my position with regard to all of the major issues in her critique. I document all this in this rebuttal.

opportunity for a serious empirical debate about the relationship between ideology and interest in the history of liberal foreign policy. These, too, are provocative claims, and I will now document them by responding in detail to Jahn's four criticisms.

Paradigms: Is the liberal approach theoretically distinctive?

One common way to distinguish different IR theories is by the causal mechanism through which independent variables impact state choice.[5] From this perspective, there is something distinctive about the liberal assumption that the critical causal mechanism is variation in state preferences (not 'state strategies' or 'policy positions').[6] This is quite distinct, say, from the realist position that the critical mechanism is variation in coercive power resources, the institutionalists focus on variation in information and transaction costs, or the constructivist, cognitive, and epistemic focus on shifting beliefs. In the article Jahn criticizes, I point out that some of the prominent among major IR theorists – among them Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, Robert Keohane, and Robert Powell – distinguish major existing IR theories precisely in terms of their refusal to invoke variation in state preferences.

> These liberal assumptions, in particular the third – in essence, 'what states want is the primary determinant of what they do' – may seem commonsensical, even tautological. Yet mainstream IR theory has uniformly rejected such claims for the past half-century. At the heart of the two leading contemporary IR theories, realism and institutionalism, is the belief that state behavior has *ironic* consequences. Power politics and informational uncertainty constrain states to pursue second and third

[5] This is a common distinction. See, for example, Lake and Powell (1999); Bueno de Mesquita (2005).

[6] Sebenius (1991: 207); Frieden (1999). As I have stressed elsewhere, it is essential to avoid conceptual confusion by keeping state 'preferences' distinct from national 'strategies' that constitute the everyday currency of foreign policy. State preferences, as the concept is employed here, comprise a set of fundamental interests defined across 'states of the world'. Preferences are thus *by definition* causally independent of and analytically prior to specific interstate political interactions, including external threats, incentives, manipulation of information, or other tactics – at least in the short term. By contrast, strategies and tactics are policy options defined across intermediate political aims, as when governments declare an 'interest' in 'maintaining the balance of power', 'containing' or 'appeasing' an adversary, exercising 'global leadership', or 'maintaining imperial control'. The phrase 'country A changed its preferences in response to an action by country B' is thus a misuse of the term as defined here, implying less than consistently rational behavior. Liberal theory focuses on the consequences of shifts in fundamental preferences, not shifts in the strategic circumstances under which states pursue them.

> best strategies strikingly at variance with their underlying preferences.[7] Thus varying state preferences should be treated as if they were irrelevant, secondary, or endogenous. In his classic definition of realism Morgenthau contrasts it to 'two popular fallacies: the concern with motives and the concern with ideological preferences'.[8] Neorealist Waltz's central objection to previous, 'reductionist' theories is that in world politics 'results achieved seldom correspond to the intentions of actors'; hence 'no valid generalizations can logically be drawn' from an examination of intentions.[9] Though the interests it assumes are different, Keohane's institutionalism relies on a similar as if assumption: it 'takes the existence of mutual interests as given and examines the conditions under which they will lead to cooperation'.[10] In short, Powell observes that 'structural theories .... lack a theory of preferences over outcomes'.[11] What states do is primarily determined by strategic considerations – what they can get or what they know – which in turn reflect their international political environment. In short, variation in means, not ends, matters most. Liberal theory reverses this assumption*: Variation in ends, not means, matters most.*[12]

To the list of theorists who acknowledge the distinctiveness of the liberal paradigm in this way might be added many constructivists, who distinguish socialization and role adaption that focus on views about appropriate means-ends behavior from theories about how a shifting set of material or ideal interests inspire policy change.[13] The same might be said of the English School analysts.[14] The distinction is grounded in general social theory.[15]

The distinction is empirical as well as theoretical. In a recent article – which Jahn does not cite – I offer the following illustrations.

> In explaining patterns of war, for example, liberals do not stress inter-state imbalances of power, bargaining failure under incomplete information, or particular non-rational beliefs, but conflicting state preferences derived from hostile nationalist or political ideologies, disputes over appropriable

[7] Waltz (1979: 60–67, 93–97).

[8] The resulting 'autonomy of the political' in geopolitics gives realism its 'distinctive intellectual and moral attitude'; see Morgenthau (1960: 5–7)....

[9] Waltz follows Morgenthau almost verbatim: 'Neo-realism establishes the autonomy of international politics and thus makes a theory about it possible'; see Waltz (1979: 29), and also 65–66, 79, 90, 108–12, 196–98, 271.

[10] Keohane (1984: 6, 6) and Hellmann and Wolf (1993).

[11] Powell (1994: 318).

[12] Moravcsik (1997: 522).

[13] See, for example, Wendt (1999: 262ff) and Johnston (2008) emphasizing 'social influence', 'mimicking', and 'persuasion', rather than rational adaptation.

[14] Bull (1976).

[15] Coleman (1980: 132) and passim; Moravcsik (1992).

> economic resources, or exploitation of unrepresented political constituencies. For liberals, a necessary condition for war is that these factors lead one or more 'aggressor' states to possess 'revisionist' preferences so extreme that other states are unwilling to submit. Similarly, in explaining trade protectionism, liberals look not to shifts of hegemonic power, suboptimal international institutions, or misguided beliefs about economic theory, but to economic incentives, interest groups, and distributional coalitions opposed to market liberalization.[16]

It is hard to imagine a more clearly documented, consensual case for theoretical distinctiveness.

Yet Jahn is unsatisfied with it. Her core concern is that the liberal paradigm 'does not fulfill the criterion of distinctness .... Moravcsik's general assumptions ... are shared by a host of other approaches'.[17] After asserting this view several times, she applies it to specific liberal mechanisms. With regard to republican liberal theory, she writes:

> It is hard to think of an approach that would in principle disagree with the claim of republican liberalism that 'the mode of domestic political representation ... determines whose social preferences are institutionally privileged' and that government policy is 'biased in favor of the governing coalition or powerful domestic groups'.

With regard to ideational liberalism, she continues:

> While it may be true that ideational liberalism entails the general claim that human beings rationally pursue their particular vision of a legitimate form of political and economic organization, there is nothing distinctively liberal about this claim. Indeed, a host of other approaches would readily agree.

