Kinship in international relations: Introduction and framework

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While kinship is among the basic organizing principles of all human life, its role in and implications for international politics and relations have been subject to surprisingly little exploration in international relations (IR) scholarship. This volume is the first book-length study, and so a bit of a first stab at thinking systematically about kinship – as an organizing principle, as a source of political and social processes and outcomes, and as a practical and analytical category that not only reflects but also shapes politics and interaction on the international political arena. Since kinship is such a ubiquitous phenomenon, it should be 'good to think with' (Lévi-Strauss 1966) for IR theorists. It presents itself as an alternative and fertile starting point for thinking about how the overall international system is organized, how and why states formulate and practise their foreign policies the way they do and how various actors in the international arena make sense of and contend with one another. Our collective ambition, then, is to explore how kinship – whether constituted by blood, practices or metaphors – profoundly impacts on contemporary political structures, processes and outcomes. Our point of departure is that it is insufficient to approach kinship merely as a pre-given, natural bond between individuals, one that exists independently of perception or analysis. What is needed, we suggest, is increased awareness of how blood and metaphorical kinship relations are entangled, and acquire social meaning through everyday application as well as through scholarly attempts to classify and make sense of international relations by using kinship terminology.

The chapters in this volume examine the practical and political implications of invoking kinship in everyday speech, what it means to political interaction and to relational structures, at the same time as they also aim to add to our understanding of kinship as an analytical category. Our first aim, then, is to explore how kinship can expand or limit actors' political room for manoeuvre in the international political arena, making some actions and practices appear more possible and likely. As kinship terms are used in politics to designate relationships within and between states, kinship should also be included in our scholarly and analytical gaze. Adding kinship to the political equation could in other words change not only the political dynamics at play, but indeed the very rules of the game (Sabean *et al.* 2007). Against this backdrop, the second aim of this volume is to call attention to kinship as an organizing principle and driver in the dynamics of global power politics (Goddard and Nexon 2016). As an analytical category, kinship can help us organize and make sense of relations between actors in the international arena. It presents itself as a ready-made, self-evident classificatory system for understanding how entities within a hierarchy are organized in relation to one another, and how this logic is at once natural and social.

This introductory chapter elaborates on these opening claims, and discusses some ways in which kinship may be of use to IR scholars. We begin with some examples of how kinship relations have manifested themselves historically in international relations, seeking to demonstrate how blood kinship from the beginning has been accompanied, reinforced and challenged by metaphorical kinship – that is, how certain non-blood related relations in or via practice come to be treated as kin, with the duties, obligations and expectations that entails. We then proceed to observing how kinship has been dealt within its home discipline, social anthropology. Some early anthropologists, like Lewis H. Morgan (1877), treated kinship as a chief principle of social organization, while others, like Bronislaw Malinowski, did not. Disciplinary developments led structural-functionalists to focus on the law-like tendencies of kinship (Yanagisako 2002), and by the mid-twentieth century, British anthropology focused on what we may call 'kinshipology': identifying kinship structures and their effects on lived life. Over the last half century or so, the focus has moved towards treating kinship from what it is to what it does. This move from the structures of kinship to kinship's

role for social organization, which may be summed up as treating kinship as an enabling metaphor, has produced a number of insights on the level of everyday political practice, which IR scholars may apply to the level of relations between polities. We conclude the chapter with a presentation of the individual contributions to this volume.

Blood and metaphorical kinship

Before we proceed, a note on terminology is needed. Whether for universal reasons that are to do with the difference between giving or receiving (Carsten 2004) or for reasons that are to do with how Western discourse on kinship foregrounds the biological (Schneider 1984), an analytical distinction between kinship that flows from biological factors on the one hand and kinship that flows from social constitution (marriage, adoption, agreement, etc.) on the other, seems to be endemic both to the practice and analysis of kinship. Even in scholarly analyses – the very aim of which is to demonstrate how this opposition is undetermined and/or hybridized – these categories make up the raw material (e.g. Baumann 1995). Not least since kinship that begins as a biologically founded relation *also* has to be socially confirmed on a regular basis to maintain its social relevance, the distinction is an easy one to de-differentiate. Indeed, contemporary students of kinship seem to have made the undetermined character of this distinction foundational for what we may refer to as 'new kinship studies'. What they have not done, however, is to replace the insufficient terminology with a less problematic one. Since practical and analytical categories tend to mutually influence one another, and since uses of 'kinship' in everyday speech often are with reference to individuals of common descent, we need categories that account also for this aspect – even if the distinction is to be bracketed in the subsequent analytical round.

After careful consideration, in this volume, we have chosen to present a pragmatic dichotomy between 'blood' and 'metaphorical' kinship at the outset, before we proceed to problematize this distinction and, eventually, melt the two together. While we are fully aware that neither of these two terms are perfect, as long as the people we study continue to apply such a distinction in everyday language, it is our claim that we need analytical terms to denote them as well. In lieu of agreed scientific practice, this is the best we can do. In terms of terminology, then, we set aside terms

such as 'biological' (too entangled with social-biology) and 'biogenetic' (too technical) in favour of 'blood' kinship, which is used to denote kinship that is treated socially as (not necessarily 'is') having its origin in common descent. We have also set aside terms such as 'imagined' and 'fictional' in favour of 'metaphorical' kinship, to denote kinship that is treated socially as such, without making claim to having such shared origin in ancestry.

