

Interview – Steven C. Roach

Written by E-International Relations

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E-IR has partnered with the journal *Politics* to bring a series of interviews with authors of a special section of its November 2016 edition titled 'Resurrecting IR Theory'. In this interview, Dr. Steven C. Roach discusses at length affective values in international relations, the value of resilience and how to theorize emotional actions. He is currently Associate Professor of International Affairs in the School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies at the University of South Florida-Tampa.

You can find the full article by the author here (requires login / access).

Where do you see the most exciting theoretical debates happening in IR Theory?

I believe that the most interesting debates nowadays are those drawing on non-traditional sciences. Wendt's quantum mind approach to IR, for example, has garnered perhaps the most attention. Indeed, I find it a novel way of working beyond the materialist problems of social inquiry, such as the mind-body duality/problem. It's based on conjectural propositions that seek to unify quantum theory and social ontology. This includes how wave particles can suddenly take a different form (or what is called quantum leap) and new identity, and how the quantum human consciousness – or correlations between subatomic particles and brain waves – can take the form of a super-organism derived from David Bohm's notion of proprioception (self-perception that leads to creative perception orders). I'm intrigued by the implications of this research for IR, including mapping the imaginary contours of a global human consciousness.

But Wendt's approach is not without its problems. Most notable is the correlation of measured wave collapse with a determinate, fixed identity. To me, this proposition remains unconvincing, since quantum theory is really about measuring the unpredictable behaviour of particles (or particles will turn into waves). Probably, the safest proposition to make here is to say that the instruments we use to theorize/measure such phenomena are the only functionally independent tools of understanding; and not the social phenomena that is being observed.

This would at least explain why, as social scientists, we have long tended to conflate the functionality with the fixity and/or independent existence of things and in the process, ignore the immanent tension between an entity's becoming and its being. It's another way of saying that we are always striving to be scientists first and political thinkers second (or if at all).

I also believe that this tendency masks a larger problem of stressing the need to expose the so-called immovable order of things, rather than understanding this order in processual or social (re-)ordering terms. Maybe it's this tendency to fixate on this order that explains so many of the limitations in our thinking, that is, of using what I like to call the heavy conceptual anchors to immobilize creative rethinking of the social phenomena we observe. Maybe this is also what haunts Wendt's own attempts to unify quantum theory with social ontology.

Where do you see the most exciting practical conundrum in international relations in the 21st century?

Robotic weapons or artificial intelligence (AI) in modern warfare, including the ethical implications of holding fully autonomous lethal weapons accountable are highly consequential practically and puzzling theoretically. Can we, for

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instance, hold robots accountable when there is no intention or guilt to trace? And will the laws become irrelevant in this case, or cease to deter would-be perpetrators of violence? These are questions that reflect the growing concern about relying on fully autonomous lethal robots (or “killer robots”) in 21st century warfare. While some remain optimistic about the ethical autonomy of such weapons – or programming such robots to comply with the laws of war and other protocols – others insist that the lack of emotions and conscious states of mind make this kind of autonomy and accountability impossible.

I tend to agree with the latter position: that emotions and conscious states can't be fully replicated. Even if we did come up with a weak or limited replica, it may well lead to highly unstable expectations about the application of law, and also eliminate the technical advantages of robots vis-à-vis humans, such as the more rapid ability to take out enemy subjects/targets. It's nonetheless hard not to note the contradiction here: that the absence of emotion can be a symptom of the loss of control over judgments made during war (via the products we make that lack self-consciousness). Humans, as we know, need to control and/or possess things. It's what allows us, in most cases, to derive value from our experiences. However, it is emotions that constitute our judgements and appraisals about the need to control our surroundings. It's an important albeit still, little understood part of cognition and rationality.

How has the way you understand the world changed over time, and what or who prompted the most significant shifts in your thinking?

Originally, I was a radical cosmopolitan and very much idealistic in my thinking, especially in the late 1990s. I have, however, become more realistic in terms of my theoretical engagement with world crises. And by “realistic” I do not mean a focus on solving problems, but rather, understanding the underlying social and political forces at work in political crises, i.e., global warming. In this sense, I suppose, I was becoming more aware of the content of the concepts I was using to critique social relations as well as the rising prosperity, complacency, growing anti-intellectualism, and fearmongering that followed the 9/11 attacks. All of this, as many know, had set the stage for a so-called willful ignorance of politics of our times, in which for instance, global climate skeptics have demonstrated the power of ignorance to undermine the virtues of scientific consensus and civility norms.

