

Images of International Relations



Realism: The State and Balance of Power

MAJOR ACTORS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Realism is an image of international relations based on four principal assumptions. Scholars or policymakers who identify themselves as realists, of course, do not all perfectly match the realism ideal type. We find, however, that the four assumptions identified with this perspective are useful as a general statement of the main lines of realist thought and the basis on which hypotheses and theories are developed.

First, states are the principal or most important actors in an **anarchical** world lacking central legitimate governance. States represent the key **units of analysis**, whether one is dealing with ancient Greek city-states or modern nation-states. The study of international relations is the study of relations among these units, particularly major powers as they shape world politics (witness the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War) and engage in the costliest wars (World Wars I and II). Realists who use the concept of **system** usually refer to an international system of states. What of non-state actors? International organizations such as the United Nations may aspire to the status of independent actor, but from the realist perspective, this aspiration has not in fact been achieved to any significant degree. Realists tend to see international organizations as doing no more than their member states direct. Multinational corporations, terrorist groups, and other transnational and international organizations are frequently acknowledged by realists, but the position of these non-state actors is always one of lesser importance. States remain the dominant actors.

Second, the state is viewed as a unitary actor. For purposes of theory building and analysis, realists view the state as being encapsulated by a metaphorical hard shell or opaque, black box. We need not look much inside this shell or black box. A country faces the outside world as an integrated unit. Indeed, a common assumption associated with realist thought is that political differences within the state are ultimately resolved authoritatively such that the government of the state speaks with one voice for the state as a whole. The state is a unitary actor in that it is usually assumed by realists to have one policy at any given time on any particular issue. To be sure, exceptions occur, but to the realists these are exceptions that demonstrate the rule and that actually support the general notion of the state as an integrated, unitary actor.

Even in those exceptional cases in which, for example, a foreign ministry expresses views different from positions taken by the same country's defense ministry, corrective action is taken in an attempt to bring these alternative views to a common and authoritative statement of policy. "End running" of state authorities by bureaucratic and nongovernmental, domestic, and transnational actors is also possible, but it occurs unchecked by state authorities in only those issues in which the stakes are low. From the realist perspective, if the issues are important enough, higher authorities will intervene to preclude bureaucratic end running or action by nongovernmental actors that are contrary to centrally directed policy.

Third, given this emphasis on the unitary state-as-actor, realists usually make the further assumption for the purpose of theory building that the state is essentially a rational (or purposive) actor. A rational foreign policy decision-making process would include a statement of objectives, consideration of all feasible alternatives in terms of existing capabilities available to the state, the relative likelihood of attaining these objectives by the various alternatives under consideration, and the benefits or costs associated with each alternative. Following this rational process, governmental decisionmakers select the alternative that maximizes utility (maximizing benefit or minimizing cost associated with attaining the objectives sought) or at least achieves an acceptable outcome. The result is a rank ordering of policy preferences among viable alternatives.

As a practical matter, the realist is aware of the difficulties in viewing the state as a rational actor. Governmental decisionmakers may not have all the factual information or knowledge of cause and effect they need to make value-maximizing decisions. The process may well be clouded by considerable uncertainty as decisionmakers grope for the best solution or approach to an issue. They also have to deal with the problem of human bias and misperception that may lead them astray. In any event, the choice made—if not always the best or value-maximizing choice in fact—is at least perceived to be a satisfactory one. It is a **satisficing** or suboptimal choice—less than a value-maximizing choice, but still good enough in terms of the objectives sought. The assumptions of states being both unitary and rational actors are particularly important in the application of **game theory** and other rational-choice methods to **deterrence**, arms control, balance of power, the use of force, and other studies of interest to realists.

Fourth, realists assume that within the hierarchy of issues facing the state, national or international security usually tops the list. Military and related political issues dominate world politics. A realist focuses on actual or potential conflict between state actors and the use of force, examining how international stability is attained or maintained, how it breaks down, the utility of force as a means to resolve disputes, and the prevention of any violation of its territorial integrity. To the realist, military security or strategic issues are sometimes referred to as "high politics," whereas economic and social issues typically are viewed as less important or "low politics." Indeed, the former is often understood to dominate or set the environment within which the latter occurs.

Given the state's objectives, goals, or purposes in terms of security, it seeks and uses **power** (commonly understood in material terms as capabilities relative to other states), which is a key concept to realists as is the **balance of power** among states. The structural realist (or neorealist) puts particular emphasis on the security

implications of the distribution of power (or underlying structure) of the international system of states: unipolar (one great power), bipolar (two great powers), or multipolar (three or more great powers). States use the power they have to serve their interests or achieve their objectives. To most realists, the struggle for (or use of) power among states is at the core of international relations. In the words of Hans J. Morgenthau: “International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim or means to an end.”¹

Further comment is necessary concerning assumptions two and three. The important point is that from the standpoint of **methodology**, the image of a unified, rational state is truly an assumption, not a description of the actual world. Realists who embrace positivism use such assumptions to build theories, not describe reality. Assumptions should be viewed not in terms of descriptive accuracy, but rather in terms of how fruitful they are in generating insights and valid generalizations about international politics. From this point of view, assumptions are neither true nor false; they are more or less useful in helping the theorist derive testable propositions or hypotheses about international relations. Once hypotheses are developed, they are tested against the real world. The image of the unified, rational state is, therefore, the starting point for realist analysis, not a concluding statement. This is true whether one is a **classical realist** emphasizing the impact of history, international law, and actions taken by political leaders or a present-day **neo- or structural realist** who believes the basis for a theory of international relations has to have at its core an understanding of the distribution of capabilities across states. Morgenthau, a classical realist, explained the utility of the rational, unitary actor assumption as follows:

We put ourselves in the position of a statesman who must meet a certain problem of foreign policy under certain circumstances, and we ask ourselves what the rational alternatives are from which a statesman may choose . . . and which of these rational alternatives this particular statesman, acting under these circumstances, is likely to choose. It is the testing of this rational hypothesis against the actual facts and their consequences that gives meaning to the facts of international politics and makes a theory of politics possible.²

The point is that neorealist theorizing that focuses primarily on material structure (the distribution of power or capabilities) as the principal explanatory variable depends on the same rationalist assumptions as classical realists. This is despite the fact classical realists are more likely to accept such nonmaterial factors as ideas or norms as part of the theories they develop.

Game theory is a realist example of the use of such simplifying assumptions as an aid to developing hypotheses and theories about the causes of various international political phenomena. Many works on deterrence and **coercive diplomacy** (or “compellence”) also use the rational, unitary actor assumptions as do other explanations of international conflict. The rationality assumption is similarly central to **expected utility models** of international politics. These and similar formulations comprise **rational-choice theorizing**. Not confined to realism, rational choice is also part of theorizing associated with the liberal (particularly neoliberal institutionalist) image discussed in Chapter 3.

As an image of politics, then, realism focuses on power and power politics among states. Neorealists such as Kenneth Waltz, John Mearsheimer, and Christopher Layne emphasize the overall distribution of power among states and are highly skeptical of the extent to which international norms and international institutions can ameliorate competition among states. Classical realists such as Morgenthau, E. H. Carr, and Arnold Wolfers and their present-day followers who could be termed **neoclassical realists** such as Randall Schweller, however, have had a more inclusive approach.³ While recognizing the importance of balance of power, they also have argued for the serious consideration of how factors at the domestic or societal level of analysis influence international relations. Possible factors include the impact of leaders, whether a state is revisionist or status-quo oriented, as well as the role of norms and institutions. Hence, as with other images discussed in this book, an adherence to basic realist assumptions can still result in different interpretations and theoretical applications based on these assumptions.

Where did these assumptions of current realist thought come from? They obviously did not appear out of thin air following World War II, the Cold War, or the period since the al Qaeda attacks in 2001 on 9/11. Rather, they represent the culmination of thinking about international relations over the millennia, particularly the last five centuries. We now turn to some of the more notable intellectual precursors who have had a significant impact on the writings of contemporary realists.

INTELLECTUAL PRECURSORS AND INFLUENCES

Thucydides

Thucydides (471–400 B.C.) is usually credited with being the first writer in the realist tradition as well as the founding father of the international relations discipline. Anyone who has taken a class in political philosophy would probably agree that the profound insights of many ancient Greek writers are not easily grasped on first reading. One might initially find this less a problem with Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* because this famous work chronicles twenty-one of the twenty-eight years of war between Athens and Sparta (and their respective allies) in the fifth century B.C. Taken simply as history, it is a masterful account of this era, filled with tales of heroism and brutality, victory and defeat, brilliance and stupidity, honor and deceit. These human traits are certainly exhibited not only in one particular war, but also in wars throughout the ages. This is what makes the work such a classic.

The task Thucydides set for himself, however, was much more ambitious than simply describing what was occurring. Particular events were dealt with in great and vivid detail, but his goal was to say something significant not only about the events of his own time, but also about the nature of war and why it continually recurs. For Thucydides, the past was the guide for the future. He was less interested in the immediate causes of the Peloponnesian War than he was in the underlying forces at work. Leaders might point to a particular event to justify a policy, but for Thucydides this simply obscured more profound factors that operate throughout history such as his famous trinity of fear, honor, and interest, a typology that is hard to improve upon. At heart, for realists *The History of the Peloponnesian War* is a study of the struggle for military and political power.

Thucydides was younger than Socrates and Sophocles and older than Aristophanes. In 424 B.C., during the eighth year of the Peloponnesian War, he was elected an Athenian general. While stationed in Thrace, he failed to prevent the Spartan capture of a city and was punished with twenty years of exile. Athens might have lost a general, but the world gained an historian.

As a member of one of the more notable Athenian families, Thucydides spent the rest of the war observing events, traveling, and interviewing participants. As an exile, he was detached from yet obsessed with politics. Although concerned with accuracy, he gave precedence to understanding the motives and policies of the leaders on all sides of the conflict and used the technique of liberally reconstructing speeches and episodes. His purpose was to draw historical lessons for future statesmen who might read his work. By analyzing the particular, he hoped to illuminate the general.

Why did war break out between Athens and Sparta? Thucydides states:

I propose first to give an account of the causes of complaint which they had against each other and of the specific instances where their interests clashed [i.e., the immediate causes of the war]: this is in order that there should be no doubt in anyone's mind about what led to this great war falling upon the Hellenes. But the real reason for the war is, in my opinion, most likely to be disguised by such argument. What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta [i.e., this was the underlying cause of the war].⁴

Thus, according to Thucydides, the real or underlying cause of the war was *fear* associated with a shift in the balance of power—a systems-level explanation. Sparta was afraid of losing its preeminent role in the Hellenic world and therefore took countermeasures to build up its military strength and enlist the support of allies. Athens responded in kind. In the ensuing analysis, the situations, events, and policies Thucydides described lend themselves to comparison with such familiar notions as arms races, deterrence, balance of power, alliances, diplomacy, strategy, concern for honor, and perceptions of strengths and weaknesses.

Thucydides' emphasis on fear as a cause of the Peloponnesian War, fear that resulted from the increase in Athenian power relative to that of Sparta, is echoed throughout history. As statesmen perceive the balance of power to be shifting in their disfavor, they make efforts to rectify the situation that in turn causes fear, suspicion, and distrust on the part of their rivals. One could quite easily substitute for Athens and Sparta other historical examples such as France and Britain in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Napoleonic France and the rest of Europe in the early nineteenth century, Germany and Britain after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and the Soviet Union and the United States in the four decades following World War II. In all such historical examples, a good case can be made that fear is a dominant characteristic and a motivating factor for arms races and war itself.

One reason Thucydides is deemed a scholar of international relations, however, is that the cause of fear he identifies is not so much innate or basic human nature as it is the nature of interstate politics. Concerning a world in which no superordinate or central authority exists to impose order on all states (whether ancient city-states or modern states often encompassing large expanses of territory), Thucydides relates in a classic statement of **Realpolitik** how Athenians emphasized the overriding importance of power in such a world: "The strong [Athens] do what they have

the power to do and the weak [the islanders on Melos] accept what they have to accept.”⁵ Put even more directly: the strong do what they will; the weak do what they must! Although fear may lead to war, power and capabilities relative to that of others determine the outcome.

Thucydides was too good of an historian, however, to explain the origins of the Peloponnesian War by restricting his emphasis to the systems level and the shifting balance of power between Athens and Sparta. In fact his work can be viewed as an exemplar of the application of the state-societal and individual levels of analysis. With regard to the former, Thucydides deserves more credit than he has been given for the impact of what are termed “second image” factors—in particular the nature or character of a society. In other words, the emphasis on the phrase “What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power” should be as much on the adjective “Athenian” as it is on the noun “power.” In particular, Spartan fear of Athens was a result of the actual and perceived special character of Athenian society. As historians of classical Greece have argued, Athens was not simply another powerful state on the rise. Athenian democracy and the crucible of the Persian wars helped to mold an Athenian citizen whose daring and self-assurance were a driving force behind Athenian imperialism. The nature of Athenian society made for an expansionist zeal. Other states recognized this, and it was this recognition that contributed to such an intense fear of Athens and hence led to the Peloponnesian War.

In the very first dialogue of the book the nature of Athenian society and character is discussed at length. Prior to the full-scale outbreak of the war in 431 B.C., representatives from Corinth were the last delegates to speak at a debate in Sparta on the issuing of a declaration of war against Athens. The Corinthians point out “the enormous difference between you and the Athenians.” Sparta, they claim, has never given any serious thought to “what sort of people these Athenians are against whom you will have to fight—how much, indeed how completely different from you.” (1.70) The essential danger does not simply derive from the impressive military capabilities of Athens and its allies, but rather “the character of the city which is opposed to you.” (1.71) The most famous discussions of Athenian character are to be found in Pericles’ reply to a Spartan ultimatum and in his funeral oration where he extols Athenian wisdom and daring.

Thucydides’ discussion of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War points to other factors that go beyond character and capabilities. Shifting power among states and domestic-level, political-cultural factors share a common characteristic—they both tend to change slowly. Yet the propensity for war and peace can change quickly. Hence, Thucydides discussed not only the underlying causes of war, but also the more immediate causes. While war may have been inevitable—and even this is subject to dispute—to explain the timing requires an examination of the manner in which decisions were made and the persons involved. As a result, Thucydides spends a great deal of time recounting debates within and among states. Domestic factors such as political coalitions and elite personalities are important in explaining the outbreak of war and its conduct. For example, Thucydides comments unfavorably about the leaders of Athens who came after Pericles had died of the plague. Thucydides, therefore, appreciated the importance of various factors at different levels of analysis in order to explain the outbreak of war.

Machiavelli

By his own admission, the Italian political philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) drew heavily from his study of ancient, especially Roman, writings. In some respects, the situation in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy, divided as the peninsula was into separate city-states, was similar to the Hellenic world of Thucydides. Machiavelli worked as a civil servant and diplomat until the Republic of Florence fell in 1512. Thought to be a republican counterrevolutionary opposed to the aristocratic Medici family that had assumed power in Florence (as well as in Rome), he was tortured by their interrogators. During his subsequent enforced idleness in a small town south of Florence (Santa Andrea in Percossina), he put his time to good use by reflecting on the chaos and political instability among the Italian city-states influenced as well by French and Spanish interventions.

Like Thucydides, Machiavelli wrote of the importance of personality on politics, power, balance of power, formation of alliances and counteralliances, and the causes of conflict between different city-states. His primary focus, however, was on what present-day writers refer to as national security. For Machiavelli, survival of the state (identified with the ruling prince) was paramount. The prince could lose his state by not coping effectively with both internal and external threats to his rule. The German term *Realpolitik*, so central to realist thought, refers to power and power politics among states. Machiavelli's most famous work, *The Prince*, is a practical manual on how to gain, maintain, and expand power—the stuff of *Realpolitik*. It is dedicated to the ruler of Florence at that time, Lorenzo de Medici.

One of the more controversial parts of Machiavelli's thesis is the notion that the security of the state is so important that it may justify certain acts by the prince that would be forbidden to other individuals not burdened by the princely responsibility of assuring that security. The end—security of the state—is understood to justify any means necessary to achieve that end. Machiavellianism (or Machiavellism) has been condemned by many who consider such a view to be immoral. In fact, Machiavelli never wrote that “the end justifies the means.” What he did write was “*si guarda al fine*”—that in decisions and actions the prince should look for or anticipate consequences—wise counsel it would seem, but by no means an assertion that the end justifies any means as he has customarily been (mis)interpreted.