Why kinship?

Since the inception, humans – be they *Homo erectus*, Homo *heidelbergiensis*, Neanderthals, Denisovans or *Homo sapiens* – have been organized in hunter and gathering bands consisting of 20 to 200 individuals, often organized along blood kinship lines. During the tenth millennium before our era, some of these groups living in the foothills of the Fertile Crescent began to manipulate plant life and settle down, and other groups in the north of what we now call Europe began to make the sea a reliable and stable source of food. This was the beginning of sedentary life, with which came increased social complexity. Kinship, in the form of shared descent, remained an important organizing principle of these societies.[2]

With the arrival of polities of some scale, what the Romans called patronism – bestowing favours on followers or clients – entered the picture. Max Weber famously elaborated his category of patrimonialism to cover those cases of social organization where the ruler claims ownership of the land and/or people that he rules. What we have here, then, is a principle of social organization that comes with increased social complexity, and that complements the principle of blood kinship in interesting ways. The crucial thing seems to be how patronage and patrimonialism grows out of kinship. We get a first lead about this already from etymology: patron comes from the Latin term *patronus*, protector, which itself hails from Latin *patris*, the genitive form of *pater* – father. Patrimonialism comes from Latin *patrimonium*, inheritance from the father. Patronage and patrimonialism started as kinship writ large, and is a reminder that, if we look at basic forms of social cohesion, kinship will lurk somewhere. The connection may be obvious, as when European settlers had to translate their political organization

to native Americans by saying things like 'Uncle Sam has thirteen sons', or it may be more understated, but it will be there.

Everyday understandings of kinship tend to fasten on blood relations – which we in the present context see as encompassing both consanguine (i.e. genetically related) and in-law affines. However, as most of us would know from personal experience, kinship is, like all social relations, confirmed and strengthened by being exercised. Social use and practice has a recursive effect also on blood kinship. It may fasten or loosen the tie. As Peter Wilson (1988: 33, see also p. 50) generalizes about hunter-gatherers,

> …commitment and formality are excluded as elements of social structure, and in this way issues of power in social relations are diminished, though not extinguished, in significance [relative to domesticated societies, that is]. Such exclusion is further revealed when one examines what anthropologists of hunter/gatherer societies agree is a universal feature; the flexibility and fluidity of relations, especially kinship relations. […] their commitments are personal, not formal, institutionalized, or rule governed. Relationships are activated and animated through proximity, and proximity is determined by affection and friendliness rather than any formal or even ideal 'norm' of status.

In his study of what linguistic terms may tell us about social and political structures amongst proto-Indo-Europeans, Émile Benveniste (1973) similarly reaches the conclusion that it was ongoing social relations, as opposed to biological origins, that were key. Kinship, we might argue, is the great fastener of social ties. It is usually at the core of that basic unit of everyday life, the household, and always at the core of that basic unit of social analysis, the family (which often also includes hangers-on). Families that are also dynasties or, as it were, family firms, are no exception. At the state level, an illustrative example is found in the common description of the British King Edward VII (r. 1901–1910) as 'the Uncle of Europe'. The nickname alluded to the king's blood relations with 'nearly every Continental sovereign' – ties which clearly impacted on the nature of the bilateral, political relations between Britain and the monarchies in

question. Norway's choice of Britain as its political lodestar following the independence from Sweden in 1905 would be a case in point – it is commonly argued that the blood tie between the British king and the new Norwegian royal family (he was the Queen's father and king's uncle) helped cement relations between the two states in the early 1900s (Haugevik 2018). The implications of tying relations with another ruler, state or people to kinship – whether founded in blood or metaphor – is nicely captured by Wilson (1988: 35, compare Lévi-Strauss 1967), who elaborates on how

> [K]inship, or claiming kinship, signals friendship, while friendship realizes and confirms kinship. In the continuous pattern of coming and going that is signified by flexible social composition, there is bound to be a degree of uncertainty at the inauguration of a new proximal relationship. This uncertainty can be reduced through kinship. To claim kinship is to proclaim trustworthiness.

To exemplify further, Kathleen Burk (2007) observes how, towards the end of the 1800s, the idea of war between Britain and the United States increasingly came to be 'unthinkable, even fratricidal' at the same time as the term 'American cousins' was increasingly used in British domestic discourse. As Burk points out, the reference to kinship in this context had components of both blood and metaphor – the two states reframed themselves as 'racial as well as cultural cousins' (Burk 2007: 385–286; cf. Carsten 2004: 153–161).

Agriculturally based societies of low complexity tend to demonstrate less dynamism than industrially based ones, and blood kinship is correspondingly important. When, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, German thinkers like Hamann and Herder introduced the seminal idea of the nation, they thought of it as kinship organization writ large (Eriksen 2002). In societies where people move from the countryside to the city at unprecedented rates, new communities must take over many of the practical and emotional functions that were covered by the family-based villages they left behind. These new communities – nations – are often thought of as extended families. They are motherlands, so they are mothers, and they are fatherlands, so they are fathers.