The assertion of 'non-distinctiveness' is central to her critique of liberalism. She uses it not only to deny that there is anything new in the paradigm, but, as we shall see later, to dismiss much *prima facie* evidence in favor of it and to assert that it lacks sufficient generality. Yet, curiously, Jahn proceeds as if the truth of her claim is so obvious as to require no support. She offers neither an argument nor even a single counter example to back it up. Not only does Jahn ignore the citations to Waltz, Keohane, Powell, and Morgenthau in favor of distinctiveness, she offers no discussion of IR theory at all – although any claim about paradigmatic distinctiveness is only meaningful in a particular context of other paradigms.[18] The sole support she offers is a

[16] Moravcsik (2008b: 235).

[17] Jahn (2009: 419).

[18] In Lakatosian language, Jahn accuses me of being a 'dogmatic falsificationist', and in her article treats me as one. But I am not. Lakatos writer: 'Indeed, it is not difficult to see at least two

quotation from David Long's critique of my work – and this quotation is taken out of context. What Long wrote is: 'An emphasis on preferences is enough to distinguish Moravcsik's approach from realism and neo-realism, which are concerned with the constraints on state action and the limits of power in the international system'. The quotation admits no ambiguity: it *supports my contention* that the liberal paradigm is theoretically distinct.[19] The utter lackof support for Jahn's position calls into question her entire critique, which depends heavily on this claim.[20]

crucial characteristics common to both dogmatic and our methodological falsificationism which are clearly dissonant with the actual history of science: that (1) *a test is-or must be made-a two-cornered fight between theory and experiment so that in the final confrontation only these two face each other; and* (2) *the only interesting outcome of such confrontation is (conclusive) falsification:* '*[the only genuine] discoveries are refutations of scientific hypotheses*'. However, history of science suggests that (1') tests are – at least – three-cornered fights between rival theories and experiment and (2') some of the most interesting experiments result, *prima facie,* in confirmation rather than falsification. But if – as seems to be the case – the history of science does not bear out our theory of scientific rationality, we have two alternatives. One alternative is to abandon efforts to give a rational explanation of the success of science. Scientific method (or 'logic of discovery'), conceived as the discipline of rational appraisal of scientific theories– and of criteria of *progress-vanishes.* We, may, of course, still try to explain *changes* in 'paradigms' in terms of social psychology. This is Polanyi's and Kuhn's way. 'The other alternative is to try at least to *reduce* the conventional element in falsificationism (we cannot possibly eliminate it) and replace the *naive* versions of methodological falsificationism-characterized by the theses (1) and (2) above-by a *sophisticated* version which would give a new *rationale* of falsification and thereby rescue methodology and the idea of scientific *progress.* This is Popper's way, and the one I intend to follow'. Lakatos (1970: 115–116).

[19] See Long (1995: 498–499). Long, whose critique is far more nuanced, prefers not to employ the name 'liberal' for such theories, but this is not because they lack paradigmatic distinctiveness, but for other reasons. I have no difficulty with such semantic issues. Indeed, as his critique predates the IO article, I respond to it at the end of the latter, on p. 548, where I write: 'A final word to those readers who object to using the term *liberal* to distinguish this restatement …. critics will protest that this restatement fails to acknowledge the full richness of the intellectual history and, in particular, the normative implications of liberalism. This criticism is correct, but the omission is deliberate. This article does not aim to provide a comprehensive intellectual history of classical liberal international thought, nor a self-sufficient guide to the normative evaluation of policy, but to distill a coherent core of social scientific assumptions for the narrower purpose of explaining international politics. The project is best judged on its own terms. (Such critics) may nonetheless prefer to call liberal theory a 'societal', 'state-society', 'social purpose', or 'preference-based' theory. The central claims of this article, however, remain intact'.

[20] Moreover, Jahn formulates this criticism in a way that betrays a deeper misunderstanding about what a theoretical claim is. Any theorist might well assume, as an ontological fact, that all governments represent some selectorate. Yet what is theoretically relevant – and thus controversial – is the claim that *variation* in the form of representation or identity drives *variation* in state preferences, which in turn drives *variation* in foreign policy and international interaction. In other words, it is that preferences are decisive. The claim is further narrowed by the small number of plausible specifications of liberal theory that test out; empirically, the liberal research programme has proven not just fruitful but parsimonious.

Theories: Are individual liberal claims derived properly?

Specific liberal theories – the various strands of republican, ideational and commercial theory – are derived from a combination of the three core paradigmatic assumptions of the liberal paradigm, and '*auxiliary assumptions*' specific to the strand of liberal theory in question. The three core assumptions concern: (1) the nature of societal actors ('Globalization generates differentiated demands from societal individuals and groups with regard to international affairs'), (2) the nature of the state ('States represent the demands of a subset of domestic individuals and social groups, on the basis of whose interests they define "state preferences" and act instrumentally to manage globalization'), and (3) the nature of the international system ('The pattern of interdependence among state preferences shapes state behavior').[21] In order to derive individual liberal theories precisely and to circumscribe their empirical scope (e.g. an explanation of the 'democratic peace') one needs auxiliary assumptions, not simply the three core assumptions.

In her critique, Jahn misunderstands all this. She believes that all social science theories must be derived logically and uniquely from core assumptions alone. Thus she contends that since republican, ideational, and commercial liberal theory, as well as individual theories within each category – particularly as applied to liberal states – are not so derived, they must therefore be arbitrary.[22] Thus Jahn accuses me of proceeding backward, deriving the three core assumptions of the paradigm from specific theories, such as the 'democratic peace', endogenous policy theories, and theories of legitimate values. Importantly, she repeatedly presents the failure to derive individual theories unambiguously from first principles as a failure to meet my own explicit standard, namely to 'derive the [liberal] theory of international relations from … general assumptions'.[23] There is something at stake: Jahn dwells on his point to show, apparently, that a 'general' theory of international relations is impossible, and thus we should settle for particularistic historical interpretation.

This is an outright misreading not just of the liberal paradigm, but also of social scientific paradigms in general. The notion, that theories and

[21] Moravcsik (2008b: 236–239).

[22] This follows, I believe, from Jahn's misunderstanding that all social science theories are universal claims. As a guide to what social scientists are doing, she approvingly cites Mannheim for the claim: 'In positivism, "nothing is regarded as "true" or "knowledge" except what could be presented as universally valid and necessary" (Mannheim 1960, 149). [It] assumes that underneath the messy superficial layer of ideological struggles, there are to be found general laws of politics – thus denying the essentially, and not just superficially, contested nature of the political realm'. Jahn (2009: 433). This misunderstands both Mannheim and social science.