Indeed, it seemed that everything had become excessively politicized and polarized. The polarization was driven not just by anger and distrust, but also by the growing mass capacity to manipulate the raw power of these emotions. The raw power threatened the collective good will of a global civil society, a united Europe, and increasing global economic interdependence. It also showed how the global warming deniers could suddenly share an unspoken affinity with the terrorists' messianic message of destruction; and also how the new global institutions lacked the ability to contain, much less confront the mounting social and economic global pressures. In the emerging new world disorder, the new global architecture of governance had become the source of the crises, not the solution.

I therefore began to ask how such irrationality had taken root in political affairs: that is, why so many had unconsciously and consciously subscribed to the forces of destruction whose effects scientific knowledge was supposed to avert and overcome. I therefore found myself drawn (back) to the moral obstacles and possibilities of creating new political dialogue, and becoming increasingly interested in understanding not only how ethics and dialogue could be (re-) interwoven, but also how they too could be instrumentalized to support perilous and self-destructive political agendas. Confronting the latter became an important priority. And I found Andrew Linklater's work on dialogical ethics and the ethics of harm in world politics of particular influence. It helped me re-configure the moral possibilities of producing dialogue across states.

Equally important, my thinking was influenced by research I conducted on the volatile politics of the International Criminal Court, global terrorism, and human rights abuses. This has given way to my deeper engagement with pluralist ethics – inspired by William Connolly's writings on pluralism. I am now examining the conditions of moral possibility of cultural pluralism in world politics. A central concern of mine is how decency can be treated as the starting point of analyzing the social and relational significance of global pressures on cultural movements.

You argue in your article that you will help us understand the transformative link between emotions and values. I was wondering if you could elaborate on the exact impact of emotions. Do they change affective

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values or their interpretation; that is, their norms? You also claim you will explain the tension between negative and positive values. Sometimes though, it may appear that you are arguing that you explore not the tension between different values but within one and the same value depending on the emotion to which it gives rise. So, are you referring to the tension between or within values?

Values possess negative and positive qualities that are in tension with one another inside and between values. Consider, for instance, the relationship between peace (e.g. peace negotiations and peace pacts) and justice. The later consists of retributive elements, that some might consider as negative, since they concern punishment (that satisfies one's anger) and/or exacting some kind of vengeance; and restorative elements that relate to healing and forgiveness by victims. Now, you can also say that the pursuit of retributive justice is about showing compassion for the victims, but that the threat of punishment is what fuels the anger and hostility of targeted leaders (who are the key negotiators of a peace agreement) that can complicate efforts to reach peace and any terms of reconciliation for that matter. However, many human rights activists seem to ignore this conflict, by steadfastly and understandably insisting that upholding the rule of law does not involve discriminatory treatment or selective justice.

As one can see, the retributive and restorative elements of justice remain in tension. The benefit of researching values in relation to emotions in this respect is that they help us understand the political tensions of legitimizing the global rule of law. In other words, the tensions between and inside values operate and are fueled by conflicting emotions: in this case, between trust (in the rule of law) and compassion (for the victims). I believe it is the intensity of conflicting emotions that helps us understand in greater depth the volatility of the International Criminal Court's (ICC) activities, for example.

Let me also add that for much of the 20th century, emotions were regarded as irrational, meaning that they functioned independently of cognition. However, as many philosophers, psychologists and social scientists have shown over the years, emotions can also be considered as judgments for evaluating and appraising actions and behavior. This of course makes assessing their impact a bit more difficult, since it suggests that we live by and through our emotions, or rather, that emotions are ultimately what moves us and reflects why we feel the way we do. And yet, if we live through them, how are we to assess their causality? Are they simply effects of something? The idea that emotions can also stick – to use the term Sara Ahmed uses in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* – is also to say that emotions can latch on to values and in this case, anchor our judgments and beliefs about something. These values include justice, peace, cooperation, resilience, or tolerance. Together they express not only how, or in what way we relate to others, but also how we structure social relations.

Would it be fair to deduce that you are criticising the idealistic theory of values that may exist within the “non-transformational” approach of values or an idealist view of values found among some states today? However, aren't values inherently contested concepts in modernity? With values being agonistic ideas and not ideas with fixed meaning; hence, political, how would you say you build on this understanding of values and their meaning through your study of emotions?