In our own time, a similar tendency to export kinship structures and language to structures beyond the traditional family can be found if we look at how some social organizations, for example student networks, are constituted and referred to as 'fraternities' and 'sororities', or how political parties across state borders refer to one another as 'sister parties' or members of the same 'party family', on the basis of related ideological underpinnings. As noted by Mair and Mudde (1998: 214) 'Once party families come into play […] classification becomes almost a matter of conventional wisdom, and there seems little need to spell out or explain the categorizations involved.' Further examples would include how kinship terms are used in reference to particular professions, for example when priests are referred to as 'fathers', nuns as 'mothers' or 'sisters', nurses as 'sisters' (perhaps a fading practice), military contemporaries as 'brothers' (see Græger, this volume) and, in certain social democracies, policemen as 'uncles'. Even in our own professional field, academia, we find multiple examples of how kinship vocabulary is put into play so as to illustrate, order and give meaning to structures, individual relations and everyday activities. The school or sometimes even university is commonly referred to as the *Alma mater* (Lat. nourishing mother). Similar to a blood mother, the university provides (intellectual) nurture for its academic offspring. In German, doctoral advisors are referred to as *Doktorvater* (or *Doktormutter*), suggesting a more personal and persistent tie between doctoral supervisors and students than one might expect. The making of academic 'genealogies', to trace academic networks based on the metaphorical kinship ties between doctoral advisors and students, is becoming an increasingly popular exercise.

In all these examples, we see how kinship, due to its intuitive logic and presumably universal application, presents itself as useful to think with when approaching various kinds of relationships. At the same time, the examples also offer an important reminder about the protean character of kinship: If we say that kinship is everywhere, we say that *metaphorical* kinship is everywhere, for kinship is supposed to institutionalize trust. In the words of Pierre Bourdieu (1998: 67–68):

> If the family appears as the most natural of social categories and is therefore destined to provide the model for all social bodies, this is because it functions, in habitus, as a classificatory scheme and a principle of the

construction of the social world […] The family is the product of an institutionalization, both ritual and technical, aimed at durably instituting in each member of the instituted unit feelings that will tend to ensure the integration that is the condition of the existence and persistence of the unit. Rites of institution (from [Lat.] stare, to stand, be stable) aim to constitute the family by establishing it as a united, integrated entity.

For the discipline of IR, this lends the category of kinship an obvious potential, perhaps most obviously as the default mode of social organization. Kinship is a possible high road to understanding the constitution of states and other polities waiting to be explored. The debates about the character of the state, including the debate on whether it is a person or not (Wendt 1999: 215–224, Jackson *et al.* 2004), could do with a dose of kinship theorizing. So could IR scholarship on how relations between selves and others come to be constructed, adjusted and upheld through representations of the Other as 'friend', 'enemy' and 'rival' (Wendt 1999) and how mature security communities at the international level can be founded on shared values and a profound sense of 'we-ness' (Adler and Barnett 1998). Kinship clearly has something to add to these research agendas. Illustratively, when Winston Churchill first launched the idea of a US–British post-war alliance and 'special relationship' in 1946, he framed political cooperation as a natural consequence of the 'fraternal association between the English-speaking peoples' (Churchill 1946, see also Haugevik, this volume). Many similar examples could be noted; the idea here is to underline social and political closeness and mutuality by drawing on the kinship term of brotherhood. But metaphorical kinship structures may just as well be hierarchical. We have already made note of fatherlands and mother countries. In the preceding century, colonized polities were 'backward children' (Keal 1995), and in contemporary academic writing, the relationship between former colonial centres and their peripheries has been described as 'post-colonial families of nations' (Brysk *et al.* 2002). The point we wish to make is that humans need to classify the world surrounding them in order to act in relation to that world. By the same token, classifying other polities, which are indeed part of the surrounding world, is a precondition for a certain polity's actions vis-à-vis those other polities.

If its character of default mode of international relations is not alone a convincing reason why IR scholars need to study kinship, then a second major way in which kinship holds promise for IR is as an organizational principle on the systemic level. For early polities, this is obvious. The state of the art volume on second-century BCE polities in Anatolia and the East Mediterranean is called The Brotherhood of Kings (Podany 2010, see also Cohen 1996). When ancient Greeks prepared to enter into diplomatic relations with a barbarian people, such as the Macedonians, a first step was to 'discover' that they were kin (Jones 1999). Barbarians at the edges of the Roman Empire were no different. As Geary (2002: 111) notes with reference to Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths:

> Particularly in dealing with external gentes, such as the Burgundians, the Visigoths, the Franks, and the Thuringians, it was not civitatis or Romanitas but the common kinship among the royal families – either by common descent, marriage alliances, or adoption – that he emphasized to cultivate a sense of unity.

Note that this also went for relations *between* polities. For example, the process whereby Roman society hybridized with Northern barbarians was underpinned by

> an extensive nexus of kinship at all social levels, including the leading figures in the gentes [barbarian peoples] among themselves and with members of the Roman aristocracy and even the imperial families, created a new intermixed society despite the practically disregarded prohibition on intermarriage between Romans and barbarians.

