# Neta Crawford – <u>Argument and Change</u> (1999)

<u>The Lowdown</u>: Crawford seeks to develop a theory of change in the international system that can explain the dynamics of the present in terms of the past, as well as predict the future, within a constructivist framework. Persuasive argument, particularly in the form of the syllogism, is the primary independent variable explaining change. The global political arena is an emergent phenomenon made manifest through belief, and only persuasive argument changes those underlying beliefs.

<u>Crawford's Five Central Points</u>:
1) IR theory, and realism especially, fail to articulate a coherent explanation for change in the international system. To really understand politics, meaning both change in politics and resilience in institutions, a satisfactory theory must make sense of *process*.
2) Reason and persuasion are intrinsic processes in politics, at both the domestic and structural level. But these terms remain underspecified, thus a satisfactory theory must articulate these concepts more clearly in their political contexts.
3) Culture, norms, and beliefs form the content of persuasive speech, and also the context in which that speech will be understood. As they form the medium and parameters of political discussion, culture, norms, and beliefs must be addressed in a good theory.
4) An "argument analysis framework" allows us to recognize and explain change in world politics, and should form the core of a successful IR theory. It also allows us to avoid looking at world systems as "ordered" or "ruptured", missing the *degree* of order existing at any given time.
5) Once politics is understood as a social construction, it becomes ripe for reconstruction. The argument analysis framework is more than a method for objectively understanding world politics. It is more importantly a tool to be used for the increase of human welfare.

<u>So There's All These "Things" Floating Around Out There…</u>

Humans use reason in making decisions, but are not "rational" in our usual social science meaning of the word (utility-maximizing). Rather, humans make decisions on the basis of preexisting beliefs, translated into political action via persuasive argument. Such argument exists not only at the state and interpersonal level, but *within* the individual as well. Such beliefs and arguments are intelligible only through and within culture. The point of reasoned argument is to persuade another to see the world in a particular way and act in accordance with the logic of that belief. Actors use practical, symbolic, or identity arguments in the attempt to persuade. Of fundamental importance to Crawford is the syllogism, consisting of a major premise, minor premise, and a conclusion drawn from the premises. Manipulation of the syllogism and similar devices are the primary tools of persuasion. These frequently target "meta-arguments", or high-order conceptions about the world, but usually narrow in on a subset of meta-arguments concerning representations. These are frames of choice situations emphasized in post-structuralism and psychological analysis that Crawford thinks are underemphasized in IR.

<u>Persuasive Argument At Work – The End of Colonialism</u>:

The end of colonialism was not the result of rational calculations of costs and benefits, but due to a change in the ethical consensus on colonialism. Normative beliefs changed in the 20th century so that colonialism became delegitimized as an acceptable political arrangement. These beliefs changed due to the strength of persuasive argument on the part of decolonization advocates. To the degree that the profit motive was a contributing factor, Crawford asserts that the very idea of profit changed in a manner consistent with the end of colonialism.