Drawing from Machiavelli, Max Weber and others have argued that the actions of statesmen do (or should) follow a code of conduct different from that of the average citizen. Thus, it has been observed that there are two separate and distinct ethics: first, conventional religious morality concerned with such matters as individual salvation (the ethics of ultimate ends) and, second, by contrast, the moral obligations of rulers who must take actions to provide for national security (the ethics of responsibility).

Following this interpretation, one can understand Machiavelli's view that rulers should be good if they can (good or harmless in the conventional sense) but be willing to cause harm *if necessary* (consistent with their obligations as rulers). Indeed, princes put soldiers in harm's way when they go into battle and these soldiers, in turn, wreak harm upon their adversaries. Machiavelli expressed such choices as invoking *male* (pronounced mah-leh)—the Italian word used to describe evil, harm

or negative consequences associated in this context with the decisions and actions of princes.

Although a prince may not wish to be hated, Machiavelli argues “it is much safer to be feared than to be loved, if one must choose.” Although the prince may be criticized for being harsh, this is acceptable to Machiavelli so long as the prince keeps his subjects united and loyal. These are the sorts of arguments that have given Machiavellianism a negative connotation, but followers of Machiavelli would respond that the ultimate goal meant to justify particular policies is the security of the state (and its people), not just the security of an individual ruler.

Machiavelli wrote of the world as it *is*, not the world as it *should* or *ought* to be. That is one reason modern political theorists refer to him as a realist. Ethics or moral norms and the real-world politics he observed are in separate domains. His advice to the prince, following this interpretation, was based on an analysis of history, and of what actually occurs in the political realm, not on abstract ethical principles:

Many have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or known to exist in reality; for how we live is so far removed from how we ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done, will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation. A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good.⁶

This is not so much an endorsement of human behavior in politics as it is a statement of what he understands it actually to be. For Machiavelli, in an amoral (if not immoral) world, what meaning, after all, does the preaching of conventional morality have? Indeed, an extreme statement of realist thinking is that considerations of power and power politics are the *only* relevant factors. Thucydides raised this issue in the *Melian Dialogue*, appended to this chapter.

In the present-day world, a convenient way to discredit an opponent is to accuse him or her of being Machiavellian. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that Machiavelli did not encourage rulers to engage in harmful activity or use violence for its own sake. In numerous passages, he advises the prince not to be needlessly cruel because this may eventually undermine his rule. The yardstick one should use is how a particular policy contributes to the security and stability of the state. Indeed, as reading the last few chapters of *The Prince* makes clear, Machiavelli’s prescription for Italian security was to be found in unifying the country, thus not only avoiding armed conflict among cities and alliances of cities against one another, but also dissuading interventions or attacks by outside powers, namely, France and Spain.

Isn’t it interesting that this was the same prescription for American security we find in John Jay’s and Alexander Hamilton’s *Federalist Papers* 1 through 9 and later in George Washington’s farewell address? The thesis they argued was that unity among the thirteen states under the proposed U.S. Constitution was essential to avoiding war among them and also to securing themselves against invasion by either Britain or Spain. Their concerns proved to have merit: Unity helped repel the British in the war of 1812 and failing to keep unity in 1860 and 1861 resulted in civil war.

Hobbes

The political philosophy of the Englishman Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) was developed during the first fifty turbulent years of the seventeenth century. After attending university in Oxford, Hobbes became a tutor to the son of a nobleman, and throughout his life he remained associated with the family. Identified as a Royalist in a struggle between parliamentarians and the crown, Hobbes left for France in 1641 at a time when Parliament was asserting its power against the monarchy. For three years, he tutored a future monarch, the son of Charles I, the latter executed in 1649 during the English civil war. Publishing his famous work *Leviathan*, Hobbes returned to England in 1651, pledging loyalty to the newly established republican or parliamentary regime. Indeed, marking the end of divine right of kings, *Leviathan*—the first general theory of politics in English—provided that either a monarch or an assembly (i.e., parliament) could be tasked by the people to assure their security as the primary responsibility of government.

Like Machiavelli and Thucydides, Hobbes had a pessimistic view of human nature, which has particularly influenced both the work of classical realists such as Hans Morgenthau and structural realists like Kenneth Waltz. Hobbes was informed by his own life experiences. As with others, his life and safety were in jeopardy in the 1640s during the English civil war. In comments to others, he was known frequently to remark: “Fear and I were born twins!” The reference was to his whole life beset by the turmoil of English politics, beginning with his premature birth in 1588 due to the trauma his mother apparently suffered in fear of a Spanish invasion, which was blunted only by English good fortune in its naval battle against Spain—sinking the armada of ships that had been assembled off English shores.

His primary focus in *Leviathan* was domestic politics, and his goal was to make the strongest case possible for the necessity of a powerful, centralized political authority to establish and maintain the order essential to human security in society. To illustrate his philosophical points, Hobbes posited hypothetically that prior to the creation of society, human beings lived in a “state of nature”—a condition of war of “every one against every one.” There was in this state of war “a continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”⁷

Hobbes did not argue that such a state of nature had ever really existed. To him, the state of nature was the result of a thought experiment—imagining what the world would be like without governmental authority or any other social structure. Accordingly, he was interested in showing how people could escape from this hypothetical situation—a state of war of everyone against everyone else—by agreeing to place all power in the hands of a sovereign or Leviathan (a biblical, beastly metaphor used by Hobbes that refers to state authority, or the supreme ruler, either a monarch or parliament) that would end the anarchy of the state of nature, using power to maintain order so essential to daily life. If governmental authority did not already exist, it would have to be created. In his words: “There must be some coercive power to compel men equally to the performance of their covenants, by the terror of some punishment, greater than the benefit they expect by the breach of their covenant.”⁸ Without order, he argued, civilization and all its benefits are impossible—no economic development, art, knowledge, or anything else of value.

Hobbes's impact on the realist view of international relations stems from an image of states as if they were individuals in a mythical state of nature. Although his focus in *Leviathan* is on domestic societies, his observations are also considered relevant to international politics and have had a major impact on realism, particularly his assessment of why conflict and violence between individuals or states are to be expected. In the absence of a sovereign or central, superordinate authority, the anarchic world described by Hobbes is a rather dismal one.

Because in international politics as in the state of nature there is no Leviathan or superordinate authority with power to impose order, we find a condition of **anarchy**. For survival, states are left to their own devices in a world in which each state claims to be **sovereign**, each with a right to be independent or autonomous with respect to one another. In Hobbes's words:

In all times, kings, and persons of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their forts, garrisons, and guns upon the frontiers of their kingdoms; and continual spies upon their neighbours; which is a posture of war.⁹

As anarchy prevails in the state of nature, so too is anarchy a dominant characteristic of international politics. In such a world states use power to make their way. Power politics complete with alliances and counteralliances are the order of the day. Without a Leviathan (or, in the language of contemporary international relations literature, a leading or *hegemonic* power or world state that can maintain order), suspicion, distrust, conflict, and war are seemingly inevitable. There being “no common power”—the absence of any **social contract** among (or authority over) them—states must fend for themselves.

As with Machiavelli's understandings, this rather negative image of international politics offered by Hobbes is central to realist thought. We also find power and balance-of-power politics framed in Machiavellian or Hobbesean terms in English School (see Chapter 5) writings as one source of order in international or world society. This, however, is complemented by the rules states find or make to govern their conduct—a perspective one sees prominently in the writings of Hugo Grotius, the “father” of international law.

Grotius

Indeed, Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), a Dutch contemporary of Thomas Hobbes, offered a different view of international relations from that associated with Hobbes and Machiavelli. We also take up Grotian thought in some detail in Chapter 5 on the English School. Grotius dealt with the essential anarchy of international relations by calling for the establishment (or acknowledging the existence) of laws or rules accepted by states as binding. That the relations of states *ought* to conform to such rules is a central tenet of the Grotian tradition in international relations. To Grotians, values or norms, particularly when recognized as international law, are important in maintaining order among states.

Grotius dealt with the problems of international relations (including commercial transactions) from a very practical point of view. Given the importance of trade

to his native Holland as a seafaring nation, he addressed this subject in his *Law of Prize and Booty* (1604–1605) and questions of freedom of navigation and territorial seas in his *Freedom of the Seas* (1609). Probably his most important work was his *Law of War and Peace* (1625), three volumes that dealt with war and questions of national security—central themes in much realist writing then and now. Grotius has a place alongside Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes in classical realist thought, although less so in neorealist or structural realist understandings that see international law and global norms or rules as secondary to, or informed by, system structure or the distribution of power among states. Put another way, their material understandings of power and the balance of power lead structural realists to put more stock in Hobbes than in Grotius.

What are the sources of international law? Grotius looked to the use of reason and the “natural law” for general principles. He also looked to customary practice and to rules agreed on by governments that would be binding on states. Such treaties or formal covenants would be binding (in Latin, *pacta sunt servanda*) in the sense that states are obligated to follow them even in the absence of central authority to enforce their adherence. Changing circumstances might lead to the alteration of rules, but the important point is that to Grotians (and many classical realists) order in international relations and matters of war and peace to include commerce involve both power *and* values. In this regard, this Grotian emphasis on norms and laws leads many liberals and neoliberal institutionalists to claim him as one of their own, as do those in the English School. For them, the term **rationalist** owes much to rule-oriented, Grotian thought.

Clausewitz

Carl von Clausewitz (1780–1831), a Prussian officer who rose to the rank of general and who served in the Napoleonic wars, thought the military element of a state’s power to be extremely important but subordinate always to the political. Consistent with the writings of Machiavelli on war, Clausewitz argued in an oft-quoted phrase that war is “a continuation of political activity by other means.” War or the use of force is thus a *means* policymakers may choose rationally to accomplish their state objectives; it decidedly is not an *end* in itself. This formulation is reflected in realist conceptions of power and its use.

Much of Clausewitz’s writing took place in the interwar period between the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 and Clausewitz’s recall to duty in 1830 for service in East Prussia. Clausewitz died in 1831, never having completed his major work, *On War*. His legacy, nevertheless, remains a central contribution to the realist school, thanks to the successful efforts of his wife to publish the manuscript.

The use of force in battle aims to destroy or substantially weaken the war-making capability of an adversary, which undermines (or precludes) the will to continue fighting. Leadership is important, and the commander is crucial in this essentially rational enterprise, adapting to changing circumstances and employing such principles as surprise, mass, and concentration of forces. Attacks effectively directed to an enemy’s “center of gravity” (however this may be defined in operational terms) can cause an enemy’s capability to collapse. Because one’s own military forces are necessarily finite, one is not wasteful in their use—an economy of force essential to sustaining military capabilities against an adversary.

Just as Machiavelli referred to *fortuna* and Thucydides to fate as blunting even the best-laid plans of the prince, Clausewitz identifies the uncertainty that attends decision making in battlefield conditions—the “fog of war.” He was also well aware that rationally made plans often run into obstacles or “friction” when actually implemented. He is cautionary when he warns that one ought not take the first step into war without realizing where the last step may lead. These are the kinds of observations one readily finds in present-day strategic literature in the realist genre that owes much to Clausewitz. As significant as his view that the military is properly a political means was his exposition of societal (including social and economic) dimensions of national capabilities. At the same time, his focus on national security problems places him in the mainstream of present-day realist thought.

Carr

Many students of international relations consider Edward Hallett Carr’s *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919–1939* a classic. Although Carr can be viewed as an intellectual precursor for realists and, as we note in Chapter 5, a forerunner of the present-day English School, his work transcends narrow classification in that he has also been influential, as has Grotius, on the thinking of certain authors whom we would label liberals or neoliberal institutionalists.

The writings of Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Grotius, and Clausewitz illustrate how great works are often written during the most difficult times. *The Twenty Years’ Crisis* is no exception in that it was completed in the summer of 1939 with the shadow of war looming over Europe. As with other authors we have discussed, Carr was less interested in apportioning blame to particular leaders for the imminent onset of World War II than he was in attempting “to analyse the underlying and significant, rather than the immediate and personal, causes of the disaster.” Unless this were done, he argued, we would fail to understand how war could break out twenty short years after the signing of the Versailles Treaty in 1919. He dedicated his book “to the makers of the coming peace.” In attempting to understand “the more profound causes of the contemporary international crisis,” echoes of Thucydides can be discerned. Carr, for example, placed a great deal of emphasis on the role of fear in explaining World War I.

Throughout *The Twenty Years’ Crisis*, Carr refers to the impact of Machiavelli and Hobbes on realist thinking. Although his work is best known as a critique of **utopian** or **idealist** thought, which dominated the fledgling discipline of international relations after World War I, Carr also challenges the more extreme versions of realism that posit the divorce of morality from politics in international relations. He argues that sound political thought must be based on elements of both utopia (i.e., values) and reality (i.e., power). Where utopianism has become a “hollow and intolerable sham,” serving merely as a disguise for the privileged, the realist provides a service in exposing it. Pure realism, on the other hand, can offer nothing but “a naked struggle for power which makes any kind of international society impossible.” Hence, for Carr, politics is made up of two elements, inextricably intertwined: utopia and reality—values and power.

Consistent with classical-realist understandings that go beyond just power and interest, more than a third of the book is devoted to such Grotian topics as

the role of morality in international relations, the foundations of law, the sanctity of treaties, the judicial settlement of international disputes, peaceful change, and the prospects for a new international order. Because Carr critically assessed the strengths and weaknesses of utopianism as well as realism, he can be viewed as an important influence on many contemporary international relations theorists, both realists and nonrealists. Particularly given his insightful critique of proposed liberal solutions to the problems of re-creating international order following World War I, he remains relevant to the post-Cold War era in which liberal solutions have been suggested to deal with globalization.

Morgenthau

Hans J. Morgenthau (1904–1980) remains one of the most influential IR theorists. In many ways he exemplifies those classical realists who came before him due to his emphasis on a holistic approach to IR that encompasses all the levels of analysis to include the impact of human nature, the blurring of the distinction between society and the international system, and a concern for justice. Born in Germany, he fled to the United States when the Nazis came to power. While he was a professor at the University of Chicago, his *Politics Among Nations* (1948) was published. It has been viewed by some as a tutorial for post-World War II American statesmen who now led a country of preeminent international power and which could no longer seriously contemplate isolationism from the rest of the world.

Morgenthau posited six principles of political realism: (1) “politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature”; (2) in international politics, “interest [is] defined in terms of power”; (3) interest defined as power is not endowed with a meaning that is fixed once and for all: “the kind of interest determining political action depends on the political and cultural context within which foreign policy is formulated”; (4) there is “tension between the moral command and the requirements of successful political action,” but that as a practical matter “universal moral principles . . . must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place”; (5) “political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation [such as the United States] with the moral laws that govern the universe”; and (6) “interest defined as power” is an understanding that gives international politics a separate standing and thus emancipates it from other fields of study.¹⁰ Following from this perspective, some scholars give Morgenthau credit, among others, for helping establish the legitimacy of international relations as a separate discipline within political science—and not just a part of history, international law, or philosophy. Yet he also made the point that “the essence of international politics is identical with its domestic counterpart. Both domestic and international politics are a struggle for power. . . . The tendency to dominate, in particular, is an element of all human associations. . . .”¹¹

Not unlike Thucydides and other ancient Greeks, Morgenthau had essentially a tragic view of international relations. While he may have developed the above precepts to help guide statesmen through the rocky shoals and dangers of IR, he realized all too well that history is replete with examples of individuals and the states they represented making a grab for international dominance—alliances and balances of power failed to keep the peace. The temptation to overturn existing

power arrangements and norms of international conduct strongly pulled at leaders whether of ancient Athens, Rome, absolutist France, Imperial Germany, or Hitler's Third Reich.

This brief overview of the intellectual precursors of contemporary realism illustrates a distinct realist preoccupation with armed conflict or war. A concern with the causes and consequences of conflict helps to explain why the realist perspective is held by statesmen throughout the world: Over the centuries leaders have engaged in the very battles and struggles described by authors from Thucydides to Morgenthau. Realism, from the statesman's point of view, is indeed realistic as it tends to correspond to personal experiences both in diplomacy and in war.