[23] Jahn (2009: 417).

hypotheses are rigorously deduced from a small set of core paradigmatic assumptions is not one I espouse. Indeed, it is one I explicitly reject in various publications that Jahn fails to consult. No realistic modern philosophy of science proposes such a thing (Jahn's only evidence for the claim that I or anyone else holds this view is that Karl Mannheim says it must be so). According to the modified Lakatosian and Laudanian views I actually defend in the body of my relevant work, which Jahn ignores – including a book chapter devoted almost entirely to this issue – individual theories need only be *consistent* with paradigmatic assumptions, not deduced from them.[24]

This slight difference is of fundamental importance; Jahn overlooks my explicit cautions against the fallacy of assuming universal applicability of theories on the model of the natural sciences.

> Lakatos expects that conflict among theories will eventually result (or, hypothetically, could ideally result in the vindication of one, which will subsume the loser by explaining all of its content. This image implies heroic confidence in the universal applicability of some single set of micro-foundational assumptions – confidence that has been vindicated in some areas of the natural sciences. The study of world politics, by contrast, often manifestly fails to meet these criteria – at least at its current state of development. (…)
>
> [The] discipline imposed on theory construction and development by the Lakatosian approach (…) is surely a useful reminder of the need for consistent assumptions, rigor, comparative theory testing, and the need to explain patterns in empirical data efficiently. Yet Lakatos's focus on the scope of theories might encourage scholars to advance 'universal' and mono-causal claims when it is inappropriate to do so.[25]

Social scientific research paradigms aim instead to maintain a measure of coherence and distinctiveness (via 'core' assumptions), while affording precisely the sort of flexibility, particularity, and diversity Jahn espouses via 'auxiliary' assumptions.[26]

[24] Moravcsik (2003: 176, 183–4). I write: 'Thus whereas I do maintain that liberal theory meets many criteria for theoretical fruitfulness and, accordingly, is unjustly neglected in current theoretical debates, I do not reach this conclusion primarily because liberal theory was derived deductively rather than inductively. More important than novelty, in my view, is performance – confirmed predictions minus confirmed anomalies – as compared to competing scientific research programs'. See also the qualifications to Lakatosian and Laudanian standards there, which date back to Moravcsik (1992: 39).

[25] Moravcsik (2003: 198, 204).

[26] So, for example, Jahn (2009: 417) argues: 'Yet, by starting with these richer theories in which he then identifies his general assumptions, Moravcsik has reversed the order by which a proper "theory" in his own terms has to be established'. This reversal '…ruptures the logical

> In other words, Lakatosian emphasis on maximal claims about the scope of an explanation may blind us to narrower, subtler, and more nuanced conclusions about the conditions under which particular theories have explanatory power. Such a world of accurate mid-range theories seems closer to our grasp than one with a single dominant theoretical paradigm.[27]

At the same time, however, it is important to formulate theories in a hypothetically generalizable way, so we can seek to determine the scope of potentially general claims under hypothetical conditions. Testing of claims of varying scope should proceed without us having made up our minds before the fact what that scope must be.

Some specific examples illustrate the point. My 'liberal intergovernmentalist' theory on European integration is circumscribed, for example, as follows:

> [It] is important to note that [liberal intergovernmentalism, LI] is not a universal theory. LI explains integration under most conditions, but not under those that violate its assumptions about preferences, bargaining, and credible commitments. One of the advantages of employing more explicit theory is that we can be more precise about its scope: the scope of a theory is defined by its assumptions; where they do not obtain, the theory does not apply.[28]

Similarly, for example, liberal theories of economic interdependence assume bounded rational individuals and groups as actors, state institutions as transmission belts, and variation in state preferences as the critical determinant of state behavior. Yet each applies only under specific conditions defined by assumptions about the nature of markets, economic interests, budget constraints, beliefs, political incentives, etc.

The important philosophy of science point here is that to see whether a paradigm is coherent, one must trace the evolution of specific mid-range theories, of which the paradigmatic assumptions are only a lowest common denominator. Jahn does not do this, so she is in the no position to be a critic. Given the broad and rigorous empirical and theoretical debate in areas such as democratic peace, endogenous policy theory, and theories of ideas and politics, however, the benefit of the doubt surely rests with

coherence of his theory'. And, according to Lakatos, this is as it should be. The recognition of the true contours of a research programme is only possible *ex post facto*. Individual theories may be revised within the paradigm, depending on empirical research. So the 'reversal' about which Jahn complains is in the very nature of a scientific paradigm. For a detailed discussion, again overlooked by Jahn, see Moravcsik (2003: 197–184).

[27] Moravcsik (2003: 198, 204).

[28] Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig (2009: 76).

liberal theory. Due to the diversity of the arguments in this camp, moreover, the liberal paradigm surely addresses Jahn's concerns about the need to recognize particularity. In lieu of acknowledging this, however, Jahn simply imposes a narrow conception of 'generalizing' social science, and criticizes it as 'ideological'. In the end, she is just arguing with herself.

Data: Is the evidence about liberal theory biased?

My articles on liberalism do not claim to conduct a systematic empirical test of the liberal paradigm. For reasons I shall discuss in a moment, it would be inappropriate to do so. In the article she criticizes – for reasons of space, if no other – my goal is far more modest, namely to illustrate the potential fruitfulness of some ongoing research within various strands of the liberal research programme.[29] In various articles and chapters I cite dozens of studies by liberals, and have systematically compared the performance of the liberal paradigm to realism and other paradigms, while discussing the alternative criteria one might use for doing so.[30] Others have done so even more comprehensively, using quantitative methods, arguing that liberal results have been underweighted in assessments of IR research.[31] Few observers of contemporary IR theory would deny that theories that focus on variation in state preferences have been fruitful and powerful.

Jahn, nonetheless, asserts that the empirical evidence cited to illustrate liberal theory in the 1997 article is biased and therefore invalid. She claims the data were, in her view, selected in what she considers an arbitrary and 'subjective' manner.[32] The article is 'a methodologically flawed piece of scholarly writing'.[33] Since I do not seek to 'test' liberal theory, we might just ignore her entire critique. But because Jahn makes a serious, if scattershot, effort at detailed methodological criticism; I will consider three of her specific concerns – at the risk of trying the reader's patience.