Yes, it is fair, since I am critical of their preferential treatment of emotions as universal judgments. By preferential treatment I mean the selection of certain emotions that they [idealists] feel apply equally to all people regardless of nationality. But this simply can't be true, since some people may lack the feelings embodied in the selected emotion, or alternatively, express the emotion in entirely different ways that challenge its universal meaning. Still, moral cosmopolitans insist that some emotions like love and compassion enable us to reflect and revise the built-in biases that restrict our moral judgments. By using the term moral discovery, political theorists, like William Talbott, seek to champion the ideal of individual autonomy over societal transformation. This emphasis on the fixed ideal of autonomy is what makes their moral theories non-transformational, for it ignores the socially transformative role of collective resistance to oppressive practices.

It is also this emphasis on the link between autonomy and a well-ordered, decent society (that embodies the practices, principles, and laws) that structures our emotional attachment to others less fortunate or disadvantaged. In her recent book, *Political Emotions*, Martha Nussbaum, for example, claims there needs to be what she calls “a circle of concern appraising the world from the person's own viewpoint, therefore, of that person's evolving

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conception of a worthwhile life” (p.11). Love, in this sense, is about transcending one’s circumstances; it assumes a fixed absolute point in our moral understanding of a good society. In short, it is about treating respect and cooperation as moral values of a well-ordered society, values that compete with ‘enemy’ emotions like hatred, resentment, and distrust.

I am also critical of idealists’ treatment of the tension between these ‘friendly’ and ‘enemy’ emotions. The conflicts between these emotions reinforce the incontestable need to transcend their effects (e.g., alienation). By incontestable, I mean that we can all agree that there is a consensual need to eliminate severe poverty. Nonetheless, when it comes to the norm and value of assistance, people may possess very different feelings about how this need of overcoming impoverishment is best addressed. Some may reject such concern as arrogant, even stigmatizing, while at the same time becoming, in the minds of those offering the assistance, incorrigible(s). Suddenly, it is not difficult to see how the incontestability can become the condition for imposing the humanitarian norm. But this simply begs the following question: how do we deal with these inherently divisive effects of feelings? Ignore them? It seems to me that this is the cost we incur when we fail to contest the meaning of certain values and norms.

You explore the topic of humanitarian assistance from the perspective of the impact of emotions and I would like you to clarify your position regarding the unconscious or conscious level of internalization. I was wondering if you would agree with the statement that humanitarian support reflects the unconscious internalization of the norm of humanitarian assistance. If this is the case, then how quickly is it possible for a norm to become an affect entering the unconscious level of the actors that your analysis focuses on, given that unconscious internalisation of norms domestically takes a much longer time and a more complicated process? The creation of an affect domestically is part of a long cultural process whereas the humanitarian norm at the unconscious level is something very new to perhaps have such an effect. Would you say that such international norms are operating at the level of beliefs, conscious emotions or unconscious affect, as you seem to argue by referring in your article to the “unconscious striving”? If what you mean is unconscious, then why would offering help to people in plight be exemplar of the humanitarian assistance norm and not, perhaps, of a Christian/religious value with (deeper) unconscious roots such as compassion?

I would agree with your statement since to summon humanitarian support shows that we are becoming aware (albeit not fully) of our feelings about assisting other humans in need. The question also depends on what we mean by affect and emotion.

Some psychologists and normative philosophers use basic emotion and affect interchangeably to describe pre-social and unconscious, biological stimuli. They focus on the individual and collective capacities of persons. Emotions in normative theory concern how our judgments can be put into action, or why we act on these judgments to address the problem of exclusion and deprivation of rights. Emotions are seen as the sets of feelings that form our judgments and actions.

I treat affect, however, as social and relational phenomena. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s work, I stress the capacity of the body to produce what these two thinkers call “assemblages” with other bodies; bodily sensations allow us to come together to form collective identities. Bodies, in other words, are what these two authors call “becomings” and they do not necessarily concern individual capacity. Our feelings challenge authority unconsciously. They “circulate” within and through these assemblages or functional structures. This suggests that affects resonate with unconscious feelings people have about an injustice, even a photo of a dead baby washed ashore.

This view means that norms can become affects – albeit in a relatively long period of time – depending on the circumstances. For instance, if it has become customary not to challenge the authoritarian government over torture, then the political affect of a spontaneous assembly of bodies (via social media) protesting governmental torture and oppression, may simply be the effect of feeling marginalized; but not the conscious awareness of action that involves a political platform and/or agenda per se (that brings into existence and embeds a norm).