> (Chrysos 2003: 15)

In 198 BCE, China and the Hsiung-nu, a confederation of what Chinese thought of as Northern barbarians, concluded a treaty that became known as *heqin*, which literally means 'peace through kinship relations' (Cunliffe 2015: 270). In Europe, medieval and early modern kings routinely referred to one another as brothers, meaning brothers in Christ. To the east, in Prussia, Austria-Hungary and Russia, this usage persisted during

the nineteenth century. Once again, metaphorical kinship served as a matrix that made specific cooperative practices possible. For later cases, the use of kinship as a basic matrix that allows other kinds of relations to emerge may or may not be that obvious, but we usually find references to kinship if we look (Liow 2003).[3] A case in point would be international organizations; it is, as it were, no coincidence that the British Commonwealth was referred to as a British 'Family of Nations' (Windsor 1947) or that the United Nations is commonly referred to by the same term (Mole 2009; see also Andersen and de Carvalho, this volume). In the latter, we have an example of how the entire states system is shoehorned into a kinship term.

Anthropological kinshipology

When anthropology split from the other social sciences, the others were supposed to take care of the West, and anthropology 'the rest'. The rest were traditional societies, where kinship was seen as the primordial institution and thus supposed to be the general matrix upon which everything else was structured. As Fox (1967: 10) put it, 'kinship is to anthropology what logic is to philosophy or nude is to art; it is the basic discipline of the subject'. Any social science that wants to reclaim kinship, must therefore start by revisiting anthropological work on the category. IR is in luck, for among the key aspects of anthropological kinship studies was to explore how large-scale political mobilization occurred in the absence of centralized leadership, i.e. to study social order and cohesion in so-called primitive, stateless societies.

Three assumptions have underpinned the anthropological study of kinship: that kinship is a universal phenomenon, that it has to do with reproduction(but see Weston 1991), and that, in addition, it is imbricated in a number of other social phenomena (Holy 1996: 150–155; Sahlins 2011a; Sahlins 2011b). Kinship studies, then, must deal with the tension between what is often described as human universals and cultural particulars. Kinship tends to be about descent and affinity (that is, marriage relations), whereas the family is the procreating unit defined through marriage, and the household is the unit of everyday life.

Already here, at the basic level of anthropological assumptions, we find an important insight for IR, namely that, since kinship terms are 'multiply realizable', that

is, the same term may cover very different social phenomena, they cannot be effortlessly lifted from different state contexts only to be elided at the international one. When the UN presents itself as a 'family of nations', it is committing a category mistake, for the different members of the alleged family obviously think about the family and the kinship at its core in very different ways (Mole 2009). Consider the fairly usual classificatory (consanguine) systems where the term 'father' is used about your male progenitor and all his brothers, and the term 'mother' is used for your female progenitor and all her sisters. In such systems, a distinction is often made between cross cousins and parallel cousins.[5] The hitch in terms of effects is important, for such systems usually lay down the discursive principle that you are supposed to marry a cross cousin, while parallel cousins, like siblings, are out of bounds. We have here a reminder that when a human says 'brother' or 'cousin', the terms are deceptive, for they may refer to different individuals in different societies, and the terms will come with different sets of social expectations attached. As will be clear already from this one paragraph, we do not need to go to metaphorical kinship in order to find social variation; consanguine classification systems are already very varied indeed. To put it differently, kinship, globally understood, is a bewilderingly complex discursive category. It is also a practice category that is wide open to bending. As Sverdrup-Thygeson notes elsewhere in this volume, while 'fraternity' in Western societies tend to bring associations to equality and symmetric relations, in the Chinese kinship vocabulary, 'brother' is a hierarchical term. For these reasons, the traditional study of kinship studies was an easy target for and an early casualty of the social constructivist turn.

Until the 1960s, anthropological kinship studies were about establishing universal rules and revealing the principles of social structure based on blood and kin. They were concerned with tracing the natural ties through blood, and how people attributed social significance to the natural facts of procreation (Holy 1996). Kinship was seen as the social construction of natural facts, and studying kinship meant tracing what was seen to belong to the biology of the species (Strathern 1992). In its heyday in the 1930s and 1940s, kinship studies often resembled exercises in formal logic, concerned with elaborate classifications, such as those surrounding classificatory kinship, that were based on rigid conceptual distinctions. The basic goal of this exercise

was to facilitate cross-cultural comparison with a view to establishing universal rules regarding how kinship determined a person's rights and duties, deviations from which would be socially sanctioned.

This original anthropological way of studying kinship might not have too much to offer when it comes to understanding contemporary international relations. It is of key historical interest, however, for it is logically connected to the way in which anthropology in the age of positivism sought to constitute itself as a specialized subject in its own right. From the 1970s onwards, this positivistic ambition was challenged by postmodern ideas, the general analytical turn from social structures to social organization and process and the increase in empirical complexity caused by the inclusion of new empirical scopes and social changes driven by processes of globalization. Anthropologists became increasingly concerned with studying the daily life of living people rather than focusing on abstract, juridical and logical principles that 'kinshipologists' saw as governing social life. This shift – away from the elegant but rigid kinship models based on according one institution *a priori* priority over others – reflects the waning of structural-functionalism as a guiding paradigm (Peletz 1995) and the last stand of anthropological functionalism.[6] The direct consequence of this general turn from structure to organization and process for the study of kinship was a turn away to looking at what it is, towards looking at what it does.