Among realists, there are two basic concepts that traditionally have been the foci of analysis at the state and international levels: **power** and **balance of power** among states—often referred to as a **system** in which states are the principal actors. In the following pages, we discuss how realists have attempted to define these terms. We then give examples of how theorists have used these concepts in generating insights and explanations of the causes of war. This is followed by a discussion of how realists deal with the concepts of change, globalization, and interdependence. We conclude with a critique of the realist image of international relations.

POWER

Definitions

In our discussion of several of the more important intellectual precursors of realism, the concept of **power** was mentioned time and again. Any attempt to give the reader a more complete understanding of the realist image of international relations starts with a discussion of this crucial term. Power is *the* core concept for realists.

Having said this, it is rather ironic that even among realists, there is no clear consensus on how to define the term *power*. Some realists understand power to be the sum of military, economic, technological, diplomatic, and other capabilities at the disposal of the state. Others see power not as some absolute value determined for each state as if it were in a vacuum but, rather, as capabilities *relative* to the capabilities of other states. Thus, the power of the United States is evaluated in terms of its capabilities relative to the capabilities of other states such as China.

Both of these definitions—whether treating capabilities of a state in isolation or relative to the capabilities of other states—are termed a **materialist** view. Both also assume a static view of power: It is an attribute of the state that is the sum of its capabilities whether considered alone or relative to other states. An alternative, dynamic definition of power focuses on the interactions of states. A state's influence (or capacity to influence or coerce) is not only determined by its capabilities (or relative capabilities) but also by (1) its willingness (and perceptions by other states of its willingness) to use these capabilities and (2) its control or influence over other states. Power can thus be inferred by observing the behavior of states as they interact. The relative power of states is most clearly revealed by the outcomes of their interactions.

Examples of diverse views of power are the following definitions drawn from the literature: power as the capacity of an individual, group, or nation “to influence

the behavior of others in accordance with one's own ends"; power as "man's control over the minds and actions of other men"; and power as "the ability to prevail in conflict and overcome obstacles." Joseph Nye differentiates between *hard power* as in economic or military capabilities and the *soft power* that comes, for example, from cultural dimensions or the values that define the identity and practices of a state to include the diplomatic capacity to influence other states bilaterally or multilaterally in international organizational contexts. (See his article at the end of this chapter.) Others prefer not to dissect it in this fashion, but rather to view power as an integral concept that states apply in different ways in the pursuit of their goals or objectives in international relations. To Nye, what he calls "smart power" is an integral or blend of hard and soft power assets used effectively to advance the state's purposes.

Measurement

Given these definitional and conceptual disputes, it follows that attempts to measure power will also be divergent for those hoping to apply scientific standards to their work. First, if one understands power as being equivalent to capabilities, one looks for some way to measure military, economic, and other component elements. Even if one assumes that it is possible to measure these capabilities adequately through such indicators as defense expenditures or gross national product, the further problem remains of aggregating or adding up such diverse capabilities into a common measure of power. How can one combine different component capabilities that use different measures such as dollars spent on defense expenditures as opposed to overall gross national product? Even more challenging is how one measures geographic, technological, or diplomatic factors with any degree of precision. What about the unity and strength of a society? What is the metric? And, if capabilities are difficult to measure, are not *relative* capabilities between and among states even more difficult to specify?

Second, some would say that the view of power as a unitary concept calculated by aggregating component capabilities or relative capabilities misses the key point, which is that the power of a state is dependent on the issue involved. Consider, for example, the argument that some states, such as Japan, have substantial economic power but are militarily weak. Hence, in a particular area, the Japanese are powerful. Conceiving of world politics in terms of separate issue areas or, in the words of Stanley Hoffmann, alternative "chessboards," is one example of awareness among realists of the importance to the state of socioeconomic and other nonmilitary issues. In some respects, Joseph Nye's more recent use of *soft* and *hard power* is a corollary or extension of Hoffmann's observations that use of power by states varies by issue area (his metaphor of states acting differently depending on which chessboard was engaged).¹² As noted above, Nye, sees "smart power" as the effective combination in policymaking of the hard and soft components he identifies.

Opponents of this disaggregation of power into its component capabilities note that persuasive as it may be on the surface, it is misleading because it overlooks the relations among the various power components. Thus, the economic capabilities of Japan as a global trader are said to be related to its military ties with the United States that assure Japan's freedom to engage in commerce. From this perspective,

whether addressing the power of Japan, Europe, or Third World countries, one cannot understand economic, military, political, or other component capabilities of power as if they were factors independent of one another. Much as military ties and divisions among states may define the framework within which economic relations take place, so military capabilities of states are bolstered (or weakened) by the strength or relative strength of their economies.

SYSTEM

In the preceding section, we discussed the concept of power and attempts to measure state power. Using that discussion as a basis, we now move on to a discussion of the concept of **system**. Not all realists portray relations among states in systemic terms, but some (particularly neo- or structural realists) do. When applied to international relations, the term *system* has currency within each of the four images we have identified—realism, liberalism, economic structuralism, and the English School. As one might expect, however, there is considerable diversity among theorists on both the definition of the term and the uses to which it should be put in the construction of international relations theory.

Scholars who understand system to be the set of interactions among states operate from a positivist behavioral methodology. This approach was dominant in the 1960s and 1970s as efforts were made to count, track, and code interactions among states in the hope of identifying patterns of conflict and cooperation. Journals such as *International Studies Quarterly* continue to publish research in this tradition, emphasizing studies that attempt to draw meaning from aggregate numbers and data sets that are amenable to mathematical equations.

Over the past thirty years, however, realist scholars identified as neo- or structural realists have argued that counting interactions has provided limited insights on international relations. A more useful starting point, they argue, is the various distributions of power or capabilities among states—unipolar, bipolar, multipolar. The polarity of the system is measured by the number of major powers, and different polarities will have different effects on international relations, including interactions among states (discussed in greater detail later in this chapter).

However *system* may be defined, the uses to which the concept is put vary considerably. Some theorists are content to use systems merely as **taxonomies**, frameworks for organizing knowledge about international relations. Hence, one can speak of the international political system, the international economic system, or the international social system. Systems are therefore mental images that may help to describe international phenomena. They are, in effect, superimposed on the real world by a scholar in order to make the real world more intelligible or somewhat easier to understand.

Others are more ambitious and use the system concept to explain and predict outcomes of international relations. In the process of theory building, they may ascribe to systems such properties as equilibrium, or balance, of their component parts (such as among states). Critics, however, find little use in such notions as balancing or “equilibrating tendencies” allegedly to be found in a system of states. The approach of treating a system as if it were a concrete or tangible entity and ascribing properties to it is of questionable validity from this point of view. To do

so, according to critics, is to be guilty of the methodological error of **reification**—treating abstractions like systems as if they were real and had a life of their own.

A response by some system theorists to this line of criticism is that dealing in abstractions is useful in the generation of propositions or hypotheses about international relations. These, in turn, can be tested empirically to determine whether or not they have factual support. To the extent, then, that use of the systems concept enables the theorist to describe, explain, or predict international phenomena, to them the use of the concept is justified.

The reader may or may not wish to visualize international relations or world politics as a system that is defined in terms of patterns of interactions, polarity, equilibrating tendencies, or some other characteristics. Some may share the English School preference for seeing international or global politics as actually occurring in a societal (rather than in a seemingly more mechanical, systemic) context. We do note, however, that the systems concept as an approximation to the nature of world politics is present within the mainstream of contemporary realist thought, even if some (particularly classical) realists avoid its use.

Speaking of abstractions, we admit this discussion has been rather abstract. To lend substance to the concept of system, we next examine the way in which the concept of system has been used by some realists: system as anarchy plus the distribution of capabilities. The intention of scholars has been to explain some aspect of international relations concerning such matters as instability, conflict, and war. In keeping with realist assumptions, the state and state power have been a key focus of analysis and investigation as has the analytical assumption of rationality.

Game Theory and Anarchy

Game theory is an approach to determining rational choice or optimum strategy in a competitive situation. Each actor tries to maximize gains or minimize losses under conditions of uncertainty and incomplete information, which requires each actor to rank order preferences, estimate probabilities, and try to discern what the other actor is going to do. In a two-person zero-sum game, what one competitor wins, the other loses. In a two-person, non-zero-sum or variable-sum game, gains and losses are not necessarily equal; it is possible that both sides may gain. This is sometimes referred to as a positive-sum game. In some games, both parties can lose, and by different amounts or to a different degree. So-called *n*-person games include more than two actors or sides. Game theory has contributed to the development of models of deterrence and arms race spirals, but it is also the basis for work concerning the question of how collaboration among competitive states can be achieved: The central problem is that the rational decision for an individual actor such as a state may be to “defect” and go it alone as opposed to taking a chance on collaboration with another state actor.

For many realist writers, game theory is highly relevant to understanding international relations due to the realist emphasis on the conditions of **anarchy** and the distribution of capabilities or power among states. These so-called system-level, structural attributes are viewed as crucial because they act as constraints on decisionmakers. As we will see, the condition of international anarchy is seen by realists as contributing to the amount of distrust and conflict among states. Realists have

also been concerned whether particular distributions of capabilities involving various balances of power make war between states more or less likely. We will first take up the concept of anarchy and related terms.

The word *anarchy* brings forth images of violence, destruction, and chaos. For realists, however, anarchy simply refers to the absence of any legitimate authority above states. States are sovereign. They claim a right externally to be independent or autonomous from other states, and they claim a right internally or domestically to exercise complete authority over their own territories. Although states differ in terms of the power they possess or are able to exercise, none may claim the *right* to dominate another sovereign state.

Realists distinguish between *authority* and *power*. When they use the term *anarchy*, they are referring to the absence of any hierarchy of legitimate authority in the international system. There *is* hierarchy of power in international politics, but there is not a hierarchy of authority. Some states are clearly more powerful than others, but there is no recognized authority higher than that of any state.

Anarchy, so understood, is the defining characteristic of the environment within which sovereign states interact. Violence and war may be evident, but so too are periods of relative peace and stability. This absence of any superordinate or central authority over states (such as a world government with authority to enforce rules and to maintain order) is fundamentally different from domestic societies, where an authority exists to maintain order and to act as an arbiter of disputes. Exceptions would be cases of total government collapse or in civil wars when legitimate authority may be unclear.

Realists argue that the absence of a central and overriding authority helps to explain why states come to rely on power, seeking to maintain or increase their power positions relative to other states. For one thing, the condition of anarchy is usually accompanied by a lack of trust among states in this environment. Each state faces a **self-help** situation in which it is dangerous to place the security of one's own country in the hands of another. What guarantee is there against betrayal, however solemn another state's promises may be to an ally? Consistent with the world described by Hobbes, there is really nothing to keep a supposed ally from reneging on a security agreement or any other international pact. There is no world governmental authority to enforce covenants or agreements among states. In such a world, it is logical, rational, and prudent to look out for number one—the security of one's own state. Indeed, this was the same counsel reported by Thucydides when he noted Athenian advice to the Melians not to place their hope for survival in the hands of the Spartans and their allies.

Given international anarchy and the lack of trust in such a situation, states find themselves in what has been called a **security dilemma**.¹³ The more one state arms to protect itself from other states, the more threatened these states become and the more prone they are to resort to arming themselves to protect their own national security interests. The dilemma is that even if a state is sincerely arming only for defensive purposes, it is rational in a self-help system to assume the worst in an adversary's intentions and keep pace in any arms buildup. How can one know for certain that a rival is arming strictly for defensive purposes? This is the stuff of arms races. Isn't it best to hedge one's bets by devoting more resources to match a potential adversary's arms buildup? Because a state may not have sufficient resources to

be completely self-reliant, it may join an alliance in an attempt to deter aggression by any would-be adversaries.

Given an understanding of the anarchic condition of international politics, one can more easily grasp the game-theoretic dynamics of arms races. All sides involved may sincerely desire peace, but the anarchical nature of international politics leads states to be suspicious of one another and engage in worst-case analyses of one another's intentions. This realist insight, it is argued, is just as applicable to understanding the ancient competition between Sparta and Athens as it is to understanding contemporary international relations. It is a system-level explanation in that the emphasis is placed on the anarchic structure of international politics as a whole, not on the internal nature of a particular state. An example of an explanation that relies on internal factors is the claim that a given country keeps building more and more weapons because of demands from its own military-industrial complex or because of the nature of a national mentality that reflects its regional or global ambitions. External factors such as the anarchic structure of the system or the actions and reactions of other states if not ignored, are thought less important than domestic imperatives.

Finally, an anarchical, self-help system obviously makes cooperation among states difficult to achieve. How are states to act in such a world? Is it inevitable that they will be self-seeking, attempting to maximize their short-term individual or self-interests? Or is it possible that states can upgrade their common (perhaps enlightened) self-interests over both the short and long term? What is the rational thing to do? The informing image for some realists is provided by the allegory of the stag hunt, taken from the writings of the Geneva-born, eighteenth-century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau.¹⁴ It is an excellent example of game theory at work.

Each of five individuals in the state of nature—a world without government or any other form of social structure—has to decide whether (1) to collaborate in the hunting of a stag necessary to meet the hunger needs of all five or (2) to defect from the group to capture a hare. To choose the latter course of action would be to serve one's own self-interest at the expense of the group (see Figure 2.1).

If the individual prefers to serve the common interest (go after the stag), can he or she trust the others to do so? And if one can't trust the others, is it not rational

	Individual interests: pursue the hare	Group/collective interests: pursue the stag
Short run	Serve immediate self-interest	May provide basis for possible future collaboration
Long run	No apparent basis for collaborative behavior	Serve long-term common interest

FIGURE 2.1

The Stag Hunt Fable: A Dilemma of Rational Choice

to go for the hare and defect from the group before any of the others do? Or is it possible to develop the basis for collaboration by all five? Scholars who deal with game theory attempt to answer such questions.¹⁵

How one understands Rousseau's stag hunt fable has a great deal to do with how one sees states interacting in world politics. Some tend to see the state as serving only narrow self-interest. Pessimists point to the number, duration, and intensity of wars. They tend to see international politics as sets of competitive games in which decisions or choices may be zero-sum—one side's gains are losses for the other. Those of a more optimistic bent see great potential for collaboration among states, noting how in fact many states live in peace and harmony for decades and even centuries. In competitive settings, the players can find ways in which all parties can gain, albeit to different degrees—so-called positive- or variable-sum games. When losses have to be taken, optimists argue they can be distributed so as to minimize damage to each party. As such, the payoffs (gains or losses) typically are “asymmetric” or uneven, but still the best that can be achieved for all players.

For international relations theorists, however, it is not simply a matter of having a pessimistic or optimistic nature. Aside from the assumptions that states are unitary and rational actors, structural realists also tend to make the analytical assumption that states are largely concerned with **relative** rather than just **absolute gains**. What is the difference? If a state is concerned with individual, absolute gains, it is indifferent to the gains of others—“As long as I'm doing better, I don't care if others are also increasing their wealth or military power.” If, however, a state is concerned with relative gains, it is not satisfied with simply increasing its power or wealth, but is concerned with how much those capabilities have kept pace with, increased, or decreased relative to other states.¹⁶ This harkens back to the issue of how one defines and measures power.

Differing assumptions about a state's preferences lead to different expectations about the prospects for international conflict and cooperation. For structural realists, the relative gains assumption makes international cooperation in an anarchic world difficult to attain, particularly among great powers prone to improving their relative position or, at least, hold their own in this international competition. Structural realists do not have to rely, therefore, on such classical realist assumptions as found in the works of Machiavelli and Hobbes that man is inherently aggressive. More optimistic about the prospects for international cooperation, English School scholars, neoliberal institutionalists, and social constructivists are much more likely to assume that states may well be satisfied with absolute gains due to the development of international norms, collaborative institutions, and the ability to redefine national interests.

Distribution of Capabilities and the Balance of Power

Realists see anarchy as continuing to be a defining characteristic of the international system unless one state or some kind of superior international authority were constructed to provide a new order to the world through its position of dominance. Within this anarchical environment various distributions of capabilities or power among states emerge in dynamic, competitive relations among states. Indeed, anarchy plus the distribution of capabilities among states define for many realists

the international system at any one time, described by them typically as unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar. Balances of power and alliances among states are the means realists conceive for sustaining international order.