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This delinking reflects one of the problems of the nonrepresentational logic used by Deleuzian-inspired IR scholars. It remains unclear how political affects relate to the norm process, or how affects may take several decades to become norms.

To show the possibility of recoupling these two processes, I propose that social movements must retain some elements of the liberal norms/framework they are resisting. Such retention can be thought of as a political effect of wanting to be conscious about something which we are still only slightly aware of, or what I call unconscious striving that is both individual and collective. As one can see, my aim here is to resituate the displaced individual feelings/sensations/body within the social assemblages of bodies, so that they can at some point make their return and serve as a new counterpoint to the circulation of affects (for the circulation process to be repeated). Whereas Deleuze and Guattari state that affects accumulate and are transformed within the assemblages, I take unconscious striving to mean a renewed and desired capacity to exercise control over one's social and political circumstances.

So, to answer your last question: let me stress that the humanitarian norm of assistance is both broad and flexible in relation to particular traditions. I believe that Christian values, which assume an absolute sacred point of God's omnipresence, can also be considered an active part of the unconscious striving towards the norm of humanitarian assistance. There are of course many humanitarian workers who are first and foremost Christians, people who unconsciously strive to promote the humanitarian norm by serving God's will. Their beliefs may indeed be more deeply rooted. However, it is precisely humanitarian norms of assistance that enable many to unconsciously strive toward and embrace affective values. Resilience is one such value. It allows humanitarian workers' beliefs to be situated and oriented broadly toward their (and God's) relief work.

The type of actors each theory chooses to focus on is often a point of contestation. I was hoping you could help our readers have a clearer understanding of your position about the actors on which you are focusing. On one hand, you mention in your article, that “[f]or the most part, it is fair to say that developing countries believe that powerful states have been using the norm of R2P to disguise their interests of intervening in states where they can increase their political influence”. The actor here seems to be ‘states’. On the other hand, a few lines below, you argue that “[t]he politics of resilience... involves the empowerment of local groups and the legitimization of their capacity to coordinate their affairs”. What is the type of actor you are assuming: states or local groups and does this make a difference when theorizing emotions?

I am referring here to local communities/actors/tribes that have remained the object of humanitarian interventions. The international institutions, NGOs, and powerful states were once the agents largely, if not exclusively responsible for enforcing the norm of humanitarian intervention (HI). R2P of course sought to work beyond this political power dimension of the HI discourse. It recognized the role of more actors in conducting and leading the operations of R2P. It has now reached the point where policymakers have begun to champion local empowerment, democratization, civil society building and resilience. The last of these values reflects the complex coordination of local communities and their individual and collective capacity to manage and adapt to the risks stemming from the political root causes of R2P (e.g., political corruption and scarcity of resources).

I am therefore referring to both states and local communities since the empowerment of the latter has helped destabilize and possibly revitalize the R2P institutional framework. Nevertheless, up until the time that these values of empowerment and resilience were made part of the preventive agenda of R2P, the major powers would invoke compassion and anger (at the human rights atrocities) to justify (unknowingly) the political and moral costs of intervention. The same might be said of the interests of state elites in developing countries, who have sought to stoke public anger and resentment by championing their inviolable sovereign right against foreign intervention (and proclaiming intervention as a new form of Western imperialism).

Nonetheless, it could be argued that a shift in power from the international to local level has begun to occur. In this respect, the positive value of resilience, which stresses management and adaptation to threat, seems to mask the circulating effects of emotion inside resistance movements. This is why, I think, we need to further flesh out the negative (undesirable) emotive qualities of the affective value of resilience, so that we do not end up either placing

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blind faith in its efficacy, or overlooking how these negative elements may be accumulating in the communities embodied by this value.

There is an expanding post-colonial dialogue that criticises Western-centrism and I was wondering how you would situate your research within this context. More specifically, when you are elaborating on how the R2P is being perceived by local groups, what would you say that you are adding to the already existing debate that criticises universalistic norms? For example, a post-colonial perspective is anyway critical of modernity and how Western norms are based on an ideal Western-centric modern subject. Seen from this perspective, states at the Centre tend to expect that the norms they institutionalize as part of a cosmopolitan/neocolonial vision could be well received. Doesn't it follow that people or groups that are not Western will think of international norms differently from the way Western institutions and states think of them? To think otherwise is, arguably, to be Western-centric. Also, isn't it to be expected that the international institutionalization of norms will have a different impact/interpretation at the domestic level? Doesn't it make a difference that these are two different political domains? Even the interpretation of values like justice at the domestic level takes a different meaning within one and the same state from one area or domain to another. For instance, justice in relation to profit can mean fair value, in relation to power it can mean a just state, in relation to the justice system it can mean the just functioning of the justice system, in relation to truth it can mean equal opportunities etc.