Central to the study of kinship was to explain social structures, politics and power dynamics, economic relations, ritualized practice and the cultural classification of humans and the formation of groups. In brief, the analytical focus on kinship offered an explanation to social cohesion, stability and reproduction in stateless polities. In the heyday of British structural-functionalism in the 1930s and 1940s, outsiders – typically American cultural anthropologists – ironically referred to the entire discipline of social anthropology as 'kinshipology', due to a combination of factors in addition to anthropology's monopoly of kinship studies. First was that kinship itself was the main analytical focus, seeking to describe the structural principles underlying the life and organization of primitive societies. Different societal institutions were studied through the prism of kinship, thus nourishing the structural-functionalistic role of kinship as an organizing principle. So-called primitive societies were maintained and reproduced

through various kinship patterns, and the other social institutions such as politics, economy and religion studied by other designated disciplines were all seen through the functions they had for kinship structures. Second and interrelated was the inherent focus on social structures. As a discipline, anthropology was concerned with mapping and describing social structures, of which kinship was seen as the most important one. This connects with anthropology's holistic ambition and how kinship relations were attributed analytical significance in their perceived ability to not only describe but also prescribe social meaning, relations, duties and responsibilities. This expression of positivism should be seen in anthropology's ambition to be accepted as a science in accordance with the standards of the natural sciences, and is also, and third, reflected in the terminology being developed. Kinship studies soon established what was referred to as 'the new latinmus', being concepts originating in the Roman law and highly associated with duties and rights derived from different kinship statuses evolving from marriage and kinship. The ambition was to establish a universal conceptual apparatus that would enable cross-cultural comparison. Scholars soon became concerned with conceptual refinement and distinctions, creating ever more elaborate classifications, creating the impression that kinship studies were 'very mature and complex … with a highly developed vocabulary' (Fox 1967: 50). The ensuing critique from Schneider's (1984) seminal book on American kinship includes how this conceptual apparatus was contextually detached, not reflecting the vocabulary of those studied, nor the meaning actors themselves put into kinship relations. It was criticized for superimposing a particular conceptual apparatus that tied particular rights and duties to the relations described with less attention being put on how various modes of organization are socially constructed and culturally defined. The theorizing of kinship, Holy writes, '…often resembled exercises in formal logic rather than being concerned with solving particular problems arising from empirical observation' (Holy 1996: 1). The focus on structures and formal logic were reflected among anthropologists influenced by structural-functionalism, asking questions about social cohesion and how stateless societies and groups without any formal leader were integrated and why they did not dissolve (Eriksen 2001). Particularly Evans-Pritchard's discovery and analysis of segmentary lineages and opposition among the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1940) marked an

important contribution to both the understanding of social cohesion of stateless societies and to kinship studies as a discipline by moving beyond a sole focus on group formations based on kin by blood. The Nuer segmentary lineages revealed how social organization was organized beyond the family, which was seen as the smallest and closest segment. But the family is also part of larger segments, and which segment that is 'activated' at any time is contextually and relationally defined. In segmentary lineages, close kin stands together against more distant kin, organized in what Evans-Pritchard called concentric circles. As Barth phrases it, with reference to a Bedouin saying: 'Me and my brothers against my cousins, me and my cousins against the world' (Barth 1973). The segmentary system of concentric circles showed a more flexible social organization based on kin and groups, all founded on descent from a common ancestor, meaning that there would not be a question of whether different Nuer groups are related but how they are related. It is thus also contextual whether this relatedness is a matter of friend or foe.

In shifting the analytical attention from the formal logic of kinship to empirical observations of how kinship worked in practice, new ways of organizing beyond the immediate kin became apparent. Contemporaries of Evans-Pritchard – such as Radcliffe-Brown, Edmund Leach, Lucy Mair and Meyer Fortes – all held strong views insisting on empirical evidence as the foundation for social analysis. Fortes' two books on the Tallensi (1945, 1949) laid the foundation for the theory of descent, and formed the basis for the structural-functionalism that were to dominate British social anthropology in the 1950s and 1960s. Fortes' theory of descent answered the question of social cohesion in stateless societies by arguing that groups with common unilinear descent – blood- or metaphorical-based – made it easier to create corporate groups that could be solidary and mobilize politically, similar to the segmentary opposition and concentric circles described by Evans-Pritchard. Groups could still be formed through marriage, but the theory of descent held that the corporative group still was the fundamental kinship unit, united through joint descent from a common ancestor. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard together co-edited the *African Political Systems* (1940) seeking a broader scope of their work and establishing the principles of segmentation and balanced opposition. Their project of providing a broad, comparative basis to enquire

into the nature and development of African political systems is indicative to structural-functionalism's general tenet that one could understand the society as a whole by studying the political and economic sides of families and tribes. These kin structures were seen as the building blocks of society and the key social institutions for maintaining social harmony and cohesion.