Jahn's first charge is that *the evidence draws too heavily on cases of 'contemporary relevance' and 'intra-liberal politics', that is, cases from the past 200 years involving liberal states – a selection criterion she*

[29] As I note in a recent article: 'While in theory the theories focusing on socially determined state preferences over the management of globalization might appear limitless, in practice viable liberal theories have proved to be theoretically parsimonious and empirically fruitful'. See Moravcsik (2008a: 240). For example, Moravcsik (1995, 1998, 1999, 2000a, b),

[30] Moravcsik (1998) and Legro and Moravcsik (1999). This has been reiterated in more recent work.

[31] Vasquez (1999).

[32] Jahn (2009: 420).

[33] Ibid. (2009: 423).

attributes to my conscious choice.[34] She writes: 'Moravcsik applies the acid test of the continuing relevance of historical data in contemporary international affairs'.[35] And then she concludes: 'This reduction of evidence to the intraliberal sphere and, indeed, to its contemporary achievements only, finally, leaves Moravcsik's conclusion completely unsubstantiated'.[36]

It is hard to know what to make of this. Nowhere do I set forth such a selection criterion; nowhere does Jahn try to document that I did so. Nor does she parse the data to show it is implicitly the case. She herself admits that I present data from non-liberal states in past historical epochs. In any case this is simply a theoretical article in which these are illustrations, not a rigorous empirical test – no one ever claimed otherwise. Ironically, the real reason why non-liberal and pre-modern cases fall out of consideration is that Jahn herself, being a 'particularist', draws the distinction between the non-liberal and liberal worlds – and rejects all my evidence from the former, even when she admits it tends to support what I claim to be liberal predictions. Apparently, the reason for this odd procedure is her belief (spurious, as we have seen in section (1) above) that there is nothing distinctive about liberal theory except when it is explaining the behavior of modern liberal states.[37] In other words, Jahn first rules out much of the relevant evidence, then accuses me of working with biased data. What can one say?[38]

[34] Ibid. (2009: 420).

[35] Ibid. (2009: 420).

[36] Ibid. (2009: 421).

[37] Jahn simply denies that these theoretical predictions are 'liberal'. She writes: 'Finally, Moravcsik attempts to show that his theory is valid for liberal and non-liberal actors alike. Thus, cooperation amongst the states of the Holy Alliance and their conflict with Republican France indicates that both, liberal and non-liberal actors, tend to cooperate with other like-minded states while ending up in conflictual situations with those whose institutions they find less legitimate This example supports the claim that states pursue the realization of their respective socio-political norms and values; that is, it supports the general microfoundational assumption. What it does not support, however, is the general validity of the specifically liberal claims of this theory. The latter clearly holds that some forms of political institutions (democracy) or social organization (market economies) are more legitimate than others – a claim which the Holy Alliance obviously did not embrace … This reduction of evidence to the intraliberal sphere and, indeed, to its contemporary achievements only, finally, leaves Moravcsik's conclusion completely unsubstantiated'. Jahn (2009: 42).

[38] Jahn's criticism rests on a more fundamental misunderstanding of paradigms. The correct way to assess the health of a paradigm is not by testing it directly – which is another reason why I do not do so. It is by tracking the evolution of the mid-range research within the liberal 'research programme'. In other words, the 'evidence' we should be considering comprises the various strands of research consistent with its core assumptions – either systematic studies or critical cases. One can then draw conclusions about whether these studies are fruitful, parsimonious and interesting enough to be viewed as justifying a liberal paradigm. The thrust of her criticism is instead abstract, suggesting methodological, philosophical and theoretical reasons

Jahn's second criticism is that *any social scientific theory that aims to generalize across history, including a liberal one, is necessarily 'ideological', that is, it imposes a conservative political bias*. This is inherently so, she believes, whether the data to confirm it are convincing or not. Following Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, Jahn believes political science is committed to universal generalization, and since political knowledge is actually particular, all generalizing social scientists are therefore 'ideological' by definition. She writes: 'What makes ideological knowledge ideological is thus not its particularity – which it shares with all forms of political thought – but rather the fact that it hides this particularity'.[39] She favors, instead, what she claims is a 'nonideological alternative', namely 'a historical investigation of liberalism's competition with alternative political projects' and an 'engagement with its conditions of emergence', so we understand 'a particular historical context that generated liberal or proto-liberal ideas'.[40]

Why, I wonder, is this criticism directed at me? To be sure, I do insist that those who seek to understand social behavior in a historically particular way can benefit from the theories formulated in general terms to help them do so. But using general theories, as an instrument is different than arguing for the ideological hegemony of a theory, or for believing that theories have a *de facto* universal scope – a distinction lost on Jahn. And among IR scholars of my generation, I am among those who have opposed claims for simple 'universal' theories. Liberal theory, as I have formulated it, embraces particularity in a way that actively seeks to avoid imposing a historical bias.

In addition to the point, already discussed, about auxiliary assumptions, this is evident in three ways. First, I conduct historical and geographical research. Among IR scholars, I am among the small minority who publishes

why we *do not* have to attend to research results (e.g. dismissing studies concerning non-liberal states), even when she concedes they are compelling. She cites only one study of empirical social science. (And the fact that one article is by Beate Jahn might raise some eyebrows.) Finally, even if we were to conclude that the mid-range research had overlooked certain issues, the answer ought to be *more* social scientific research (liberal or non-liberal), not less, to offset whatever biases there are.

[39] Jahn (2009: 435). According to Mannheim, as Jahn interprets him, this is a characteristic that is shared by all generalizing social science, according to Mannheim and Jahn. The positivist alternative is equally bald: 'In positivism, "nothing is regarded as "true" or "knowable" except what could be presented as universally valid and necessary" (Mannheim, 1960: 149)' I first studied Mannheim's work with one of his former assistants, Norbert Elias, in Bielefeld, and even then was troubled by the dichotomous way in which he characterized positivism, and the near-relativist way he fashioned an alternative.