As we have seen, many realists begin with the security dilemma in an anarchic world. Where does order come from under such conditions? What keeps states from continually attacking one another? One answer offered by realists is that states find it expedient to band together and pool their capabilities or power whenever one state or group of states appears to be gathering a disproportionate amount of power, thus threatening to dominate the world, or even a portion of it. On the other hand, influenced perhaps by the thought of Hugo Grotius, many classical realists (as well as constructivists and other scholars in the English School) observe some degree of order provided by the development and acceptance over time of international norms and practices, particularly those that come to be codified in international law.

The need to maintain a **balance of power** to avoid the triumph of a dominant power is a realist concern dating back to the works of Thucydides. It is also found in a report of the British Foreign Office written before World War I:

History shows that the danger threatening the independence of this or that nation has generally arisen, at least in part, out of the momentary predominance of a neighboring State at once militarily powerful, economically efficient, and ambitious to extend its frontiers or spread its influence. . . . The only check on the abuse of political predominance derived from such a position has always consisted in the opposition of an equally formidable rival, or a combination of several countries forming leagues of defense. The equilibrium established by such a grouping of forces is technically known as the balance of power, and it has become almost an historical truism to identify England's secular policy with the maintenance of this balance by throwing her weight now in this scale and now in that, but ever on the side opposed to the political dictatorship of the strongest single State or group at a given time.¹⁷

A bipolar balance of power (two states of comparable or relatively equal great power) or a multipolar balance of power (three or more states engaging in checks and balances) are two realist categorizations of particular distributions of capabilities. Such power configurations have occurred in the aftermath of major European wars—the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 following the Thirty Years' War, the Congress of Vienna in 1815 following the defeat of Napoleon, and the settlements following both twentieth-century world wars. Although the post-World War I arrangements bought only twenty years of peace, the Congress of Vienna was more successful in establishing a basis for maintaining a balance of power without general or major war for almost a century. Assessing the efforts of the diplomats at Vienna and subsequent meetings, Henry Kissinger concluded: “Their goal was stability, not perfection, and the balance of power is the classic expression of the lesson of history that no order is safe without physical safeguards against aggression.” In short, according to Kissinger, a “new international order came to be created with a sufficient awareness of the connection between power and morality; between security and legitimacy.”¹⁸

Four questions in this regard are subject to debate among realist scholars: (1) Do balances of power automatically occur, or are they created by diplomats or statesmen? (2) Which balance of power—bipolar or multipolar—is more likely to

maintain international stability and is unipolarity a durable condition? (3) How much power should states seek in order to feel secure? (4) How can nonsystemic factors (those at individual and state-society levels of analysis) be integrated into structural or neorealist accounts to explain the onset of war?

Balance of Power: Voluntarism and Determinism The voluntarism-determinism debate is comparable in some ways to theological dispute over determinism and free will. As we use the term, however, *voluntarism* does not refer only to freedom of choice, but rather to the ability of human beings to influence the course of events. How free are individuals to determine their own fates? How much effective choice do they have? How much are events determined by factors independent of human will exercised by statesmen? In the context of international relations, the question is whether states or their decisionmakers can affect their environment or whether their actions are severely constrained by other states interacting in a system of states. How much is free? How much is determined? Put another way, how much is the behavior of states and other units driven by the international system or its structure and how much is socially constructed by human volition—statesmen and diplomats, institutions and groups, and other human actors? As noted in Chapter 1, this is central in IR to the agent-structure debate.

As to the first question, Henry Kissinger (a classical realist) emphasizes **voluntarism**—the balance of power is a foreign policy creation or construction by statesmen; it doesn't just occur automatically. Makers of foreign policy do not act as automatons, prisoners of the balance of power and severely constrained by it. Rather, they are its creators and those charged with maintaining it. They are free to exercise their judgment and their will as agents for their states in the conduct of foreign policy with the expectation that they can have some constructive effect on outcomes.

In contrast to this voluntarist conception is that of Kenneth Waltz, who sees the balance of power as an attribute of the system of states that will occur whether it is willed or not. He argues that “the balance of power is not so much imposed by statesmen on events as it is imposed by events on statesmen.”¹⁹ For Waltz, the statesman has much less freedom to maneuver, much less capability to affect the workings of international politics, than Kissinger would allow.

How does Waltz reach this conclusion? Given the assumptions that the state is a rational and a unitary actor that will use its capabilities to accomplish its objectives, states inevitably interact and conflict in the competitive environment of international politics. States may be motivated to improve their own positions so as to dominate others, but such attempts likely will be countered by other states similarly motivated. Waltz observes that in international relations, “the freedom of choice of any one state is limited by the actions of all the others.”²⁰ Thus, a balance of power more often than not occurs as states tend to balance against a rising power as opposed to joining its bandwagon. The structure of the international system itself—anarchy plus the distribution of capabilities—affects the calculations and choices of decisionmakers. Balance-of-power theory so viewed can be used to account for arms races, alliances and counteralliances, coalitions and countercoalitions, and other forms of competitive behavior among states that transcend any particular historical era.

This image of the balance of power, therefore, refers to a recurrent phenomenon characteristic of international relations. It seems to matter little whether the states are democratic or authoritarian; the systemic tendency toward balance or equilibrium is always the same. It is as if states were billiard balls colliding with one another. The faster and larger balls (the major powers) knock the smaller balls (the lesser powers) out of the way, although their own paths may also be deflected slightly by these collisions. These interactions, it is argued, tend toward international equilibrium or stability just as billiard balls eventually come to rest, at least until the balance is upset once again. But then the same tendency toward equilibrium repeats itself, only to be upset again. And so forth. The actors involved in this timeless drama remain the same: states. As Ernst Haas—a critic of the determinism he observed among structural realists and many other balance-of-power theorists—put it: “[They] see the components [of systems, i.e., states] as relatively unchangeable and arrange them in an eternal preprogrammed dance. The rules of the dance may be unknown to the actors and are specified by the theorist. The recurrent patterns discovered by him constitute a super-logic which predicts the future state of the system.”²¹

Actor combinations involving two or more states can be observed throughout history as the mechanical workings of the balance of power: multipolar through much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, prior to World War II (1939–1945), and bipolar (the United States and the Soviet Union) in the years following the war. The post–Cold War world has been described as a unipolar system due to the preponderant power of the United States, and this has caused problems for realist balance-of-power theorists, a subject we will subsequently discuss.

In a sense, then, Kissinger and Waltz represent alternative ends of a spectrum of contemporary realists conversant with balance-of-power thinking. Realists such as Waltz who emphasize balance of power as a system tendency have been labeled “structuralists” or “neorealists” because they have allegedly departed from a realist tradition that granted the statesman or policymaker greater freedom from constraint and thus greater ability to affect international events.

Kissinger’s position is closer to the voluntarist pole, but he definitely would not argue that foreign policymakers are totally free of external constraints. Indeed, their ability to maneuver within these constraints is at least partly a function of their diplomatic skills. Similarly, Waltz would reject the idea that he is in any way a system determinist—that the structure of the international system necessarily determines state behavior. Indeed, he acknowledges the possibility of a state or “unit-level cause negating a structural effect.”²² Nevertheless, his views are far removed from the purely voluntarist pole. The implication of his view of the balance of power is that individual decisionmakers and their states have much less freedom or capability to affect the course of events than others such as Kissinger would assert.

In some respects, the writings of Hans J. Morgenthau were an earlier attempt to combine the two perspectives, thus inviting wrath by proponents of both. Morgenthau acknowledged the balance of power as a tendency within international politics while, at the same time, prescribing what statesmen should do to maintain the balance. He argued that “the balance of power and policies aiming at its preservation are not only inevitable but are an essential stabilizing factor in a society of sovereign nations.” Quite apart from the apparent determinism in this statement,

Morgenthau assigned to diplomats not just the task of maintaining the balance of power; he also charged them to “create the conditions under which it will not be impossible from the outset to establish a world state.”²³

In short, for Morgenthau, escape from the balance of power and the voluntarist creation of a new world order remained possibilities worthy of pursuit. At the same time, his detractors have noted that, on the one hand, to argue that the balance of power is an inevitable system tendency and, on the other hand, to prescribe what should be done to maintain a balance or transform the system itself is to argue in contradictory terms. Be that as it may, Morgenthau’s thinking represents a middle ground between realists who tend toward voluntarist or determinist poles. The present theoretical debate between structural realists and social constructivists is a more recent manifestation of this continuing controversy—the latter far more voluntarist in its formulations, but also understanding that *both* ideational and material structures (or understandings of them) may facilitate or constrain state actions.

Polarity and System Structure The second question is a long-standing realist debate: Is a bipolar or a multipolar balance of power more conducive to the stability of the international system? Stated another way, is war more likely to occur in a bipolar or a multipolar world?

The best-known statements on the stability of bipolar and multipolar distributions are by Kenneth Waltz on the one hand and J. David Singer and Karl Deutsch on the other.²⁴ All three agreed that the amount of uncertainty about the consequences of a particular action taken by a state increases as the number of international actors increases. The logic of this assumption is that as the number increases, a state’s policymakers have to deal with a greater quantity of information; more international actors mean more information is generated that has to be taken into account in the formulation of foreign policy. Therefore, all three authors concurred that as an international system moves from being bipolar to being multipolar, the amount of overall uncertainty in the system increases. So far, so good.

Where they part company is on the matter of whether an increase in the number of actors (and hence uncertainty) makes war more or less likely. Waltz argued that greater uncertainty makes it *more* likely that a policymaker will misjudge the intentions and actions of a potential foe. Hence, a multipolar system, given its association with higher levels of uncertainty, is less desirable than a bipolar system because multipolarity makes uncertainty and thus the probability of war greater. Singer and Deutsch, however, made the opposite argument, believing that a multipolar system is more conducive to stability because uncertainty breeds caution on the part of states. Caution means following tried and true policies of the past, avoiding deviations. Furthermore, they argued that “the increase in number of independent actors diminishes the share [of attention] that any nation can allocate to any other single actor.” This, it is argued, also reduces the probability of war because a state’s attention is allocated to a larger number of actors.

Both arguments seem logical. But if both cannot be correct, it is still possible that neither one is correct. This is a proposition put forth by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita. For example, he challenges the assumption that uncertainty is greater in a multipolar world, arguing that “if the system’s structure—be it bipolar or multipolar—does not change, there will be little uncertainty” because “learned

patterns from prior behavior will aid decision makers to anticipate the likely consequences of similar behaviors under similar circumstances.” Hence, “the level of systemic uncertainty, by itself, neither increases nor decreases the likelihood of war. Consequently, neither the number of blocs, nor the magnitude of change in the number of blocs in the system is expected to be associated with the likelihood of war.”²⁵

This theoretical debate was inconclusive, and there still is no consensus on the issue of bipolarity versus multipolarity in terms of international stability. Other realist work since then, however, has built upon the concept of polarity and addressed two other dimensions at the systemic level of analysis—disparities in capabilities among poles (not simply the number), and the implications if the capability growth rates of states are static or dynamic.²⁶

The durability of unipolarity is understandably an important issue of discussion among not only scholars of international relations, but policymakers as well. It is fair to say that realist scholars were as surprised as others by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the bipolar world in the early 1990s. Little, if any, thought had gone into the implications of unipolarity. As one would expect, unipolarity offers the hegemonic power several logical options: isolationism, enhancing the effectiveness of international institutions, and unilateralism in its foreign policy. Whatever a hegemonic state may choose, the underlying logic of realist structural analysis is that unipolarity is inherently unstable and other states will balance against it. There is a consensus among many realists that unipolarity will not last and, in time, the world will become increasingly multipolar—great powers including, for example, a reconstituted Russian Federation, China, Japan, India, and the European Union. Although the United States now holds the predominant position, they see a shift taking place in the distribution of capabilities among states. It has even been suggested that we might come to miss the Cold War for the stability that U.S.-Soviet bipolarity had provided despite the specter of nuclear war.²⁷

How Much Power? Defensive and Offensive Realists Realists also disagree on the implications of anarchy and how much weight it should be accorded as a contributing factor to power-seeking behavior by states. So-called defensive realists such as Kenneth Waltz start by assuming that states minimally aim to survive, pursue other objectives, but above all else, seek to maintain their security in a world fraught with threats and other challenges. This requires paying close attention to the balance of power. Anarchy in particular requires states to engage in competitive behavior as opposed to classical realist Hans Morgenthau’s emphasis on human nature and the drive for power causing security competition.

Waltz and other defensive realists, however, argue that while the international system provides incentives for expansion, this is only under certain circumstances. While under anarchy the security dilemma causes states to worry about relative power and the intentions of other states, efforts to increase power may inadvertently generate spirals of hostility. The pursuit of expansionist policies may be generated by this fear and the mistaken assumption that aggressive behavior and words are the best way to make a state more secure. But while states cannot escape the security dilemma, it does not guarantee war. Certain structural factors can have a significant impact on whether states go down the road of cooperation or conflict. One factor that has generated a great deal of study is the offense-defense balance. The argument

is that at any point in time military power can favor the offense or the defense. If defense dominates over offense, then conquest is difficult and the major powers have little incentive to use force to gain power. Rather, the incentive is to hold on to what they have. If, however, offense has the advantage, then the temptation is for states to attempt to conquer one another, generating major wars. But as the offense-defense balance is usually in favor of the defense, conquest becomes more difficult and hence states should be discouraged from pursuing aggressive policies.

The policy implication is that states should carefully consider the real possibility that moderate strategies may enhance their security, but with the full recognition that at times expansionist strategies will end up being the means to achieving this goal. Hence, while recognizing the importance of anarchy, defensive realists caution that analysts should not overstate its importance. They argue that security is readily available, particularly if states adopt prudent strategies. The assumption is made that the international system provides incentives for cautious and restrained behavior on the part of states and that reckless, expansionist behavior is more the result of domestic factors, as opposed to systemic conditions that occur under anarchy.²⁸ Hence, defensive realists have been charged with a status quo bias.

This is certainly not a criticism leveled at offensive realists who hold a very different assumption on the question of how much power states want and the implications of anarchy, arguing that the latter actually provides strong incentives for the expansion of power capabilities relative to other states. States strive for maximum power relative to other states as this is the only way to guarantee survival. Offensive realists argue that status quo powers are rarely found in international politics as the structure of the international system creates strong incentives to gain power relative to one's rivals. Defensive realists, it is claimed, cannot explain at the systemic level state expansion because international incentives for such behavior are lacking in the defensive-realist formulation.

John Mearsheimer exemplifies this perspective. He places emphasis in his structural realism on offensive or power-maximizing in contrast to the defensive realism he finds in Waltz and other realists. Offensive realism is both a descriptive theory about how states behave as well as a prescriptive one that states ought to follow as the best way to survive in a dangerous world. He is critical of the defensive realist focus on states supposedly more interested in maintaining the existing balance of power as opposed to increasing their share of it. By contrast, he sees states as trying to maximize their power positions—a state's ultimate goal in principle is to be the hegemon in the system. For Mearsheimer, the “best way for a state to survive in anarchy is to take advantage of other states and gain power at their expense.”²⁹ The assumption is that anarchy and the distribution of capabilities matter most in explaining the big issues of international politics such as war and peace. Little attention is paid to the role of individuals, domestic politics, and ideology. He argues that from this theoretical perspective, it doesn't really matter whether Germany in 1905 was led by Bismarck, Kaiser Wilhelm, or Hitler, or whether Germany was democratic or autocratic. What matters from an offensive realism perspective is how much relative power Germany had. Mearsheimer readily acknowledges that in those cases where domestic factors actually do play a major role, then offensive realism doesn't have a lot to say. Such is the cost of simplifying reality and attempting to develop parsimonious theories that tell us a few things about important matters.

Echoes of Morgenthau's earlier conceptualization of power in international politics can be heard as Mearsheimer characterizes states as maximizing power, not just as "a means to an end (survival) but [also] an end in itself." But as a structural realist Mearsheimer would agree with Waltz that this drive for power is a function of the structure of the international system, not human nature. Great powers pursuing power as an end may still come to understand the limits of their power, constrained by other states pursuing the same ends. In the great game of international politics, "the trick for the sophisticated power maximizer is to figure out when to raise and when to fold."