The orderly and logical universal models of the structural-functionalists were soon responded to and criticized by several anthropologists, notably by those writing from fieldworks conducted in Asia and, in particular, New Guinea (Eriksen 2001). Here, one did not find segmentary groups as an organizing feature, despite the presence of patrilinear lineages and the lack of formal, hierarchical structures. The critique not only undermined the universality of segmentary group formation but also questioned whether the structural-functionalists had exaggerated certain kinship characteristics at the cost of others, such as affinity and cognatic, or bilateral kinship, which traces relations through both a father and a mother. Instead of focusing on descent, kinship studies originating in Asia rather gave prominence to 'alliance' and exchange to account for social cohesion and organization, thus abandoning the search determining social structures. This produced a debate between the proponents of the 'alliance theory' first proposed by Claude Lévi-Strauss ([1949] 1967) and the 'descent theory' concerned with how to explain social cohesion of stateless societies (Holy 1996: 135–137).[7] This debate dominated the anthropological study of kinship in the 1960s, but would also come to shape its future by drawing attention to aspects of preferential or prescriptive kinship rules, that is, whether kinship structures should be seen as descriptive or normative. The descent theorists held that societal cohesion and equilibrium were a function of the balance of kinship and descent thus allowing certain groups and individuals to marry, which engendered segmentary, or corporate groups. The alliance theorists discovered through ethnographic work in Asia (India, Burma, Sri Lanka, Indonesia) and South America that the main structuring societal principle could not be ascribed to the interplay of kinship and descent ties. Social stability and group formation were not caused by descent but intricate and contextual rules as to who one could marry, prohibiting endogamy (within the group) to the advance of exogamy (external to the group) in order to establish alliances with other groups and segments.

Anthropology post-kinshipology

At first glance, it might seem that social anthropology's 'new kinship studies' move the focus of enquiry away from the questions of large-scale political organization and its effects that are at the heart of IR. As Janet Carsten (2004: 11) points out in a much-quoted work, the old kinship studies focused on the societal level, for that was where the variation in kinship systems was to be found, with the result that they occluded 'intimate domestic arrangements'. If we look again, however, newer anthropological studies have two particular strengths that we may build on. There is, first, the meticulous attention paid to those intimate relations that make up the micro-foundations of the social. As already noted, it simply will not do to study metaphorical kinship and how it works transnationally without paying close attention to what terms such as 'brother' and 'cousin' actually mean in different contexts. New kinship studies are exemplary in this regard (Yanagisako and Collier 1987; Baumann 1995). A second strength of the new kinship studies is the move from studying kinship per se to more inductive, empirical approaches of social life. One is struck by the prevalence of how kinship relations are intertwined with other social institutions and topics, such as nationalism, land rights, warfare, bio-ethics, gender, and transnational mobility including migration, adoption, and surrogacy (Herzfeld 2007). Kinship lingers in the background of these and related topics although in a less prominent and technically less demanding guise, and this is indeed one of the things we are able to demonstrate in this volume.

Drawing on anthropological research as it has evolved over the last half century entails exploring kinship through the lens of material practice (Goldfarb and Schuster 2016), being a more inductive approach as to the role kinship may play in various contexts. Addressing the practices undertaken in the name of kinship, attention is drawn to, in the words of Herzfeld (2007: 313):

> …a cluster of basic principles – the importance of the nuclear family, the use of nuclear family terms in nationalistic rhetoric, correlations of inheritance rules with kinship structure, and the expectation that kinship should ideally be a major source of affect and cooperation.

Kinship allows for certain practices that enable both the construction and the holding together of mutuality and difference (Goldfarb and Schuster 2016) with potentially far-reaching ramifications and consequences across scale and levels, from the nuclear family to the nation. As kinship is a social construct, this institution can take on different form and be reconstructed in various temporal and spatial contexts. Moreover, contextual renderings and usage of kinship can also be intentionally formed and infused by politics, religion and economics in order to serve other means – as demonstrated throughout this volume. This not only blurs the boundaries between whether the symbols and cultural system of kinship is a model *of* or *for* social organization (Geertz 1973); it also shows that kinship is malleable and that people may vie over filling it with meaning in order to construct commonality and assert relatedness around kin. That is, to invoke kinship as an *enabling metaphor* akin to the mechanisms described by Anderson ([1984] 2006) in *Imagined Communities*, which remains the key work on how kinship metaphors anchor nations and nationalisms.[8]

Once anthropologists started to look for non-blood elements in kinship systems throughout the world, it quickly transpired that a number of systems that had traditionally been understood as being based on blood kinship availed themselves of so many elements of metaphorical kinship that the distinction broke down. As Bourdieu (1977: 35–36) puts it:

> …*representational kinship* is nothing other than the group's self-representation and the almost theatrical presentation it gives of itself when acting in accordance with that self-image. By contrast, practical groups exist only through and for the particular functions in pursuance of which they have been *effectively mobilized*; and they continue to exist only because they have been in working order by their very use and by maintenance work (including the matrimonial exchanges they make possible) and because they rest on a community of dispositions (habitus) and interests which is also the basis of undivided ownership of the material and symbolic patrimony. […] To treat kin relationships as something people *make*, and with which they *do* something, is not merely to substitute a "functionalist" for a "structuralist" interpretation, as current taxonomies might lead one to believe; it is radically

to question the implicit theory of practice which causes the anthropological tradition to see kin relationships "in the form of an object or an intuition", as Marx puts it, rather than in the form of the practices which produce, reproduce, and use them by reference to necessarily practical functions.