[40] This way we can generate a (non-ideological) 'general theory of liberal international relations', but not a (ideological) 'liberal theory of international relations'. To set up this alternative, Jahn must show that everyone who promulgates a general theory can do so only by virtue of importing bias. Jahn (2009: 435).

in historiographical journals and employs primary sources that must be analyzed in context – certainly more so than Jahn herself.[41] Second, I explicitly champion multi-causal explanations. In my most recent article on liberal theory – ignored by Jahn – I write: 'Perhaps the *most important advantage* of liberal theory lies in its capacity to serve as the theoretical foundation for a shared multi-causal model of instrumental state behavior – thereby moving the discipline beyond paradigmatic warfare among unicausal claims'.[42] Third, any claim – inside or outside the liberal paradigm – is open for revision in the face of empirical evidence or logical challenge in favor of competing theories. Jahn treats liberalism as if it is a single hegemonic discourse. But it is not: I proposed it as a paradigm seeking equal stature alongside already recognized realist, institutionalist, and non-rational paradigms. The purpose of doing so is to encourage scholars to self-consciously recognize international relations as a fuller, more inclusive, and rigorous field of debate.[43] There are, for example, constant challenges – from inside and outside the liberal paradigm – to the veracity and causal logic of even prominent claims, such as the 'democratic peace' proposition.[44] Jahn entirely underestimates the role of competition among theories because for her, following Mannheim, paradigms and theories are simply assertions of underlying ideological bias.

Defining the scope of paradigms empirically is a far from perfect process, but what is the alternative? Jahn's own proposed methodology for drawing inferences, insofar as one can make it out, seems dubious. Though the language of being 'non-ideological' and 'particularistic' suggests tolerance and open-mindedness, in fact her stance is (unconsciously, I am sure) precisely the opposite. In contrast to the agnostic approach of the true social scientist, Jahn in fact presumes that we *already know* the (limited) scope of scientific claims *before theory-guided empirical analysis within the paradigm has been conducted.*[45] Yet, absent a set of comparative

[41] Hitchcock (1999) and Moravcsik (2000a, b). In some ways I even share Jahn's concern about work that is overly general and abstract, but my concern is different. I believe it says more and more about less and less. See Moravcsik (2009: 263).

[42] Moravcsik (2008a: 235). I make the same argument in the piece she is criticizing (emphasis added).

[43] Many mid-range liberal arguments have been appropriated by realists, institutionalists and or 'constructivists' – a practice that an explicit liberal paradigm might dampen.

[44] Gartzke *et al.* (2001) and Gowa (2000).

[45] Jahn evades the deeper issues at stake in a most 'un-Mannheimian' way. For Mannheim, who accepts a post-Marxist historical view, the need to generalize historically in the sense of explicitly situating one's argument, is unavoidable. Otherwise one could not know the broader significance of one's either historical action or analysis. In *Ideologie und Utopie,* he struggles in the book to escape the relativistic circle that ensues if one simply claims *all* views are 'ideological' – but certainly does not do so by unquestioningly embracing particularism. Any serious

theories and potentially generalizable claims with which to order the data, what gives us confidence in this? These are precisely the issues with which philosophers of science like Lakatos and Laudan struggle, and which they ultimately resolve by treating theoretical paradigms as part of a multi-causal universe of *potentially* generalizable theories, all of which should be tested even-handedly and empirically – both with regard to specific events and long-term dynamics over time.[46] Empirical competition among potentially generalizable claims is the key.

Jahn's failure to accept any methodological discipline is, in essence, the assertion of a special epistemological status for herself. She herself draws transhistorical conclusions, while criticizing others for doing the same. As a positive analyst, for example, she asserts that for four centuries there has been more expropriation and coercion in liberal politics than its apologists concede – and she claims that historical analysis helps us predict similar trends indefinitely into the future. ('If past experience is anything to go by, can we expect this latest round of liberal foreign policies to end in failure').[47] Yet, as a critic, she dismisses similar transhistorical claims made by others, even when there exists what she concedes to be strong *prima facie* evidence in their favor. And she does so with total disregard for evidence. In criticizing liberals for espousing modernization theory, for example, Jahn comes close to denying that economic development has generated conditions propitious for democratic stability, and that both are linked to interstate peace. Does Jahn really mean simply to ignore the current era of unprecedentedly low and declining interstate conflict, which appears linked to liberal variables? My point is not that liberal empirical claims are correct. It is that Jahn, methodologically ill equipped to engage this sort of empirical discussion, seeks instead (unsuccessfully) to rule out opposing positions by methodological and philosophical fiat.

This brings us to Jahn's third and final methodological criticism, namely that *liberal research tends to downplay political and ideological conflict, particularly when it is provoked by liberal states themselves or*

effort to employ Mannheim as a practical guide to research, it would seem to me, needs to respond to this central weakness. See also below section 4.

[46] In practice this is, of course, never a procedure totally without bias or ideological implications, but it provides an ideal standard against which to judge scholarship. Jahn, by contrast, who is not compelled to face rigorous paradigmatic competition from general theories, is far less protected against bias. Consider, for example, Jahn's casual efforts to use a single thinly documented historical interpretations – for example, the claim that Early Modern Europeans were not 'rational', based on a secondary interpretation of John Locke – to support a blanket refutation of the rationality assumption for pre-modern situations. Locke's work simply cannot be made to bear such explanatory weight. See Jahn (2009: 426).

[47] Jahn (2007: 227).

calls into question the fundamental nature of liberalism. My 1997 article, she notes, says little about the conditions in which liberal states arose and perpetuate themselves. This process may, she conjectures, have involved coercion, imperialism, or other zero-sum dynamics between developed and developing or unorganized areas of the globe. Citing the examples of enclosure and colonialism, she argues that liberal polities are based on expropriation. This leads her to accuse me and other liberals of promulgating a simplistic modernization theory: a 'substantive picture … of linear historical development from the initial recognition of the rationality of market economy and government by consent through their progressive realization in domestic settings to their gradual change of the nature and principles of international politics'.[48] Against this view, Jahn contends that: 'The transformation of non-liberal into liberal societies was thus not the evolutionary process characterized by an extension of peace, prosperity, and cooperation as which it appears in Moravcsik's narrative. Rather, it took the form of a political struggle'.[49] In general, Jahn asserts, 'political science fails to study…ideology', particularly 'essentially…contested' ones.[50]