Mearsheimer notes that the actual distribution of military might among great powers is critical in wartime. If a great power has a marked power advantage over its rivals, it is more likely that it will behave aggressively as it has the capability and incentive to do so. If, however, it is facing powerful opponents, it is less likely to consider offensive action and more likely to focus on defending the existing balance of power. Mearsheimer thus reflects the basic realist assumptions outlined at the beginning of the chapter in terms of states carefully calculating the costs and benefits of offensive action, aware of its strengths but also its limitations.³⁰

Finally, is there no place for cooperation among states in the world of offensive realists? Great powers certainly do cooperate as exemplified when they form alliances and act against common enemies. But extensive cooperation is limited by two concerns—relative gains and the prospect of cheating. As noted earlier, if each side is pursuing absolute gains, then there is little concern with what others are gaining or losing. But in a world of balance of power, states have to be concerned with relative gains as those of a rival could upset that balance. Once again, the international system is structured in such a way that cooperation—if it takes place—is going to be limited. Concerns over cheating in the military realm that hold out the prospect of defeat also work against cooperation.

Nonsystemic Factors Classical realists have always blended various units and levels of analysis into their accounts of international relations. In his attempt to develop a parsimonious systemic theory of international politics, the preeminent structural realist, Kenneth Waltz, purposely downplayed domestic factors as has John Mearsheimer. Waltz, however, has highlighted in other works the importance of the state-societal levels of analysis.³¹ Other defensive realists influenced by Waltz, while agreeing that his work can explain some state behavior, have tried to overcome structural realism's limitations, in particular its inability to explain those cases where major power states act in nonstrategic ways. This has required delving into the realm of the individual and state-societal or unit levels of analysis and examining the role of factors such as human agency—for example, the roles human beings play in domestic politics, their cognitive understandings, perceptions or misperceptions, and elite belief systems.

Stephen Walt, for example, has recast balance-of-power theory (states align with or against the most powerful states), arguing that a balance-of-threat theory offers more historically correct explanations.³² Hence, intentions need to be taken into account (states balance against states that are not only powerful but also threatening). Walt observes that states are attracted to strength and "a decline in a state's relative position will lead its allies to opt for neutrality at best or to defect

to the other side at worst.” Threats matter in Walt’s analysis, not just power as such. Thus, one finds that “the greater the threat, the greater the probability that the vulnerable state will seek an alliance.”

In this regard, Walt draws a distinction between *balancing* (allying with others against the prevailing threat, which is the dominant tendency in international politics) and *bandwagoning* (the opportunistic option of aligning with the source of danger, particularly if it is a strong state). Balancing behavior is more common, tending to reflect restraint and, perhaps, an effort to “minimize the threat one poses to others.” By contrast, bandwagoning, though less common, typically occurs in a much more competitive context.

Walt has also used this theoretical adjustment to balance-of-power theory to analyze how revolutionary domestic changes can increase the risk of international war by intensifying international security competition. Dangers posed by states matter, not just their power or relative power positions *per se*. So understood, it is imbalances of threat that cause alliances against the most threatening state. He concludes, then, that balance-of-threat theory provides a stronger explanatory handle than traditional balance-of-power theory offers.

Much as Walt deals with threats or perceptions of danger, Stephen Van Evera adds the ideational—ideas, perceptions, and misperceptions—to the material understandings of power and its distribution.³³ Going beyond gross distinctions captured by the terms *multipolar*, *bipolar*, and *unipolar*, Van Evera introduces what he labels a “fine-grained structural realism” that takes into account such considerations as the offense-defense balance, the advantage of taking the first move, the size and frequency of power fluctuations, and available resources. Perception and misperception matter, and war is more likely when states believe that conquest is easy (whether, in fact, it is or is not). Other war-causing ideas include windows of vulnerability, the hostility of other states, threatening diplomatic tactics (as in coercive diplomacy), and when war is considered cheap or even beneficial.

Finally, Barry Posen tests two theories—organization theory and balance-of-power theory—to see which does a better job explaining how military doctrine takes shape and influenced the grand strategy decisions of French, British, and German officials during the years between World Wars I and II. Not surprisingly, Posen finds that the causes of state behavior are found at both the state and international levels of analysis, with the latter a slightly more powerful tool for the study of military doctrine.³⁴

One of the most ambitious efforts to understand the conditions under which large-scale war is likely to occur is Dale Copeland’s *The Origins of Major War*. In the process he integrates a number of issues, concepts, and debates dear to the heart of many realists: Is a multipolar or bipolar system more likely to encourage war? How important are relative gains and losses to an explanation of war? How can the insights from two competing camps of structural realism (offensive and defensive) be reconciled? Are rising powers or declining power more likely to initiate war and under what conditions? Copeland’s bottom-line argument, based upon the application of what he calls his dynamic differentials theory to ten historical case studies, is that great powers that anticipate deep and inevitable relative decline are more likely to initiate major wars or pursue hard-line policies that substantially increase the risk of major war through inadvertent escalation.

The dependent variable in the theory is the variation in the probability of major war over time within a bipolar or multipolar system. The key explanatory variable is the dynamic differential, defined as “the simultaneous interaction of the differentials or relative military power between great powers and the expected trend of those differentials, distinguishing between the effects of power changes in bipolarity versus multipolarity.”³⁵ In multipolar systems, a declining power must possess significant military superiority over each of the other great powers before initiating war or hard-line policies that risk war. Lacking such superiority, the prospect of facing a balancing coalition or fighting several debilitating bilateral contests is likely to deter the state from taking on the rest of the system. In a bipolar system, however, the declining power need not be militarily superior—in fact, it could even be slightly inferior militarily—before initiating war or implementing such policies against its major rival. In facing only one major adversary, the chance of costly bilateral wars is minimal. The likelihood of major war therefore derives largely from the strategy adopted by the declining power.

If leaders of the major power expect the trend to be one of rapid and inevitable decline in power (disaggregated into military, economic, and potential indices), the more likely they will be tempted to engage in preventive war. Dynamic differentials theory attempts to explain not only this likelihood, but also associated diplomatic and military strategies that might be pursued by utilizing the rational actor assumption of leaders who are risk and cost neutral. He does not, therefore, fall back on sub-systemic or unit auxiliary theories such as threat perception, individual pathologies, ideology, civilian-military relations, and military doctrine. But by utilizing the rational actor assumption, Copeland’s work aspires to be a theory of international relations and also a theory of foreign policy.

As part of his theory Copeland also takes on the ambitious task of synthesizing the competing insights of offensive and defensive realism by specifying the conditions under which they are most likely to apply. Both assume that international outcomes resulting from the interaction of states in an anarchic environment will essentially match the relative distribution of material capabilities. Anarchy forces states to be primarily concerned with maximizing their security, and states are largely rational, utilizing power as a critical means to achieve security. As noted above, offensive realism argues that it is the mere possibility of war that conditions state behavior and encourages hard-line policies to maintain relative power as a hedge against future threats. The international system provides the incentive for expansion, conflict, and relentless security competition. Defensive realism, however, argues that what matters is the subjective probability of international conflict and how the security dilemma increases the likelihood that hard-line actions will lead to an escalation to major war through inadvertent means. Offensive realists, it is argued, rely too heavily on power as the sole determinant of security. The probability of war as an outcome is lessened by other structural variables such as geography, the offense-defense military-technological balance, and the rate of technological diffusion. Hence, the international system provides expansion incentives in only rare circumstances. Although the security dilemma is ever present, it does not automatically compel states continually to maximize relative power.

As noted, a problem with both offensive and defensive realism is that neither specifies the conditions under which states are more likely to respond to either

the probability or mere possibility of conflict. Copeland attempts to do this by the creative integration of the key concepts in his dynamic differentials theory—polarity, power differentials, and anticipated trends. He generates hypotheses that specify when states have an incentive to act on the mere possibility of conflict and hence desire to maximize their power. These would be cases in which states face a trend of deep and inevitable decline in two of three types of power—economic and potential. He correspondingly also specifies when major powers will react to the subjective probability of conflict. If they anticipate decline in military as opposed to economic and potential power, they have a wider range of options to avoid decline. In the case of a multipolar system, for example, shortfalls in military power can be reduced through alliance formation.

By bringing together the two realist perspectives, Copeland seeks to explain how rational states weigh the risk of decline by continuing current policies against the risks posed by inadvertent war should they choose merely to escalate the power competition or to engage in preventive war. This approach thus incorporates a state's need to maintain its power, given fear of the future intentions of other states (offensive realism) and recognition that hard-line policies have risks attached to them, particularly given the ever-present reality of the security dilemma and the possibility of a spiral of fear and arms races.

CHANGE

Realists stress the continuity of international relations. Many of the insights of Thucydides are deemed to be as relevant today as they were more than two millennia ago. Looking to modern history, a balance of power involving states has existed at least since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—whether viewed as a policy they have pursued or as a recurrent, expected outcome from the interactions of states using power to pursue their own separate interests. Although continuity is the watchword for realists, this does not mean that they are uninterested in change. For many theorists of international relations, understanding the evolution of the international system and predicting its future should be the preeminent research goals. The methods for discovering global patterns may vary. Some scholars have applied quantitative measures to historical data.³⁶ Others have approached the issue of international political change by attempting to discern cycles of national power and their relation to the outbreak of war. To illustrate how realists have dealt with the issue of change, we will also briefly discuss the works of Robert Gilpin, George Modelski.

Power Transition

As the title of his book suggests, Gilpin is interested in developing a framework for thinking about hegemonic or great power war in his *War and Change in World Politics*. He believes “it is possible to identify recurrent patterns, common elements, and general tendencies in the major turning points in international history.” Reflecting an offensive realism we can see in his perspective, Gilpin argues international political change is the result of efforts of political actors to change the

international system in order to advance their own interests, however these interests may be defined (security, economic gain, ideological goals, etc.). Gilpin lists five assumptions concerning the behavior of states that will guide his analysis. For example, the realist emphasis on the unified, rational-actor state is revealed in the second assumption: “A state will attempt to change the international system if the expected benefits exceed the expected costs (i.e., if there is an expected net gain).”

Various periods of history are marked by equilibrium (such as after the Congress of Vienna in 1815) or disequilibrium (as in the outbreak of world war). As long as the system can adjust to the demands of its constituent states, stability is maintained. What accounts for change and the undermining of the status quo? The key factor, originally identified by Thucydides, “is the tendency in an international system for the powers of member states to change at different rates because of political, economic, and technological developments. In time, the differential growth in power of the various states in the system causes a fundamental redistribution of power in the system.”³⁷ A state with ever-increasing power may determine that the costs involved in attempting to change the nature of the system are outweighed by the benefits if such an endeavor is successful. What has been the principal mechanism of change throughout history? War, because wars determine which states will govern the system. The peace settlement after the war codifies the new status quo. This equilibrium reflects the new distribution of power in the international system until eventually the differential growth in the power of states leads to another attempt to change the system.

Like balance-of-power theory, therefore, power-transition theory is a systems-level theory. Realist adherents to both theories claim that the distribution of power among states is the key to understanding international relations. Power-transition theorists, however, see the international system as hierarchically ordered, with the most powerful state dominating the rest, which are classified as satisfied or dissatisfied with the ordering of the system. But while balance-of-power theorists argue that the equality of power leads to stability if not peace, power-transition theorists such as Gilpin and others claim that war may be more likely when states are relatively equal, particularly when the differential growth in two states’ economies brings a challenger close to the reigning hegemon’s power.

Long Cycles

For his part, George Modelski argued that the global political system goes through distinct and identifiable historical cycles or recurrent patterns of behavior. The global political system dates from about 1500 and, over the years, various world powers have helped to shape and maintain the system. According to Modelski, since 1500, four states have played dominant roles, each one corresponding to a “long cycle”: Portugal (1500 to the end of the sixteenth century), the Netherlands (the seventeenth century), Great Britain (early eighteenth century to the Napoleonic Wars, and a second cycle from 1815 to 1945), and the United States (1945 to the present). As in the case of Gilpin’s analysis, war tends to mark the end of one cycle and the beginning of another.

What produces these cycles? Two conditions are critical: (1) the urge of a power to create a global order, and (2) particular properties and weaknesses of

the global system. Modelski notes that, as with long-term business cycles, world order is also subject to decay. The dominant power is inevitably faced with the growth of rival power centers, and attempts to maintain territorial control around the globe prove to be a costly task that drains the vitality and energy of the home country. Each cycle, therefore, exhibits a particular nation-state in an ascending and then a descending phase. As Modelski notes, following a major war, one world power

emerges from that conflict in an advantageous position and organizes the world even as the struggle still goes on and then formalizes its position in the global layer in the peace settlement. For the space of another generation, that new power maintains basic order and is the mainspring of world institutions, often taking transnational forms. But the time comes when the energy that built this order begins to run down. . . . The prominent role of world power attracts competitors (other great powers) . . . ; the system moves into multipolarity. Rivalries among the major powers grow fiercer and assume the characteristics of oligopolistic competition. Gradually, as order dissolves, the system moves toward its original point of departure, that of minimal order and a Babel of conflicting and mutually unintelligible voices.³⁸

Modelski and Gilpin present a dynamic view of international politics. Patterns of behavior are evident throughout history. Periods of rapid change alternate with periods of relative stability. Given the emphasis on the importance of war in changing the structure of the system, are we currently experiencing a lull before some sort of global cataclysm? Perhaps this question is too pessimistic. As Modelski notes, it is possible that the international system may be “propelled in a new direction. We have no means of predicting what that new direction might be except that it could be moved away from the present system that relies too heavily on the steady, if long-spaced-out, progression of global wars.”³⁹

Continuing the work of the late A. F. K. Organski on power-transition theory, Ronald L. Tammen, Jacek Kugler, and their associates see national power as “a function of population, productivity, and relative political capacity.”⁴⁰ They warn us that periods in which the distribution of power is in transition are more prone to war. When one state is in the process of overtaking the power position of another, the likelihood of war increases markedly. War is least likely when we find the ways and means of satisfying (or, one might add, at least dampening or minimizing dissatisfaction among) the challengers and defenders of existing power positions. The converse—dissatisfied challengers and defenders—is the condition that makes the outbreak of war most likely. How power transitions take place is important, affecting the duration, severity, and consequences of war. Rather than adopting a laissez-faire approach, the authors call for managing alliances, international organizations, levels of satisfaction among states vying for power, the distribution of nuclear weapons, and crises wherever and whenever they emerge.

“Power-transition” work on war has been criticized on historical, empirical, and conceptual grounds.⁴¹ Yet this is true of all work that attempts to explain important issues of war and peace. Furthermore, given the ongoing shifts in the distribution of world power and interest in the implications of such rising powers as China, India, and a resurgent Russia, it can be expected that scholars will continue to mine such works for theoretical insights.

GLOBALIZATION AND INTERDEPENDENCE

To this point, we have discussed some of the intellectual precursors of realism and have then examined two concepts important to the realist analysis of world politics: power and balance of power or system. In the next section, we discuss the realist view on more recent developments within the international relations field involving the concepts of globalization and interdependence.

Globalization

There is no doubt that the term **globalization** has captured the imagination of journalists, policymakers, the general public, and writers of textbooks on international relations. Realists generally do not share this enthusiasm, and one would be hard-pressed to find a realist who has utilized the term as an integral part of his or her conceptual framework. Realist skepticism is due to a number of factors.

First, there is the problem of definition. A generally accepted definition of globalization does not exist, although it is common to emphasize the continual increase in transnational and worldwide economic, social, and cultural interactions among societies that transcend the boundaries of states, aided by advances in technology. Second, the term is descriptive and lacking in theoretical content. Hence, it hardly qualifies as a “concept” suitable for use in theory-building. Third, the term is trendy, which alone makes realists suspicious. It is rare for academic theoretical concepts to gain such widespread public currency. Fourth, and most important, the literature on globalization assumes the increase in transactions among societies has led to an erosion of sovereignty and the blurring of the boundaries between the state and the international system. For realists, anarchy is the distinguishing feature in international relations, and anything that questions the separation of domestic and international politics threatens the centrality of this key realist concept. Finally, globalization has an affinity with another popular concept that came to the fore of the international relations field in the 1970s: interdependence. As with the case of globalization today, some realist scholars were skeptical of the conceptual utility of the concept. How they critiqued and utilized the concept perhaps provides insights on why realists have not embraced the globalization process as the centerpiece of the international relations theory enterprise.

Interdependence and Vulnerability

For those realists who even utilize the concept, **interdependence** is viewed as being between or among states. This is not surprising given the underlying assumptions of realism. They make several related points. First, the balance of power can be understood as a kind of interdependence. To be sure, some realists of a more eclectic sort acknowledge interdependence involving non-state actors such as multinational corporations and try to take them into account. But at the core of realist thought is the image of interactions among states.