I am happy that you called attention to this topic of post-colonialism. These are questions I address in my book currently in progress, *Decency and Difference*. Let me begin by saying that emotions and affect cut rather nicely into this debate about the tensions underlying modernity and norms. First, it's important to stress, that even if one finds oneself in a similar situation, he or she may not share the same feelings as these other people, as I've alluded to above. The difference in emotion/feeling should remind one of the lack of self-presence, in which emotions can be treated as objects of experience. This is to say that while many actors may consent to abide by a particular international norm, many may not share, as I've suggested, the same emotions about its political impact.

Indeed, the effects of institutionalizing and/or implementing (liberal) norms across states and cultures remain uneven and varied. I believe that that tendency of many western scholars is to equate consent (to abide by a norm) with sharing the same feelings and judgment about the norm. This presumption of an-across-the-board internalization may work well for empirical models that simplify phenomena; but it ends up masking the complex politics and effects of marginalizing local practices (to treatment of others as objects). In effect, it symptomizes the lack of awareness of emotions and feelings that are vested in and help valorize local beliefs, practices, and customs. Norm internalization, therefore, is not a sequential process that can be completed, finalized and fixed, as norm constructivists have posited; but rather, is ultimately a political pluralist undertaking that involves situating the dispositions, experiences, emotions, and cultural practices within the broader, changing trend of human rights.

In my book (in progress) on *Decency and Difference* I look at various cases that highlight tensions between human norms and local non-western/indigenous cultural movements. These include the Cairo Mosque movement of the early 1990s, the Acholi people of Northern Uganda and their struggle to practice local procedures of tribal justice vis-à-vis the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the Roma.

For example, with the ICC's activities in Northern Uganda, I claim that theories of the impact of international criminal justice norms on local justice have tended to downplay the influence of collective emotion in the Acholi's reaction to the ICC's presence in the region. What is important to emphasize here is the role played by vengeance in local rituals of tribal justice (such as *Mato Oput* which involves the perpetrators and victims drinking the bitter substance of the Oput tree). The Acholi people treat vengeance as antithetical to their way of life: for it intensifies divisions within local communities. In this way, the political tensions between Mato Oput and the international interests of justice of the ICC (to address the unprecedented scale of atrocities) have become a source of division. These tensions seem to concern less the individual capacity to judge, than the different sub-communities' ability to affect and be affected by the procedure of justice. I argue in the book that the tension between the tribal and the ICC's forms of justice/accountability can reflect a process of social reordering in which the ICC's compassion for individual victims' needs should be situated in relation to local practice/rituals of forgiveness.

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The same applies, in a different way, to the Cairo Mosque movement of the 1990s, which Saha Mahmood brilliantly analyzes in her book *The Politics of Piety*. I interpret this movement as an example of an affective piety which is accumulating the effects of emotion, and intensifying, in relation to western liberal perspectives. Western critics, for example, claim that women's affirmation of the veil reflects male oppressive control over the female body. However, the women of the movement insist that the practice of wearing the veil allows them to operate beyond the liberal choice concerning their bodies or their bodily experience (to find their relation to God's will).

And now a future-oriented question that focuses more explicitly on the practice of emotions, if you like. If emotions are able to change the interpretation of affective values, as you argue, then how could emotions increase the possibilities of making norms be effective rather than just admitting that norms will most of the times have unintended consequences and that these consequences are correlated with emotions? Moreover, how could resistance based on affective values be effective rather than just a kind of an unanswered complaint?

I believe that they can make norms more effective by making them pluralistic. Emotions, as I have claimed above, can be situated within the tension between norms and the possibilities of understanding one's feelings through the boundaries of local cultural practices. For Judith Butler, the world materializes and produces the boundaries of identities through the repetition of norms. Repetition correlates in this sense with the ability of norms to stabilize one's social expectations. Let's take, for example, the norm of affirmative action, more generally, the special protections offered to disadvantaged minorities. What if the repetition of this relatively new norm produces a new set of political interests at the transnational level? Does this mean that it has eliminated or drastically minimized the sources of oppression and stigmatization of Roma throughout Europe? I would argue that it doesn't. The repetition of existent cultural practices can still disrupt and be disrupted by an international and/or broad-based norm that has been internalized by most, but not all peoples across states.