The notion that liberal theory fails to theorize political conflict, or that it disregards interaction between the liberal and the non-liberal world, is simply false. Again, Jahn bases this judgment on assertion rather a close reading of my or any other liberal text. Liberalism is a theory of political conflict *par excellence*. Neither I nor, to my knowledge, any other IR scholar believes that socioeconomic change is an 'evolutionary process characterized by an extension of peace, prosperity, and cooperation' without 'political struggle'. Such a simplistic linear narrative would be inconsistent with liberal theory's stress on both the complexity of preference formation and on domestic and international power dynamics.[51] This is why concepts like 'hegemony', 'asymmetrical interdependence', 'interest groups', 'embedded liberalism', play such an important role in modern international political economy.[52] In claiming that such analyses

[48] Jahn (2009: 424).
[49] Ibid. (2009: 428).
[50] Ibid. (2009: 433).
[51] It is these things I sought to highlight when I labeled the liberal paradigm a move 'utopian' or 'ideological' formulations of liberalism.
[52] Consider, for example, the deep intellectual debt that Robert Keohane, the leading figure in the field, acknowledges to figures such as Albert Hirschman, with his views of North-South relations and both transnational and domestic power; Raymond Vernon, with his stress on multinational firms; Charles Kindleberger, with his focus on hegemony; as well as to events such as the conflict over OPEC, neo-imperialism, Vietnam, and such. For a discussion, see Moravcsik (2009).

of conflict do not extend to negative dynamics or to the origins and dynamics of liberal politics, Jahn simply ignores what I, and many others, have written about precisely these issues.[53] Indeed, the notion that liberalism rose on the basis of coercion and exploitation of unorganized territories is not, as Jahn seems to think, unresearched among political scientists. Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson have recently argued, precisely as Jahn believes, that control of the Atlantic economy was critical for the rise of liberal political institutions in the West, sparking one of the most vibrant debates in recent political science.[54] In this regard, as I have argued, commercial liberal theory dovetails with traditional Marxist and radical themes – once we strip out the historical teleology, something on which Jahn and I apparently agree.[55] Nothing in my paradigm rules out such zero-sum conflict.

Contrary to Jahn's claim that 'political science fails to study-…ideology', particularly 'essentially…contested' ideology, liberal IR theory's commitment to theorizing conflict extends to deep ideologies. In my first publication on liberal theory and international relations, I wrote:

> This pluralist conception of society leads Liberals to reject the notion, often falsely attributed to them, that there exists an automatic harmony of interest between individuals, social groups, or… nations. To the contrary, politics is always problematic, since it involves conflict between competing, sometimes incommensurable, private goals. … To present Liberalism as a doctrine that holds that underlying social interests automatically converge, therefore, is to misunderstand the very foundation of the Liberal reform impulse, directed for centuries against the concentration and abuse of social and political power.[56]

Because liberalism is essentially about incommensurable goals, it includes a theoretical strand – 'ideational liberalism' – to take account of conflict

[53] They include non-linear political development (Mansfield and Snyder, 1995; 2000; 2005), the use 'asymmetrical interdependence' as a power resource to exploit weaker countries (Keohane and Nye, 1989; Moravcsik, 1997: 523), the exploitation of unorganized territories of the world for the liberal gain (Moravcsik, 1997: 530; Hopkins, 1980), systematic market influence to maintain markets and other forms of liberal financial order (Tomz, 2007), the ways in which globalization undermines legitimate local norms of social welfare and regulation (Rodrik, 1992; Ruggie, 1983a), the class domination of foreign economic policy (Gawande and Hoekman, 2006; Ehrlich, 2007; Keefer, 2007, more generally Grossman and Helpman, 1994), self-interested arrangements to benefit credits inxs sovereign debt negotiations (Stasavage, 2007), and the one-sided politics of the IMF and other international financial institutions (Keohane *et al.*, 2009: 27).

[54] Acemoglu and Robinson (2006).

[55] Moravcsik (1997: 522n).

[56] Moravcsik (1992: 9).

driven by competing basic values about legitimacy. In direct contradiction to Jahn's assertions, liberalism is not simply about 'administration', but does theorize essential conflict over political ideology, inside and outside the liberal fold. The article Jahn is criticizing contains many examples, including nationalist conflict, fundamental ideological conflicts (both among competing forms of liberalism and between liberalism and its competitors),[57] competing claims over legitimate redistribution and regulation (which often implicate different strands of liberalism),[58] and the ideological cloaking of imperialism in liberal ideologies of the general interest.[59]

To be sure, Jahn has raised a genuinely engaging empirical issue, and I wish she had devoted more time to it. A closer examination of the sources of liberal policies, in the early modern period or now, might generate a successful challenge (liberal or non-liberal, depending on what the data showed) to existing liberal interpretations. This would be welcome: Social science is constantly up for revision, based on the results of mid-range theory testing. It would certainly be interesting to develop further the notion that as she, Acemoglu, Robinson and others believe, North–South relations over the past 500 years have been more zero-sum than some analysts concede. There is, of course, an enormous social scientific literature on this issue, but if Jahn feels certain elements deserve more stress, she should conduct empirical research about them.[60] Yet, there is no need to engage in broad-brush methodological or philosophical criticism of the liberal paradigm, or dismiss presumptively correct empirical findings just because they are general, in order to study such things.

Implications: Are liberal policy prescriptions normatively undesirable?

At its core, Jahn's critique is not about social science but about politics.[61] What is the proper relationship between academic work and public policy? This is a difficult question, and I do not believe it affords a 'one size fits all' answer. As someone who has served the governments of three different countries, and who has long been active as a political journalist, I am fully aware of the legitimate temptation to seek to influence public opinion and policy. My own view is, nonetheless, Weberian: there can and should be limits to the extent to which academic work is influenced by

[57] Moravcsik (1997: 525–528).
[58] Moravcsik (1997: 527; 2008b: 246; 2009: 261).
[59] Snyder (1991).
[60] Jahn seems more comfortable with abstract political philosophy than empirical social science, diverting the discussion with an extended discussion of John Locke's philosophy.
[61] Jahn (2009: 407–410).

policy advocacy. I do not believe, we should judge the veracity or coherence of scholarship by asking: Whose political interest does this serve?[62] I also believe that we can, to a limited extent, progressively advance our general understanding of social life through objective academic work. Here I differ from Jahn, who believes all scholarly work is inherently particularistic and, as I read her, ultimately political in a Marxist/Mannheimian sense. I strike a Weberian compromise, choosing to play by the rules of academic life: I select topics and theories according to my subjective interests and values, but impose on myself inter-subjective standards of objectivity and transparency in the selection of data, theories to test, presentation of results, and the shared norm that we seek broad regularities in social life. I believe that inter-subjective communication of social science, the notion that findings are 'universal' – that is, that we can in principle communicate objective theories and results to everyone – is an attractive ideal, with certain affinities to democracy.