Second, for any one state, interdependence among states is not necessarily such a good thing. Rather than being a symmetric relation between coequal parties (which is how many people view the term), interdependence is typically a

dominance–dependence relation with the dependent party particularly *vulnerable* (a key realist concept) to the choices of the dominant party. Indeed, interdependence as vulnerability is a source of power of one state over another. To reduce this vulnerability, realists have argued that it is better for the state to be independent or, at least, to minimize its dependency. For example, the state needing to import oil is vulnerable to an embargo or price rise engineered by the state or states exporting the commodity. To reduce this vulnerability requires efforts to reduce reliance on oil imports.

Third, and following from above, interdependence does not affect all states equally. This applies to the economic as much as the military realms. Although the economies of most oil-importing countries are affected by dramatic rises in oil prices, they are not all equally vulnerable. Vulnerability is in part a question of what alternatives are available. As a matter of policy, the United States has tried to increase domestic production, create a strategic oil reserve to be drawn from only in emergencies, find other foreign sources of oil, and substitute alternative forms of energy whenever feasible—all steps to reduce demand for oil from abroad.

Given these measures that many say have not gone far enough, the United States has attempted to reduce somewhat its vulnerability to any new oil embargo or disruption of supply due to war or other regional instabilities in the Middle East or elsewhere. As a practical matter, of course, the United States remains heavily dependent on imported oil.

In any event, if a state wants to be more powerful, it avoids or minimizes economic dependency just as it avoids political or military dependency on other states if this were to amount to a reduction in its relative power position. Dependency on others is to be minimized, whereas dependency of others on one's own state may be desirable to the extent that it increases one's leverage over those other states. In short, in any given issue area, not all states are equally vulnerable. Therefore, the realist is suspicious of such blanket statements as “given increasing globalization, the entire world is increasingly interdependent or interconnected”—as if this were a good thing—particularly when such claims are supposedly *equally* applicable to all states.

Finally, realists have made interesting arguments concerning interdependence and peace, and it can be inferred they might apply similar observations to the effects of globalization. Interdependence, according to realists, may or may not enhance prospects for peace. Conflict, not cooperation, could just as easily result. Just as in households, sectarian and community conflicts, one way to establish peace is to eliminate or minimize contact among opponents or potential adversaries. Separation from other units, if that were possible, would mean less contact and thus less conflict. Hence, realists would be as unlikely to argue that the increase in globalization among societies has a pacifying effect any more than they would assume interdependence leads to peace.

REALISTS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Classical realists perhaps have more faith than structural realists in the ability of international organizations to make a substantive contribution to international stability if not peace; after all, they draw from the same Grotian intellectual wellspring

as do those in the English School. But other realists have made a theoretical contribution to our understanding of how under conditions of anarchy international cooperation may be enhanced. For some, this involves the application of game theory and its attendant assumptions of unified, rational state actors.⁴² For others the starting point is the systemic distribution of power and the implications of hegemonic leadership.

According to the theory of **hegemonic stability**, the hegemon, or dominant power, assumes leadership, perhaps for the entire globe, in dealing with a particular issue. Thus, Britain was seen as offering leadership in international monetary matters in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The gold standard associated with the international exchange of money was managed from London by the Bank of England. After World War II, the leadership role was finally assumed by the United States.⁴³

The absence of hegemony, or leadership, may result in chaos and instability, as happened in the 1930s when the United States was unwilling to assume leadership of the world economy and Britain, given its weakened position, was unable to do so. Competitive depreciation of currencies, erection of trade barriers, and a drastic reduction in the volume of trade were the outcome.

Although not all realists would subscribe to the view, stability is therefore seen by some as enhanced by a concentration of power in international politics; there is virtue in inequality among states. The hegemonic state or states benefit, but so too do other, less powerful states that find a more stable world advantageous. By contrast, the decline of hegemony and the consequent fragmentation of power in international politics is said to produce disorder—a breakdown or unraveling of previously constructed international agreements. Leadership provided by hegemonic states is understood as facilitating achievement of collaboration among states.

Theoretical and empirical controversy in the 1980s and 1990s was mirrored by public debate as to whether or not the United States was a hegemon in decline. The debate was sparked primarily by the work of the historian Paul Kennedy, who examined the rise and fall of great powers over some 500 years. The debate influenced (and was influenced by) discussion already underway—mainly among structural realists on how the United States might be able to adapt to hegemonic decline and how stability in the international economic system could be sustained after hegemony. Other writers, including realists, challenged the whole notion of U.S. decline in any absolute sense. After all, U.S. “decline” was *relative* only to the apparent rise of other actors such as Germany and Japan. Notwithstanding all of America’s economic problems at the time, this gradual “leveling” of relative standings still left the United States effectively in first position. Moreover, the breakup of the Soviet Union resulted in the United States being the only global superpower—a “unipolar” structure.⁴⁴

Since 2001, work has been done on the implications of nuclear primacy of the United States resulting from the decline in the Russian arsenal, the slow modernization of the Chinese arsenal, and the steady growth of U.S. nuclear counterforce capabilities. While scholars interested in national security have debated the implications for crisis stability, force vulnerability, and the meaning of deterrence in the current environment, an equally important question is: Does nuclear primacy grant the United States real coercive leverage in political disputes? The question is applicable to not only U.S. relations with Russia and China, but also with Iran

and North Korea. Stated in terms of international relations theory, what can we anticipate in terms of international outcomes by relying on the realist assumption of the importance of varying distributions of capabilities?

REALISTS AND THEIR CRITICS

Realism: The Term Itself

What is perhaps most impressive about the realist image of international politics is its longevity. Although modifications, clarifications, additions, and methodological innovations have been made down through the years, the core elements have remained basically intact.

If realism represents a “realistic” image of international politics—one represented as close to the reality of how things *are* (not necessarily how things *ought* to be), what does that say about competing images? Are they by definition “unrealistic”? In debate and discourse, labels are important. A good example of this involves the period between World War I and World War II during which realists were challenged by advocates of the League of Nations, world federalism, or peace through international law. Many of these individuals came to be known as “idealists” or “utopians,” the latter term used by E. H. Carr in his *Twenty Years’ Crisis*.

The very labels attached to these competing images of world order obviously put the so-called idealists at a disadvantage. Realists could claim that they were dealing with the world as it actually functioned. The idealists, on the other hand, were supposedly more concerned with what ought to be. “Yes,” a realist might say, “I too wish the world were a more harmonious place, but that unfortunately is not the case.” Those persons who were placed in the idealist camp certainly did not choose this particular label for themselves. Who did? The realists. By so doing, the opposition was stripped of a certain amount of legitimacy. Idealism conjured up images of impractical professors, unsophisticated peace advocates, and utopian schemes.

Realists would respond that realism should be taken at face value; it is an appropriate term precisely because its basic tenets in fact closely approximate the world as it is. This is nothing of which to be ashamed. The longevity of the realist tradition is not simply a function of the expropriation of a particular label but a result of realism’s inherent descriptive, explanatory, and predictive strengths.

Another reason for the longevity of realism is that this particular image of the world most closely approximates the image held by practitioners of statecraft. Realism has always had strong policy-prescriptive components, as we have already noted. Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, for example, was expressly presented as a guide for the ruler. Nor is it mere coincidence that some of the best-known American political scientists who have held national security advisor positions in the White House—Henry A. Kissinger in the Nixon-Ford years, Brent Scowcroft in the Ford and George H.W. Bush administrations, Zbigniew Brzezinski in the Carter years, and Condoleezza Rice in the George W. Bush administration—are self-professed (or easily classified as) realists. Indeed, the realist as academic speaks much the same language as the realist as statesman: power, national interest, diplomacy, and force.

Some argue, however, that realist writers help to perpetuate the very world they analyze. By describing the world in terms of violence, duplicity, and war, and then providing advice to statesmen as to how they should act, such realists are justifying one particular conception of international relations. Realism becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Even efforts to place realism on a stronger theoretical foundation (as in structural realism or neorealism) that favor explanation over policy prescription have the same effect. Critics contend that such realists suffer from a lack of imagination and an inability to consider seriously alternative conceptions of world politics and how these might be achieved.

The realist response is that there is nothing inherently wrong with being policy relevant and helping leaders navigate through dangerous waters. Advice based on wishful thinking and questionable assessments of international forces and trends could lead to disastrous policies, particularly if one is the lone “idealist” leader in a world of realists. Moreover, most criticism is understood to be based on a selective reading of realists, ignoring their genuine concern not only with the causes of war but also with how peace can be achieved or maintained. Finally, not all realists would claim to be particularly interested in providing advice to statesmen. They would rather use realist assumptions and insights to develop better theories of international politics. Being policy relevant or ingratiating oneself with political leaders is not the goal for these realists who merely entertain the scholarly goal of explaining how the world functions.

The System and Determinism

As we have seen, the concept of system is critical to many realist writers. Whether the rather simple notion of anarchy or the more elaborate formulations devised by contemporary realist authors, the system is deemed important for its impact on international actors. Some contend, however, that recent realist writers portray the system as having a life of its own. The “system” is seemingly independent of the wishes and actions of states, even though it is the result of the preferences and powers of these constituent states. Statesmen are granted too little autonomy and too little room to maneuver, and the decision-making process is seemingly devoid of human volition. Human agents are pawns of a bloodless system that looms over them, a structure whose functioning they do not understand and the mechanics of which they only dimly perceive. Statesmen are faced with an endless array of constraints and few opportunities. It is as if they are engaged in a global game, a game called power politics, and they are unable to change the rules even if they so desire. In sum, critics claim there is a fatalistic, deterministic, and pessimistic undercurrent to much of the realist work.

Realists differ among themselves as to how much explanatory emphasis one ought to give to the international system. There is disagreement as to what extent the system functions as an independent variable in influencing state behavior. For structural or neorealists, the system is more than the aggregation of state interactions. Rather, it represents a material structure that does indeed influence the behavior of states that are part of the system. It is these scholars who have drawn the most criticism, but they reject the charge that they are structural determinists who ignore actors operating at the unit, or state, level of analysis. One realist who

argues that a systemic theory of international politics is composed of “the structure of the system and its interacting units,” notes that

if structure influences without determining, then one must ask how and to what extent the structure of a realm accounts for outcomes and how and to what extent the units [i.e., states] account for outcomes. Structure has to be studied in its own right as do units.

Another realist categorically states that “no neorealist that I have read argues that political structure determines all behavior.”⁴⁵ As noted earlier, a number of so-called defensive realists have explicitly introduced unit or non-system variables to explain instances where states do not seem to be acting in accordance with what a purely system-structure perspective would lead one to expect.

Consistent with Arnold Wolfers, Hans Morgenthau, Henry Kissinger, and others of more recent vintage, traditional or classical realists have often made the distinction between imperialist, revolutionary, or revisionist states on the one hand, and status-quo powers interested in maintaining their own position in a relatively constant regional or global order on the other. More recently, “neoclassical realists” such as Randall Schweller, while appreciating the insights of neorealism, have attempted to incorporate international institutions and explanatory factors at the state-society level of analysis. Similarly, still other realists have examined relations among states (or the interactions level of analysis) that analytically fall between the level of system structure and the level of state and society—arms racing and arms control, and alliance behavior (balancing or bandwagoning). Such factors, some argue, will affect the stability of either bipolar or multipolar systems and, consequently, the possibility of moving toward a different future, perhaps a more peaceful world.⁴⁶

As these examples indicate, realists differ on the extent to which statesmen impose themselves on events, or vice versa. No realist is completely determinist or voluntarist or exclusively emphasizes structure or agent. It is not a matter of either-or, but rather varying assessments as to how strong are the constraints placed on statesmen and how much room leaders have to maneuver.

Realists and the State

The state is the centerpiece of realist work. Few persons would disagree as to the importance of the state in international affairs. The criticism, however, is that realists are so obsessed with the state that they ignore other actors and other issues not directly related to the maintenance of state security. Other non-state actors—multinational corporations, banks, terrorists, and international organizations—are either excluded, downplayed, or trivialized in the realist perspective. Furthermore, given the national security prism through which realists view the world, other concerns such as the socioeconomic gap between rich and poor societies, international pollution, and the implications of globalization rarely make the realist agenda. At best, such issues are dealt with in a derivative manner. A preoccupation with national security and the state by definition relegates other issues to secondary importance, if not banning them entirely from any serious realist agenda.

Realists counter that simply because non-state actors are not dealt with in depth does not mean that they are considered irrelevant. Political scientists, one

realist notes, should avoid slipping “into thinking that what an author fails to concentrate his attention upon, he takes to be inconsequential.” Similarly, another realist has stated that to argue “that the state . . . is the principal actor in international relations does not deny the existence of other individual and collective actors.”⁴⁷

Second, realists contend that theories are constructed to answer certain questions and to explain certain types of international behavior and outcomes. As a result, they purposely limit the types of actors analyzed. A theory concerned with explaining state behavior naturally focuses on states, not multinational corporations or terrorist groups. Similarly, a concern with national security issues by definition makes it unlikely that global welfare and humanitarian issues will receive the same degree of attention.

Finally, some justify focusing on the state on normative grounds. Many scholars, for example, are concerned with how unbridled arms races and military spending contribute to international tension, devastating regional wars, and socioeconomic deprivation. Because it is almost exclusively states that spend this money to buy or produce military hardware, it makes sense to focus on them as the unit of analysis. Hence, far from being enamored of states, many realists are critical of these political entities that are deemed too important to be ignored.

Realists and the Balance of Power

Given the emphasis on the state and the concern with national security issues, we have seen how the concept of balance of power has played a dominant role in realist thought and theory. Although balance of power has been a constant theme in realist writings down through the centuries, it has also come in for a great deal of abuse. Balance of power has been criticized for creating definitional confusion. Hans Morgenthau, a realist himself, discerned at least four definitions: (1) a policy aimed at a certain state of affairs; (2) an objective or actual state of affairs; (3) an approximately equal distribution of power, as when a balance of power exists between the United States and the Soviet Union; and (4) any distribution of power including a preponderance of power, as when the balance of power shifts in favor of either superpower. Another critic found at least seven meanings of the term then in use—(1) distribution of power, (2) equilibrium, (3) hegemony, (4) stability and peace, (5) instability and war, (6) power politics generally, and (7) a universal law of history.⁴⁸ Indeed, one is left with the question that if the balance of power means so many different things, can it really mean anything?

Balance of power has also been criticized for leading to war as opposed to preventing it, serving as a poor guide for statesmen, and functioning as a propaganda tool to justify defense spending and foreign adventures. Despite these constant attacks and continual reformulations of the meaning of the term, balance of power remains a crucial concept in the realist vocabulary.

At times, it has appeared that the harshest critics of balance of power as a concept have been the realists themselves. All of these criticisms have been acknowledged and some deemed valid. Attempts have been made, however, to clear up misconceptions and misinterpretations of balance of power, placing it on a more solid conceptual footing. One such effort beginning in the 1970s was made by Kenneth Waltz.⁴⁹ Even his formulation, however, was not without its critics,

as Waltz soon replaced the late Hans Morgenthau as lightning rod drawing criticism to the realist and structural-realist projects. In fact, the debate between Waltz and his critics has been ongoing for more than three decades—the latest rounds involving neoliberal institutionalist, constructivist, critical theory, and postmodern challenges. (For further discussion, see the précis to the Waltz article appended to this chapter.)

Realism and Change

Given the realist view of the international system, the role of the state, and balance-of-power politics, critics suggest that very little possibility is left for the fundamental and peaceful transformation of international politics. Realists, claim the critics, at best offer analysis aimed at understanding how international stability is achieved, but nothing approaching true peace. Realist stability reflects a world bristling with weapons, forever on the verge of violent conflict and war. Alternative world futures—scenarios representing a real alternative to the dismal Hobbesian world—are rarely discussed or taken seriously. The timeless quality of international politics, its repetitious nature and cycles of war, and a world in which the strong do what they will and the weak do as they must, dominate the realist image. We are given little information, let alone any hope, say the critics, as to how meaningful and peaceful change can occur and thus help us escape from the security dilemma.