There is always a gap between social practices and the classificatory systems used by a society. We may call this the practice/discourse gap. If there were no such gap, there would be no need for interpretive social science, for societies would have been so transparent as not to require thought by their members. As we know, however low the level of complexity, a social group will be soaked in issues that have to do with power/knowledge. The practice/discourse gap is part of the human condition, and cannot be done away with by utopian schemes that aim at reducing rule to the administration of things. There is, furthermore, always a gap between the social discourses studied by scholars and the analytical concepts scholars use to study those discourses. We may call this the hermeneutics/analytics gap. The point of social theorizing is to highlight certain aspects of the social. It follows logically that certain other aspects will not be caught by a certain analytical perspective. So, if the argument to the effect that kinship (or age, or gender, or ethnicity, or culture) is supposed to mean that there is a gap between a society's practical way of classifying consanguines and affines and its own self-understanding of how this is done, then that is true, but it is hardly news. It is, rather, inevitable. If, on the other hand, the argument that kinship does not exist is supposed to mean that no universal analytical perspective may capture kinship in all its variety, then that is true as well, but that is the very nature of theorizing, and so also inevitable.[9]

This is a key development for IR, for enabling metaphors count amongst the key preconditions for agency. Consider the case of establishing contacts with new polities. What is needed is something that may ground communication, something general to anchor the relationship, so that it may proceed to concern more specific stuff. As already noted, and as demonstrated throughout this volume, historically, kinship has played that role. Greeks 'discovering' that Macedonians and Illyrians were kin (see also Wigen, this volume) is an early example of the same kind of move that the UN uses when it

refs to the enabling metaphor of the 'family of nations' in order to divert specific discord by focusing on kinship.

One immediate retort to this upgrading of enabling metaphors to being the primary material to be studied is to insist on the qualitative difference of blood kinship from metaphorical kinship, and argue that what has been done by East Mediterranean and Anatolian Kings of the second millennium BCE, via ancient Greeks to the UN somehow is not real. The study of metaphorical kinship, which is dominant in this volume, is somehow not for real, since it is not founded on blood relationships. This would be not only fundamentally to denigrate the social relative to the physiological, which would be a strange thing for any social scientist to do, but also to mistake the social category of kinship for a biologically given. A significant change in the anthropological study of kinship turned on the increasing awareness that kinship is not only built on blood relations, but also that what were previously seen as natural facts have their own cultural specificity and contextual dynamics (Schneider 1984). One should, however, be cautious about distinguishing between factual and fictive kinship, as it may essentialize kinship and reproduce a particular, ontological notion of what kinship is all about, thus distorting the overall analysis. As Schneider (1968) argued, the Western notion of kinship is predicted on blood connectedness, which for long led anthropologists to ask the wrong questions and thereby to reproduce a biocentric version that gave way to categories such as fictive kinship without asking 'fictive to whom?' (Howell 2009). Indeed, anthropologists for a long time treated only relationships based on birth and marriage in terms of kinship, as illustrated by the already mentioned alliance/descent debate as well as the well-known nature/nurture debate (Ortner 1974; Strathern 1992; Sahlins 2011a, 2011b). But increasingly, anthropology also became aware how non-blood-based relations are becoming kinned and how established kinship relations are de-kinned: the Hua of the New Guinea Highlands are not interested in distinguishing between blood and metaphorical kin, and two Hua not related by birth can establish kinship by feeding each other (Meigs 1986).

Anthropology's turn away from trying to find universal kinship patterns and identify their specific effects on social orders to focusing on the socially produced and hence malleable quality of kinship as an integral aspect of social organization overall,

and particularly on kinship as an enabling metaphor for social life, has produced, and goes on producing (e.g. Carsten and Hugh-Jones 2014) a whole string of insights directly relevant to the study of international relations. Kinship is an emergent human phenomenon across time and space, for which we also have a well-developed analytical vocabulary. Forgetting about that vocabulary by arguing that kinship does not exist analytically, is simply an act of destruction that must point to a new creation that may do a better job, for the phenomenon will still need to be analytically accounted for, in all its various social realizations. For our purposes, what we have is good enough, and so rather than do away with it, we will proceed to draw on anthropological insights throughout the book. The less stress we put on what we have chosen to call blood kinship, the easier it is to apply kinship to what is of primary interest to IR scholars, namely how polities avail themselves of *metaphorical* kinship in order to create a matrix between themselves that allows for more specific interaction. In all social settings, and that includes international relations, kinship can be drawn upon to produce potent political metaphors that go on to change political realities. The seeming universality of terms such as mother, brother, uncle and so on occlude how these terms refer to very different phenomena in different cultural settings. This means that kinship metaphors enable and constrain international relations, creating expectations of what can be said, done and anticipated of each other in social relations. It should be the job of IR scholars to account for all this, and it is in that spirit that we have produced this volume.