More specifically, the Roma's political interests/activities at the EU level (or, as you suggest, the capacity to deal with the consequences of discrimination) have come to symbolize the efficacy of the EU liberal norm of nondiscrimination. Shame though, which is a relational norm, challenges this progress. To be sure, the EU norm of nondiscrimination has created political opportunities and symbolized the role that compassion and empathy can play in remedying the effects of oppression. But the relational content of this norm also raises an important question: do these political interests at this level necessarily speak to or are inclusive of the values and cultural practices of Roma communities? A key sticking point in this case has been the role of shame in structuring the coherency of Roma (or Gypsy if we are referring to the Roma before the 1970s) values and practices of these communities (where shame structures in both positive and negative manner the role of women and men within these communities). On the one hand, then, the EU norm of nondiscrimination (and its constituent emotions) has been effective in promoting the transnational political interests of the Roma. On the other hand, it may be allowing the negative elements of anger and distrust at the national level – where negative perceptions of Roma still persist – to accumulate as a negative affective value of cooperation.

For resistance to be effective, then, it is first important to stress how such accumulation can reflect the moral and political limits of transnational representation that fails to alter the repetition stigmatizing the Roma (as lazy criminals). One needs to see how the tension between the effects of compassion and shame in this context can still disrupt the political gains made by activists at the EU level. Ultimately, the aim is to show how these pockets of oppression and intensifying anger in certain Eastern European nations can re-present themselves to EU activism. In short, it is to show how the affective value of resisting the limits of national laws can be reconnected to the progressive politics of EU activism.

What is the most important advice you could give to young scholars of International Relations?

It is to be patient, focused, and resilient in your research and teaching. Developing and applying your ideas and arguments takes considerable time and sustained focus. I believe that it is these ingredients that help a person rise above the vagaries of the so-called marketplace of ideas in international relations. It's always important to start with interesting ideas that allow you to challenge and contribute to an existing, albeit not necessarily status quo IR

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perspective. You're better off researching and staying within these perspectives, rather than trying to develop a whole new niche in the literature. Think of this as securing your place and pace in the race to be competitive in the IR field. With the right pace and sustained research, you'll be in a better position to make your next move or to project and communicate your next idea. Today, it seems that job market forces are forcing every young IR scholar to be fast out of the gates (or have several publications), making it harder to set the right pace. People either burn out or later become prematurely jaded in their academic positions.

Establishing the right pace is about trial and error. Be ready to be rejected. But also be prepared to be recognized and accepted. Try not to latch onto fashionable/trendy debates, use the same old formula introduced by others to devise your arguments, or unduly compare your productivity to your peers (pick one or two people with impressive publication records to emulate, instead). You'll only be setting your pace at someone else's, and preventing yourself from ever establishing the proper rhythm needed to have a sustained and enjoyable career in IR. Setting your pace is an individual endeavor, then. Everyone has their own, in other words. Try to see your pursuit of ideas as a process of scaling your opportunities; that is, determining which ideas are expansive or broad enough to enrich your career now and into future. Doing this will require you to lay out the trajectory of your ideas as it relates to other areas of research. It will also allow you to structure your future opportunities and put yourself in a position to catch that 'second wind' of leading the research in a certain field.

Probably in the 1980s and early 1990s there were more opportunities to be a quick pioneer. Nowadays, however, with IR encompassing so many perspectives, it has become far more difficult to locate your fit with and into these different perspectives. Just try to stay true to your research interests by first questioning your passion for IR, and then harnessing this passion to begin developing your vision of contribution to the field. For instance, how does your current theoretical research and ideas enable you to understand the practical importance of key social and political problems/crises? Good ideas are routinely borne out of personal uncertainty – even ambivalence about society. Still though, you need to realize that this uncertainty is of your own making. It is not someone else's, such as the person who attempts to convince you that the job market is hopeless. As long as you have the self-realized passion to sustain your scholarly interest in the idea you've selected, you'll be able to publish and thrive in academia. So, don't ever surrender that passion to doubt from without. Try to grow from your own uncertainty as a scholar, by learning how to harness and control it. That way you'll never be victimized by it, and you'll be a better scholar in IR.

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This interview was conducted by Alexandros Koutsoukis. Alexandros is a Commissioning Editor at E-IR.