Critics assert that realists simply assume state interests, but tell us little about how states come to define their interests, or the processes by which those interests are redefined. Interests are not simply “out there” waiting to be discovered, but are constructed through social interaction. Alexander Wendt and other constructivists discussed in Chapter 6 claim that international anarchy is what states make of it—interests not being exogenous or given to states, but actually constructed subjectively by them.⁵⁰

The issue of change, of course, is intimately connected to that of determinism and to what was referred to in Chapter 1 as the **agent-structure** problem. Although power politics and the state are central to all realist analyses, this does not mean that fundamental change is impossible or that change is limited to war and the cyclical rise and fall of states. Robert Gilpin argues that

the state is the principal actor in that the nature of the state and the patterns of relations among states are the most important determinants of the character of international relations at any given moment. This argument does not presume that states need always be the principal actors, nor does it presume that the nature of the state need always be the same and that the contemporary nation-state is the ultimate form of political organization.

What separates realists from some other writers on the question of system change, however, is a belief that “if the nation-state is to disappear . . . it will do so through age-old political processes and not as idealists would wish through a transcendence of politics itself.”⁵¹ Hence, realists claim that fundamental change *is* possible and is taken into consideration in their work. Once again, however, the strength of this view varies substantially depending on the author under consideration.

Realism: The Entire Enterprise

Critics of realism have always felt that they have been faced with a difficult task because the image comes close to approaching an impregnable edifice seemingly unscathed by years of criticism. Indeed, scholars who at one time in their careers struggled to devise alternative approaches based on alternative images of international politics have in some instances given up the quest, become converts, or resigned themselves to modifying existing realist explanatory frameworks.

Critics are faced with several problems. First, as noted earlier, given realism's affinity to the real world of policy making, this particular image of the world is automatically imbued with a certain degree of attractiveness and legitimacy. It represents the world out there, not some ivory tower perspective on human events. The realist perspective is the accepted wisdom of many, if not most foreign policy establishments—even those outside the northern hemisphere where leaders more often than not speak the language of realism as a result of concern over the survival of their regimes and states. Within the halls of academe, realism also has great attractiveness; “peace studies” programs sometimes find it advantageous to change the title to “security and conflict studies” in order to generate student interest. Realism can be as seductive to the academic professional as it can be to the student.

Second, realism is also seductive in that it has been given an increasingly scientific face. Earlier criticisms of the realist literature were very often based on the contention that such concepts as balance of power had less to do with theory building and more to do with ideology and self-justification of one particular approach to conducting international relations. Much of the classical realist work was, therefore, considered “unscientific”—insight without evidence. But many defensive and offensive realists have cast their hunches and insights in the form of hypotheses, testable either quantitatively or with nonquantitative indicators. The work is better grounded scientifically and placed within the context of the positivist view of how we comprehend reality. The positivist approach to knowledge remains prominent in the social as in the natural sciences. Indeed, in some circles any image of international politics that can be presented in the cloak of positivism is immediately granted a certain stature above those that do not.

What realists see as a virtue—a positivist orientation—is viewed by postmodernists and others as erroneous. The heart of their perspective on realism goes to the question of what is this “knowable reality” of international relations that realists claim to be true. This involves serious consideration of the underlying issues of ontology (how we see the essence of things as in the nature of the actors and the processes in which they engage), epistemology (verification of knowledge claims—how we know what we know), and methodology (modes of research and analysis). Is reality simply “out there” waiting to be discovered? Or is reality constructed, for example, by discourse and hence realism is best viewed as simply another perspective or construction of how the world works?

In conclusion, a reminder concerning criticism of any image or interpretive understanding: It is not particularly difficult to find fault with the work of individual theorists and then blanket an entire approach for the supposed sins of an individual author. As this chapter illustrates, although realists may find common

ground in terms of basic assumptions and key international actors, there are differences between classical realists and structural realists, and, in turn, offensive and defensive realists. Realists of any persuasion may differ in a number of important respects, such as methods they use, levels of analysis they choose, and what they assume about the ability of decisionmakers to influence international outcomes. That is why it is imperative to refer to, and read from, the original sources.

NOTES

1. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 4th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1966), 25.
2. *Ibid.*, 5.
3. See the suggested readings for specific works by these authors.
4. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (Harmondsworth, England, and New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 49.
5. *Ibid.*, 402.
6. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapter XV, any edition.
7. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Michael Oakeshott (New York and London: Collier Macmillan, 1974). These classic citations are drawn from Book 1, Chapter 13.
8. *Ibid.*, Book 1, Chapter 15, 113.
9. *Ibid.*, Book 1, Chapter 13, 101.
10. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, pp. 4–11.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
12. Stanley Hoffmann, “Weighing the Balance of Power,” *Foreign Affairs* 50, 4 (July 1972): 618–43.
13. John H. Herz, “Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 5, 2 (January 1950): 157–80.
14. J. J. Rousseau, “A Discussion on the Origins of Inequality,” in *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1950), 235–38. Kenneth N. Waltz develops the stag hunt allegory in his *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 165–71. For a critique of Waltz’s interpretation of Rousseau, see Stanley Hoffmann, “Rousseau on War and Peace,” *American Political Science Review* 57, 2 (June 1963): 317–33.
15. For a discussion of games such as stag hunt, prisoner’s dilemma, deadlock, and chicken, see Robert Axelrod and Robert O. Keohane, “Achieving Cooperation Under Anarchy,” *World Politics* 38, 1 (October 1985): 226–54.
16. See Robert Powell, “Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory,” *American Political Science Review* 85 (1991): 1303–20.
17. Reprinted in Fred A. Sondermann, David S. McClellan, and William C. Olson, eds., *The Theory and Practice of International Relations*, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1979), 120.
18. Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored: The Politics of Conservatism in a Revolutionary Age* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), 317–18.
19. Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, 209.
20. *Ibid.*, 204.
21. Ernst B. Haas, “On Systems and International Regimes,” *World Politics* 27, 2 (January 1975), 151.
22. This is a direct quote from Kenneth Waltz at a roundtable at the Annual Meeting, American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., August–September 2005.
23. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 161 and 519, respectively.

24. Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World," *Daedalus* 93 (Summer 1964): 881–909; Karl W. Deutsch and J. David Singer, "Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability," *World Politics* 16, 3 (April 1964): 390–406.
25. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, "Systemic Polarization and the Occurrence and Duration of War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 22, 2 (June 1978): 245, 246. See also Michael D. Wallace, *War and Rank Among Nations* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1973).
26. See, for example, Randall L. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Edward Mansfield, *Power, Trade, and War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Dale C. Copeland, "Neorealism and the Myth of Bipolar Stability: Toward a New Dynamic Realist Theory of Major War," *Security Studies* 5, 3 (Spring 1996): 29–89. Discussion and references to power-transition and power cycle theories are later in this chapter.
27. See Kenneth N. Waltz, *Realism and International Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), x and xiv. Cf. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security*; 18, 2 (Fall 1994): 44–79 and John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15, 1 (Summer 1990): 5–56. See also Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Powers Will Arise," *International Security* 17, 4 (1993): 5–51; Michael Mastanduno, "Preserving the Unipolar Moment: Realist Theory and US Grand Strategy After the Cold War," *International Security* 21, 4 (1997): 49–88. For a contrasting view, see William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Bipolar World," *International Security* 24, 1 (1999): 5–41.
28. The theoretical foundation of defensive realism is found in Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, 30, 2 (January 1978): 167–214. See also Charles Glaser, "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help," *International Security* 19, 3 (Winter 1994/95): 50–90; Jack Snyder, *Myth of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).
29. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001).
30. For a recent comparison of the conceptions of balance of power of Morgenthau, Waltz, Mearsheimer, and Hedley Bull, see Richard Little, *The Balance of Power in International Relations: Metaphors, Myths, and Models* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
31. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Foreign Policy and Democratic Politics: The American and British Experience* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967).
32. Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987) and his *Revolutions and War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996). See also Michael N. Barnett and Jack S. Levy, "Domestic Sources of Alliances and Alignments: The Case of Egypt, 1962–73," *International Organization* 45, 3 (Summer 1991): 369–95; Steven R. David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics* 43, 2 (January 1991): 233–55; Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization* 44, 2 (Spring 1990): 137–68.
33. Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).
34. Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984).
35. Dale Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), p. 15.
36. See the works by Singer and Richardson as listed under "On Power, War, and Peace" under Suggested Readings.
37. Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 3, 10. For other works on power transition, see the works listed under "On Power, War, and Peace" under Suggested Readings.

38. George Modelski, "The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, 2 (April 1978): 214–35. The quote is on p. 217. Notice that Modelski does not describe the international system as being anarchic. Although a central authority is lacking, order and authority do exist. It is Modelski's emphasis on the primacy of political factors that places him within the context of the realist as opposed to the economic-structuralist image.
39. *Ibid.*, 235.
40. Ronald L. Tammen, Jacek Kugler, et al., *Power Transitions* (New York and London: Chatham House Publishers, 2000).
41. See, for example, Jack S. Levy, "Theories of General War," *World Politics* 37, 3 (April 1985): 344–74; Nathaniel Beck, "The Illusion of Cycles in International Relations," and Joshua S. Goldstein, "The Possibility of Cycles in International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly* 35, 4 (December 1991): 455–80.
42. See the special issue of *World Politics* 38, 1 (October 1985), edited by Kenneth Oye; R. Harrison Wagner, "The Theory of Games and the Problem of International Cooperation," *American Political Science Review* 70, 2 (June 1983): 330–46; Robert Jervis, "Realism, Game Theory, and Cooperation," *World Politics* 40, 3 (April 1988): 317–49; Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).
43. Robert O. Keohane, "The Theory of Hegemonic Stability and Changes in International Economic Regimes, 1967–1977," in Ole R. Holsti, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alexander L. George, eds., *Change in the International System* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 131–62. Charles P. Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929–1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Robert Gilpin, *U.S. Power and the Multinational Corporation* (New York: Basic Books, 1975).
44. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987). Cf. the earlier work of the economist Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Henry R. Nau, *The Myth of America's Decline* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); and Samuel P. Huntington, "The U.S.—Decline or Renewal?" *Foreign Affairs* 67, 2 (Winter 1988/89): 76–96.
45. The first realist we cite is Kenneth N. Waltz, "Letter to the Editor," *International Organization* 36, 3 (Summer 1982): 680, which cites his *Theory of International Politics*, 78 and the other is Robert G. Gilpin, "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism," *International Organization* 38, 2 (Spring 1984): 302.
46. Randall L. Schweller and David Priess, "A Tale of Two Realisms: Expanding the Institutions Debate," *Mershon International Studies Review* 41, supplement 1 (May 1997): 1–33, Glenn H. Snyder, "Process Variables in Neorealist Theory," in *Realism: Restatements and Renewal*, ed. Benjamin Frankel, special issue of *Security Studies* 5, 3 (Spring 1996): 167–92, 88.
47. Waltz, "Letter to the Editor," 680; Gilpin, "Richness of Political Realism," 300.
48. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 161; Ernst B. Haas, "The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept or Propaganda?" *World Politics* 5, no. 2 (July 1953): 442–77.
49. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.
50. Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
51. Gilpin, "Richness of Political Realism," 299, 300.

SELECTED READINGS

The Melian Dialogue

THUCYDIDES

OVERVIEW

This classic contains the essential ingredients of the realist perspective described by Thucydides albeit in its boldest and most extreme form. The Athenians have no interest in whether the demands they make on the Melians are just or moral. In the only section of the entire book in which the dialogue is presented as a play, Thucydides raises the important question of the role of justice in international relations. In a classic statement, the Athenians emphasize the overriding importance of power: “The strong do what they have the power to do, and the weak accept what they have to accept.” From reading Thucydides we learn quite a lot about the ancient world he knew—insights applicable today concerning honor, justice, perception, neutrality, self-interest, alliances, balance of power, capabilities, and the uncertainty of power calculations.

Thucydides has been criticized as an advocate of harsh and brutal wartime policies, one who rationalized such events as he described in “The Melian Dialogue.” This is patently not the case. Thucydides favored the democracy of the Golden Age of Pericles. In fact, the second half of The History of the Peloponnesian War is a description of the degeneration of Athenian democracy and the resulting fanaticism that turned the war from a defensive effort to a war of conquest. “The Melian Dialogue” reflects the latter phase of the war and should not be viewed as a personal preference on the part of Thucydides. It is also a caution as to how the extreme pursuit of a foreign policy lacking in any concern for justice can eventually have a corrosive effect on democracy at home. It is not a coincidence that immediately following “The Melian Dialogue,” he places his discussion of the launching of the Sicilian expedition. The same arrogant attitude and hubris exhibited at Melos is evident in the decision to try to subdue distant Sicily, which ended in a total disaster for the Athenian expeditionary military force. Thucydides therefore subtly makes the case that international relations must rest on elements of both justice and power, a point made by many twentieth-century realists such as Carr and Morgenthau. If an international system is devoid of any sense of justice, international order is lacking and you end up with a true Hobbesian “war of all against all.”

“The Melian Dialogue” from *History of the Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides, translated by Rex Warner, pp. 400–408. Copyright 1954 by Penguin Books Ltd. Reprinted by permission of Penguin Books Ltd.

Questions to Keep in Mind

1. How do the Melians make the case that a concern for justice can actually work in favor of the self-interest of the Athenians?
2. How do the Athenians make the case that a Melian reliance on hope for the future and a trust in fortune undercuts the self-interests of the Melians?
3. What role does the concept of power play in the dialogue?

Next summer Alcibiades sailed to Argos with twenty ships and seized 300 Argive citizens who were still suspected of being pro-Spartan. These were put by the Athenians into the nearby islands under Athenian control.

The Athenians also made an expedition against the island of Melos. They had thirty of their own ships, six from Chios, and two from Lesbos; 1,200 hoplites, 300 archers, and twenty mounted archers, all from Athens; and about 1,500 hoplites from the allies and the islanders.

The Melians are a colony from Sparta. They had refused to join the Athenian empire like the other islanders, and at first had remained neutral without helping either side; but afterwards when the Athenians had brought force to bear on them by laying waste their land, they had become open enemies of Athens.

Now the generals Cleomedes, the son of Lycomedes, and Tisias, the son of Tisimachus, encamped with the above force in Melian territory and, before doing any harm to the land, first of all sent representatives to negotiate. The Melians did not invite these representatives to speak before the people, but asked them to make the statement for which they had come in front of the governing body and the few. The Athenian representatives then spoke as follows:

“So we are not to speak before the people, no doubt in case the mass of the people should hear once and for all and without interruption an argument from us which is both persuasive and incontrovertible, and should so be led astray. This, we realize, is your motive in bringing us here to speak before the few. Now suppose that you who sit here should make assurance doubly sure. Suppose that you, too, should refrain from dealing with every point in detail in a set speech, and should instead interrupt us whenever we say something controversial and deal with that before going on to the next point? Tell us first whether you approve of this suggestion of ours.”

The Council of the Melians replied as follows:

“No one can object to each of us putting forward our own views in a calm atmosphere. That is perfectly reasonable. What is scarcely consistent with such a proposal is the present threat, indeed

the certainty, of your making war on us. We see that you have come prepared to judge the argument yourselves, and that the likely end of it all will be either war, if we prove that we are in the right, and so refuse to surrender, or else slavery.”

Athenians: If you are going to spend the time in enumerating your suspicions about the future, or if you have met here for any other reason except to look the facts in the face and on the basis of these facts to consider how you can save your city from destruction, there is no point in our going on with this discussion. If, however, you will do as we suggest, then we will speak on.

Melians: It is natural and understandable that people who are placed as we are should have recourse to all kinds of arguments and different points of view. However, you are right in saying that we are met together here to discuss the safety of our country and, if you will have it so, the discussion shall proceed on the lines that you have laid down.

Athenians: Then we on our side will use no fine phrases saying, for example, that we have a right to our empire because we defeated the Persians, or that we have come against you now because of the injuries you have done us—a great mass of words that nobody would believe. And we ask you on your side not to imagine that you will influence us by saying that you, though a colony of Sparta, have not joined Sparta in the war, or that you have never done us any harm. Instead we recommend that you should try to get what it is possible for you to get, taking into consideration what we both really do think; since you know as well as we do that, when these matters are discussed by practical people, the standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel and that in fact the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept.

Melians: Then in our view (since you force us to leave justice out of account and to confine ourselves to self-interest)—in our view it is at any rate useful that you should not destroy a principle that is to the

general good of all men—namely, that in the case of all who fall into danger there should be such a thing as fair play and just dealing, and that such people should be allowed to use and to profit by arguments that fall short of a mathematical accuracy. And this is a principle which affects you as much as anybody, since your own fall would be visited by the most terrible vengeance and would be an example to the world.