The thrust of Jahn's critique is that I and others, who stress variation in state preferences as an explanation of state behavior, have a politically significant effect on the beliefs of influential people outside of academia, dampening their tendency to criticize dysfunctional liberal practices. For example, Jahn believes that my observation that 'there is good reason to believe that the most powerful influence in world politics today is not the deployment of military force or the construction of international institutions, but the transformation of domestic and transnational social values, interests, and institutions' is an 'ideological' statement, because it masks the true role of liberalism, which is, we have seen, to expropriate non-liberal property and cultures.[63] I am, in short, an apologist for the Western pursuit of global hegemony.

> In sum, Moravcsik's liberal theory of international relations provides the perfect example of an ideology …. Moravcsik, no doubt unconsciously, provides a narrative which sells policies in the short term interests of liberal societies as universally beneficial.[64]

Jahn criticizes such practices by asking: Whose interest is this scholarship serving? The answer: American hegemony.

> By expunging politics – the particular and contested nature of liberalism – from his theory, Moravcsik quite literally fulfils Mannheim's observation

[62] Again, if all Jahn is saying is that we should be doing academic work on different topics or testing different hypotheses, then we have no disagreement. But much of her critique becomes irrelevant.

[63] Jahn (2009: 424), citing Moravcsik (1997: 547).

[64] Ibid. (2009: 431).

> that where politics disappears 'administration' takes its place' (1960: 170). That is, Moravcsik's theory systematically expresses and explains the world view fitting a dominant liberal power whose interest and need lies in the 'administration' of the world rather than in political struggle. This, surely, is important political knowledge for participants and observers of current world affairs.[65]

We should recall that 'ideology', in Mannheim's language, is a term reserved for ideas that obscure progressive political alternatives and, instead, promote ('sell') essentially backward policies. Yet there is hope. 'International Relations as a social science', Jahn reminds us, 'can yet challenge ideologies and fulfill its original promise: by explicitly exposing these particularities'.[66] The ultimate aim, on which she concludes her critique, is to 'open up spaces for change in political thought and practice'.[67]

As a criticism of liberal IR theory, this is at once far-fetched and evasive. Far-fetched because (leaving aside its exaggeration of scholarly influence in the world) those familiar with my applied and policy writings based on liberal theory will surely find the notion odd that it is all a smokescreen (even an 'unconscious' one) for liberal 'administrative' rationality and American hegemony. Two examples must suffice.

First, as regards global power, it is hard to construe liberal theory as an apology for the 'short-term interests' of the US hegemon ('a dominant liberal power'). To the contrary, perhaps the most important theme in my foreign policy writing over the past 5 years has been the limits of American power and the misguided nature of US conceptions of interest. In particular, I have stressed 'civilian power' and the preference for the more consensual, negotiated system in which Western powers must make substantial compromises of sovereignty and wealth – more like the European Union's customary mode of institutionalized engagement with the outsiders and potential members than that of the United States. The important issue here is not the identity of the great power, but the instrument of power. The liberal focus on civilian power follows directly from liberal theory, with specific national preferences underlying power. In such a world, external coercion is less likely to be cost-effective than realist or institutionalist theory implies. Instead, power stems from an asymmetrical interdependence of preferences. Thus domestic or transnational social engagement will be more effective when it seeks to work with societies to generate a process of mutual social development consistent with common goals. This requires civilian policies that reach deep into

[65] Ibid. (2009: 434–435).
[66] Ibid. (2009: 436).
[67] Ibid. (2009: 436).

society, if stable outcomes are to be achieved at less than enormous costs. This is closer to what the European Union does, with its more preferences-based tools of influence, such as European enlargement, trade, foreign aid, and international law, than to US coercion.[68] The use of such tools is fundamentally constrained, so research tells us, by the evolving local consensus in the societies in question.

Jahn's objection to this view is that any discussion of the 'transformation of domestic and transnational social values, interests, and institutions' disguises coercive, inherently self-defeating, aspects of liberalism. But her position is confused. Jahn and I seem to both accept that coercive liberal policies are ineffective, to judge from her scholarship. Is her objection then simply the rubric 'liberal'?[69] Or that acknowledging the truth out loud is bad politics? Either way, I am unsympathetic. She seems to assume also that less coercive liberal policies are similarly doomed to failure, as long as liberals are behind them, and 'an altogether more radical option must be countenanced'.[70] Yet, she provides no empirical evidence. I stick to my position: domestic social, economic, and political development is first and foremost an endogenous process. External efforts to promote it through intervention, assistance, or pressure can be at best secondary. They must attend to local circumstances. Certainly, there are many areas of the world, as we have seen already, where such social change has worked. Moreover, in proposing a 'radical option', Jahn displays her preference for allusive abstraction over concrete policy analysis. She never tells us what that 'more radical option' is. Until she does, there is little reason to abandon current policies, despite their uneven result.

The second reason why liberalism is not an apology for centralized US or liberal hegemony is that the central tenet of my scholarship – most notably in the case of European integration – has been to insist upon the enduring existence of hard bargaining among diverse societies with only partially compatible interests and values.[71] I criticize those who stress centralized 'administration', supranational or hegemonic. In the case of the European Union, for example, I am a 'liberal *intergovernmentalist*', in that I insist that there is, will be, and should be a 'European constitutional

[68] Yet often even such changes, when induced from outside, are not entirely 'consensual': it is fundamentally based on asymmetric interdependence, and this can be deployed in a highly one-sided way, as in the case of European enlargement. Moravcsik and Vachudova (2003).

[69] Most of her two-part article is devoted to a demonstration that Western intervention in the developing world to promote democracy and development has ignored the consensus among scholars and policy analysts. This is a classic liberal view: special interests and ideologues triumph over informed analysts. See Jahn (2007).

[70] Jahn (2007: 227).