Organization of the book

The chapters in this volume deal with conceptual issues and overarching themes, as well as with manifestations of kinship in systems, cultures and interaction practices across specific regions, states and institutional structures. In Chapter 2, Morten Skumsrud Andersen and Benjamin de Carvalho suggest that the phrase 'the family of nations' for a long time was more commonly deployed amongst international actors themselves to describe 'the international' than more common concepts in contemporary IR scholarship such as 'international system', 'society', and 'community'. They argue that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the concept of a family of nations was integral to legitimizing strategies for coercive measures and colonial rule.

In Chapter 3, Kristin Haugevik discusses the promise of kinship as an analytical category for making sense of how inter-state relationships emerge and evolve on the international political scene. She then examines practical uses of kinship in states' efforts to initiate and foster amicable relationships with significant others. In Chapter 4, Halvard Leira explores the sociological dimension of kinship diplomacy and the importance of blood kinship as a cohesive factor in diplomatic interaction, focusing on diplomacy as a functional 'third culture' and on diplomats as part of a self-referential group of peers. In Chapter 5, Nina Græger offers a critical take on kinship inside military organizations, with a special view to how social structures, relations and culture reflect and shape gender discourses and practices.

In Chapter 6, Julie Wilhelmsen explores how kinship relations have functioned as a source of social power in Chechnya and, since the end of the second post-soviet Chechen war, constituted a bond between Moscow and Grozny that has allowed Russia governance over Chechnya. This bond is personified through the father-son-like relation between Vladimir Putin and Ramzan Kadyrov. In chapter 7, Einar Wigen demonstrates how, when the Cold War ended, Turks in Turkey started speaking of Turkic peoples formerly behind the Iron Curtain as their 'brothers', and used this claim to form closer ties with Turkic groups. He suggests that Turkey has used three sets of kinship claims to engage in region-building, incidentally co-extensive with three failed notions of the nation that were proposed in political debates of the early twentieth century.

In Chapter 8, Francesca Refsum Jensenius reflects on the prevalence of kinship references and practices in Indian political life and how they also shape India's international relations. In Chapter 9, Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson focuses on the role of kinship concepts in Chinese foreign policy, and in Chapter 10 Wrenn Yennie Lindgren discusses the entrenched trend of hereditary politicians in Japanese politics and how kinship is used as a legitimating force in Japan's international relations. The volume is concluded by Andreas Aagaard Nøhr, who offers a critical assessment of what promise that kinship may hold as an analytical category in the discipline of IR.

Notes

1   We should like to thank our fellow contributors, Scott Hamilton, Thomas Hylland Eriksen and three anonymous referees for their comments on previous drafts.

2   For a critical discussion, see Evans-Pritchard (1940).

3   Given that the country we know best is Norway, where the importance of kinship to politics is routinely undercommunicated, we take special pleasure in underwriting the following general statement where Norway is concerned: 'This patrimonialization of collective resources can also be observed when, as in the case of Scandinavian countries, a social-democratic "elite" has been in power for several generations; one then sees how the political type of social capital, acquired through the apparatus of the trade unions and the Labour Party, is transmitted through the networks of family relations, leading to the constitution of true political dynasties' (Bourdieu 1998: 16).

4   But see Weston (1991).

5   Cross cousins are children from a parent's opposite-sex sibling, that is, for a girl, my mother's brother's children and my father's sister's children. Parallel cousins are children from a parent's same-sex siblings.

6   Paradigms do not simply disappear. Arguably the most ambitious study of kinship and comparative politics is Emmanuel Todd's (1985). To Todd, kinship is a phenomenon on the level of human relations, i.e. of lived experience, whereas political system is a phenomenon on the level of social relations, i.e. of symbolic or metaphorical relations. What links the two is the centrality of the two conceptual pairs liberty/authoritarianism and equality/inequality. To Todd, who is an avowed structuralist (1985: 17), male domination means that male experience should be analytically privileged. The key lived relations for political purposes are those between father and sons and between brothers. Two variables are key: liberty/authority in the former relation, and equality/inequality in the latter. If the father is authoritarian and the relationship between brothers is egalitarian, you will have a tightly integrated family group, a communal family. Todd's key example of such a family structure is Russia, and he does not shy away from seeing the existence of such a family structure as a precondition for communism's victory.

7   Proponents of the 'descent theory' were mainly Evans-Pritchard (1940, who originally developed the approach which was further elaborated by Fortes (1945, 1949, 1953), as well as Jack Goody (1959). The 'alliance theory' was put forward by Lévi-Strauss

([1949]1965, 1969), Luis Dumont ([1966] 1970) and Edmund Leach (1957, 1962). For an important recent contribution, see Carsten (2004).

8   'Imagined' may suggest not real, but that would, as Anderson himself strongly underlines, be a mistake, for what is at stake are social facts, and they are always socially constituted or, if one likes, 'imagined'. The reason why we have settled for metaphorical rather than imagined kinship as a term is similar: metaphorical kinship is no less socially real than is blood relationship, for both have to be produced and reproduced socially in order to become and remain social facts.

9   This was the position pioneered by Needham (1971), who underlined how kinship is so amorphous that we should perhaps not think of it as a category at all.

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