[71] For example, Jahn (2005: 192–193).

settlement' that preserves a legitimate democratic domain consisting of redistributive, fiscal, and cultural issues subject to national and local control.[72] Again, this follows from the basic liberal view that diverse national preferences impose a binding constraint on the willingness of countries to integrate: Until values change, whether for functional or ideological reasons, further integration would be neither practical nor ethical. Though my major area of research is not the developing world, my positions concerning issues as disparate as Chinese foreign policy, reform in Libya, and the war in Iraq neither apologize for, nor entirely reject, classic Western 'liberal' positions.[73]

What is most troubling is Jahn's evasiveness about the underlying foundation of her own position, given her commitment to criticizing others for their unspoken political values. Jahn dismisses the ideal of intersubjective communication of social science, based on the notion that findings are universal or objective. She does not believe we can in principle apply and communicate theories and results to everyone – the essentially democratic ideal underlying social science.[74] Yet she gives no positive argument in favor of this position. Instead, she appeals to authority: Karl Mannheim, she glosses Mannheim to show that generalizations simply disguise political ideology. Mannheim's position, though one would not know it from Jahn's extended discussion of *Ideology and Utopia*, rests on Marxist teleology: objective social science as a norm is based on a 'bourgeois rationalist' notion of 'generally valid knowledge' – an affectation of the 'capitalist bourgeoisie'.[75] This Marxist view of history is quaint, but at least Mannheim is serious enough to accept the responsibility of grounding his *Ideologiekritik* in explicit 'objective' assumptions. If this is also Jahn's view, she should say so – although, of course, that would contradict her previous historical particularism. If not, she should tell us what her position is. As it stands, her criticism simply floats in a philosophical vacuum.

The absence of consistent foundations is convenient for Jahn, for it permits her to criticize the conventional methods of others as ideological, yet, cite conventional social science to support her own political preferences. For example, when she advances her own policy agenda by criticizing Western policy in the Middle East, she ditches the epistemology

[72] Moravcsik (2002: 621). For related reasons, I remain agnostic about the democratic legitimacy of the European Central Bank.

[73] Moravcsik (2007a, b; 2008b).

[74] I believe also that, at least in my case, that this is probably the most effective means of promoting progressive change – and thus I make a point of trying to keep my public policy writing consistent with my research.

[75] Mannheim, 148–150.

and cites general social science research ('host of scientific analyses questioning every single one of its claims') to make her point – just like a good positivist.[76] Make, no mistake, *this* claim is not particularistic.

> 'What we witness in the world today, therefore, is neither a new world order characterized by a third wave of democratization nor the end of history, as liberals would have us believe, but rather its repetition. And herein lies the real tragedy of liberal diplomacy. Not only, if past experience is anything to go by, can we expect this latest round of liberal foreign policies to end in failure'.[77]

If this is how Jahn is going to critique policy, what was the point of all the sociology of knowledge?

We could pursue the point further, but it is no use. Everything about Jahn's policy analysis remains vague: her theory of 'ideological' policy making, her view of history, her sociology of knowledge, her preferred alternative. In the end, all we know is that Jahn believes that the solution to current problems lies in deep philosophical reflection on social theory: 'Sooner or later…if the cycle is ever to be broken, an altogether more radical option must be countenanced: the critical self-analysis and actual revision of liberalism itself'.[78] It is a nice (transhistorical) claim, but not a plausible one. If history teaches us anything, it is that more than a critique of someone's IR theory is needed to 'open up spaces for change in political thought and practice'.

Conclusions: Why did we have this debate and not some other one?

We have seen that nearly every aspect of Jahn's critique rests on outright misunderstandings of liberal IR theory. She misquotes specific liberal claims and misconstrues the context of IR theory, philosophy of science, empirical research, and policy analysis, which surrounds it. These are not judgment calls: Jahn misreads black-and-white textual evidence and overlooks literally hundreds of pages of directly relevant work. The resulting misunderstandings are significant and unambiguous. Finally, over and over again, she is flagrant in her unwillingness to provide any logical or empirical support for critical claims, ranging from the assertion that core assumptions of liberal theory are not distinctive to the assertion that all general social scientific claims are ideological.

The underlying problem is not Jahn's sloppiness; it is her basic mode of criticism. By arguing in this way Jahn is acting as a principled scholar, for

[76] Jahn (2007: 227).
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

she is deeply committed to the view that liberals like me *do not know what we are talking about*. That may sound flip, but I mean it precisely. Jahn is, and admits to being, a theorist of false consciousness.[79] She contends that all who do generalizable social science are carriers of social 'ideologies' who falsely obscure progressive change. It is the higher purpose of social science, a purpose reserved for critical social theorists such as Jahn, to expose and criticize such ideologies. The rest of us, quite literally, do not know what we are talking about.

Anyone seriously committed to such a dismissive view of other scholars will naturally tend to spend a great deal of time lecturing them about the real meaning of what they are saying. This has two unfortunate effects. One is to transform debates between competing views of international relations into debates about competing views of the sociology of knowledge. Everyone spends less time talking about people, states, power, and other real things, and a lot more time talking about epistemology, methodology, and other abstract concepts. I did not become a scholar to do that. The second is that debates become one-sided. According to Jahn's epistemology, only the critical theorist like herself divines the true meaning of what has been said and done. Thus Jahn seems to see little need to document precisely what liberals say before she imposes her own (mis)reading. In the end disciplinary relativism becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. I believe that a scholarly community should be the site for conversations, not soliloquies.

The greatest loss lies in the scholarship that might have been. I admire Jahn's intense interest in the complex relationship between interest and ideology across the history of modern international relations. Some of her empirical work, though conjectural, is bracing and provocative. Such issues deserve more serious research. However, in order for it to be coherent and credible, it must be more tightly disciplined. It must involve concrete testing of competing mid-range theories, using objective data, communicated in a way all can understand. Had Jahn taken this route, her paper might have launched an interesting empirical and theoretical discussion about the concrete causes of liberal policy failures. But no such debate can flourish as long as one deploys method and philosophy of science to evade direct confrontation with real-world evidence. Jahn spends much time lambasting liberals for their inability to imagine grand alternatives to the geopolitical *status quo*. Among those who view scholarship as a vocation, the first steps on the road to utopia are more modest.

[79] Jahn does not use the term, but it is essential to Mannheim, on whom she relies almost totally, and her approach would be entirely incoherent without the concept.

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