Athenians: As for us, even assuming that our empire does come to an end, we are not despondent about what would happen next. One is not so much frightened of being conquered by a power which rules over others, as Sparta does (not that we are concerned with Sparta now), as of what would happen if a ruling power is attacked and defeated by its own subjects. So far as this point is concerned, you can leave it to us to face the risks involved. What we shall do now is to show you that it is for the good of our own empire that we are here and that it is for the preservation of your city that we shall say what we are going to say. We do not want any trouble in bringing you into our empire, and we want you to be spared for the good both of yourselves and of ourselves.

Melians: And how could it be just as good for us to be the slaves as for you to be the masters?

Athenians: You, by giving in, would save yourselves from disaster; we, by not destroying you, would be able to profit from you.

Melians: So you would not agree to our being neutral, friends instead of enemies, but allies of neither side?

Athenians: No, because it is not so much your hostility that injures us; it is rather the case that, if we were on friendly terms with you, our subjects would regard that as a sign of weakness in us, whereas your hatred is evidence of our power.

Melians: Is that your subjects' idea of fair play—that no distinction should be made between people who are quite unconnected with you and people who are mostly your own colonists or else rebels whom you have conquered?

Athenians: So far as right and wrong are concerned they think that there is no difference between the two, that those who still preserve their independence do so because they are strong, and that if we fail to attack them it is because we are afraid. So that by conquering you we shall increase not only the size but the security of our empire. We rule the sea and you are islanders, and weaker islanders too than the others; it is therefore particularly important that you should not escape.

Melians: But do you think there is security for you in what we suggest? For here again, since you will not let us mention justice, but tell us to give in to your interests, we, too, must tell you what our interests are and, if yours and ours happen to coincide, we must try to persuade you of the fact. Is it not certain that you will make enemies of all states who are at present neutral, when they see what is happening here and naturally conclude that in course of time you will attack them too? Does not this mean that you are strengthening the enemies you have already and are forcing others to become your enemies even against their intentions and their inclinations?

Athenians: As a matter of fact we are not so much frightened of states on the continent. They have their liberty, and this means that it will be a long time before they begin to take precautions against us. We are more concerned about islanders like yourselves, who are still unsubdued, or subjects who have already become embittered by the constraint which our empire imposes on them. These are the people who are most likely to act in a reckless manner and to bring themselves and us, too, into the most obvious danger.

Melians: Then surely, if such hazards are taken by you to keep your empire and by your subjects to escape from it, we who are still free would show ourselves great cowards and weaklings if we failed to face everything that comes rather than submit to slavery.

Athenians: No, not if you are sensible. This is no fair fight, with honour on one side and shame on the other. It is rather a question of saving your lives and not resisting those who are far too strong for you.

Melians: Yet we know that in war fortune sometimes makes the odds more level than could be expected from the difference in numbers of the two sides. And if we surrender, then all our hope is lost at once, whereas, so long as we remain in action, there is still a hope that we may yet stand upright.

Athenians: Hope, that comforter in danger! If one already has solid advantages to fall back upon, one can indulge in hope. It may do harm, but will not destroy one. But hope is by nature an expensive commodity, and those who are risking their all on one cast find out what it means only when they are already ruined; it never fails them in the period when such a knowledge would enable them to take precautions. Do not let this happen to you, you who are weak and whose fate depends on a single movement of the scale. And do not be like those people who, as so commonly happens, miss the chance of

saving themselves in a human and practical way, and, when every clear and distinct hope has left them in their adversity, turn to what is blind and vague, to prophecies and oracles and such things which by encouraging hope lead men to ruin.

Melians: It is difficult, and you may be sure that we know it, for us to oppose your power and fortune, unless the terms be equal. Nevertheless we trust that the gods will give us fortune as good as yours, because we are standing for what is right against what is wrong; and as for what we lack in power, we trust that it will be made up for by our alliance with the Spartans, who are bound, if for no other reason, than for honour's sake, and because we are their kinsmen, to come to our help. Our confidence, therefore, is not so entirely irrational as you think.

Athenians: So far as the favour of the gods is concerned, we think we have as much right to that as you have. Our aims and our actions are perfectly consistent with the beliefs men hold about the gods and with the principles which govern their own conduct. Our opinion of the gods and our knowledge of men lead us to conclude that it is a general and necessary law of nature to rule whatever one can. This is not a law that we made ourselves, nor were we the first to act upon it when it was made. We found it already in existence, and we shall leave it to exist forever among those who come after us. We are merely acting in accordance with it, and we know that you or anybody else with the same power as ours would be acting in precisely the same way. And therefore, so far as the gods are concerned, we see no good reason why we should fear to be at a disadvantage. But with regard to your views about Sparta and your confidence that she, out of a sense of honour, will come to your aid, we must say that we congratulate you on your simplicity but do not envy you your folly. In matters that concern themselves for their own constitution the Spartans are quite remarkably good; as for their relations with others, that is a long story, but it can be expressed shortly and clearly by saying that of all people we know the Spartans are most conspicuous for believing that what they like doing is honourable and what suits their interests is just. And this kind of attitude is not going to be of much help to you in your absurd quest for safety at the moment.

Melians: But this is the very point where we can feel most sure. Their own self-interest will make them refuse to betray their own colonists, the Melians, for that would mean losing the confidence of

their friends among the Hellenes and doing good to their enemies.

Athenians: You seem to forget that if one follows one's self-interest one wants to be safe, whereas the path of justice and honour involves one in danger. And, where danger is concerned, the Spartans are not, as a rule, very venturesome.

Melians: But we think that they would even endanger themselves for our sake and count the risk more worth taking than in the case of others, because we are so close to the Peloponnese that they could operate more easily, and because they can depend on us more than on others, since we are of the same race and share the same feelings.

Athenians: Good will shown by the party that is asking for help does not mean security for the prospective ally. What is looked for is a positive preponderance of power in action. And the Spartans pay attention to this point even more than others do. Certainly they distrust their own native resources so much that when they attack a neighbour they bring a great army of allies with them. It is hardly likely therefore that, while we are in control of the sea, they will cross over to an island.

Melians: But they still might send others. The Cretan sea is a wide one, and it is harder for those who control it to intercept others than for those who want to slip through to do so safely. And even if they were to fail in this, they would turn against your own land and against those of your allies left unvisited by Brasidas. So, instead of troubling about a country which has nothing to do with you, you will find trouble nearer home, among your allies, and in your own country.

Athenians: It is a possibility, something that has in fact happened before. It may happen in your case, but you are well aware that the Athenians have never yet relinquished a single siege operation through fear of others. But we are somewhat shocked to find that, though you announced your intention of discussing how you could preserve yourselves, in all this talk you have said absolutely nothing which could justify a man in thinking that he could be preserved. Your chief points are concerned with what you hope may happen in the future, while your actual resources are too scanty to give you a chance of survival against the forces that are opposed to you at this moment. You will therefore be showing an extraordinary lack of common sense if, after you have asked us to retire from this meeting, you still fail to reach a conclusion wiser than anything you have mentioned so far. Do

not be led astray by a false sense of honour—a thing which often brings men to ruin when they are faced with an obvious danger that somehow affects their pride. For in many cases men have still been able to see the dangers ahead of them, but this thing called dishonour, this word, by its own force of seduction, has drawn them into a state where they have surrendered to an idea, while in fact they have fallen voluntarily into irrevocable disaster, in dishonour that is all the more dishonourable because it has come to them from their own folly rather than their misfortune. You, if you take the right view, will be careful to avoid this. You will see that there is nothing disgraceful in giving way to the greatest city in Hellas when she is offering you such reasonable terms— alliance on a tribute-paying basis and liberty to enjoy your own property. And, when you are allowed to choose between war and safety, you will not be so insensitively arrogant as to make the wrong choice. This is the safe rule—to stand up to one’s equals, to behave with deference towards one’s superiors, and to treat one’s inferiors with moderation. Think it over again, then, when we have withdrawn from the meeting, and let this be a point that constantly recurs to your minds—that you are discussing the fate of your country, that you have only one country, and that its future for good or ill depends on this one single decision which you are going to make.

The Athenians then withdrew from the discussion. The Melians, left to themselves, reached a conclusion which was much the same as they had indicated in their previous replies. Their answer was as follows:

“Our decision, Athenians, is just the same as it was at first. We are not prepared to give up in a short moment the liberty which our city has enjoyed from its foundation for 700 years. We put our trust in the fortune that the gods will send and which has saved us up to now, and in the help of men—that is, of the Spartans; and so we shall try to save ourselves. But we invited you to allow us to be friends of yours and enemies to neither side, to make a treaty which shall be agreeable to both you and us, and so to leave our country.”

The Melians made this reply, and the Athenians, just as they were breaking off the discussion, said:

“Well, at any rate, judging from this decision of yours, you seem to us quite unique in your ability to consider the future as something more certain than what is before your eyes, and to see uncertainties as realities, simply because you would like them to be so. As you have staked most on and trusted most in

Spartans, luck, and hopes, so in all these you will find yourselves most completely deluded.”

The Athenian representatives then went back to the army, and the Athenian generals, finding that the Melians would not submit, immediately commenced hostilities and built a wall completely round the city of Melos, dividing the work out among the various states. Later they left behind a garrison of some of their own and some allied troops to blockade the place by land and sea, and with the greater part of their army returned home. The force left behind stayed on and continued with the siege.

About the same time the Argives invaded Phliasia and were ambushed by the Phliasians and the exiles from Argos, losing about eighty men.

Then, too, the Athenians at Pylos captured a great quantity of plunder from Spartan territory. Not even after this did the Spartans renounce the treaty and make war, but they issued a proclamation saying that any of their people who wished to do so were free to make raids on the Athenians. The Corinthians also made some attacks on the Athenians because of private quarrels of their own, but the rest of the Peloponnesians stayed quiet.

Meanwhile the Melians made a night attack and captured the part of the Athenian lines opposite the market-place. They killed some of the troops, and then, after bringing in corn and everything else useful that they could lay their hands on, retired again and made no further move, while the Athenians took measures to make their blockade more efficient in the future. So the summer came to an end.

In the following winter the Spartans planned to invade the territory of Argos, but when the sacrifices for crossing the frontier turned out unfavourably, they gave up the expedition. The fact that they had intended to invade made the Argives suspect certain people in their city, some of whom they arrested, though others succeeded in escaping.

About this same time the Melians again captured another part of the Athenian lines where there were only a few of the garrison on guard. As a result of this, another force came out afterwards from Athens under the command of Philocrates, the son of Demeas. Siege operations were now carried on vigorously and, as there was also some treachery from inside, the Melians surrendered unconditionally to the Athenians, who put to death all the men of military age whom they took, and sold the women and children as slaves. Melos itself they took over for themselves, sending out later a colony of 500 men.

On Princes and the Security of Their States

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

OVERVIEW

In this selection from The Prince, Machiavelli makes a number of his famous observations on how a prince should rule. Although a prince may not wish to be hated, Machiavelli argues: “It is much safer to be feared than to be loved, if one must choose.” Although the prince may be criticized for being harsh, this is acceptable to Machiavelli so long as the prince keeps his subjects united and loyal. These are the sorts of argument that have given Machiavellianism a negative connotation, but followers of Machiavelli would respond that the ultimate goal meant to justify particular policies is the security of the state, not just the security of an individual ruler.

Questions to Keep in Mind

1. What is Machiavelli’s basic view of human nature? Does this reflect or refute a basic realist precept?
2. Why is it safer for a ruler to be feared than to be loved by the citizens?
3. What role does cruelty play for leaders of armies?

On Things for Which Men, and Particularly Princes, Are Praised or Blamed

We now have left to consider what should be the manners and attitudes of a prince toward his subjects and his friends. As I know that many have written on this subject I feel that I may be held presumptuous in what I have to say, if in my comments I do not follow the lines laid down by others. Since, however, it has been my intention to write something which may be of use to the understanding reader, it has seemed wiser to me to follow the real truth of the matter rather than what we imagine it to be. For imagination has created many principalities and republics that have never been seen or known to have any real existence, for how we live is so different from how

we ought to live that he who studies what ought to be done rather than what is done will learn the way to his downfall rather than to his preservation. A man striving in every way to be good will meet his ruin among the great number who are not good. Hence it is necessary for a prince, if he wishes to remain in power, to learn how not to be good and to use his knowledge or refrain from using it as he may need.

Putting aside then the things imagined as pertaining to a prince and considering those that really do, I will say that all men, and particularly princes because of their prominence, when comment is made of them, are noted as having some characteristics deserving either praise or blame. One is accounted liberal, another stingy, to use a Tuscan term—for in our speech avaricious (*avaro*) is applied to such as

From Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated and edited by Thomas G. Bergin. Reprinted by permission.

are desirous of acquiring by rapine whereas stingy (*miserio*) is the term used for those who are reluctant to part with their own—one is considered bountiful, another rapacious; one cruel, another tenderhearted; one false to his word, another trustworthy; one effeminate and pusillanimous, another wild and spirited; one humane, another haughty; one lascivious, another chaste; one a man of integrity and another sly; one tough and another pliant; one serious and another frivolous; one religious and another skeptical, and so on. Everyone will agree, I know, that it would be a most praiseworthy thing if all the qualities accounted as good in the above enumeration were found in a Prince. But since they cannot be so possessed nor observed because of human conditions which do not allow of it, what is necessary for the prince is to be prudent enough to escape the infamy of such vices as would result in the loss of his state; as for the others which would not have that effect, he must guard himself from them as far as possible but if he cannot, he may overlook them as being of less importance. Further, he should have no concern about incurring the infamy of such vices without which the preservation of his state would be difficult. For, if the matter be well considered, it will be seen that some habits which appear virtuous, if adopted would signify ruin, and others that seem vices lead to security and the well-being of the prince.

Cruelty and Clemency and Whether It Is Better to Be Loved or Feared

Now to continue with the list of characteristics. It should be the desire of every prince to be considered merciful and not cruel, yet he should take care not to make poor use of his clemency. Cesare Borgia was regarded as cruel, yet his cruelty reorganized Romagna and united it in peace and loyalty. Indeed, if we reflect, we shall see that this man was more merciful than the Florentines who, to avoid the charge of cruelty, allowed Pistoia to be destroyed.¹ A prince should care nothing for the accusation of cruelty so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal; by making a very few examples he can be more truly merciful than those who through too much tender-heartedness allow disorders to arise whence come killings and rapine. For these offend an entire community, while the few executions ordered by the prince affect only a few individuals. For a new prince above all it is impossible not to earn a reputation for cruelty since new states are full of dangers. Virgil indeed has Dido

apologize for the inhumanity of her rule because it is new, in the words:

Res dura et regni novitas me talia cogunt Moliri et late fines custode tueri.

Nevertheless a prince should not be too ready to listen to talebearers nor to act on suspicion, nor should he allow himself to be easily frightened. He should proceed with a mixture of prudence and humanity in such a way as not to be made incautious by overconfidence nor yet intolerable by excessive mistrust.

Here the question arises; whether it is better to be loved than feared or feared than loved. The answer is that it would be desirable to be both but, since that is difficult, it is much safer to be feared than to be loved, if one must choose. For on men in general this observation may be made: they are ungrateful, fickle, and deceitful, eager to avoid dangers, and avid for gain, and while you are useful to them they are all with you, offering you their blood, their property, their lives, and their sons so long as danger is remote, as we noted above, but when it approaches they turn on you. Any prince, trusting only in their words and having no other preparations made, will fall to his ruin, for friendships that are bought at a price and not by greatness and nobility of soul are paid for indeed, but they are not owned and cannot be called upon in time of need. Men have less hesitation in offending a man who is loved than one who is feared, for love is held by a bond of obligation which, as men are wicked, is broken whenever personal advantage suggests it, but fear is accompanied by the dread of punishment which never relaxes.

Yet a prince should make himself feared in such a way that, if he does not thereby merit love, at least he may escape odium, for being feared and not hated may well go together. And indeed the prince may attain this end if he but respect the property and the women of his subjects and citizens. And if it should become necessary to seek the death of someone, he should find a proper justification and a public cause, and above all he should keep his hands off another's property, for men forget more readily the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony. Besides, pretexts for seizing property are never lacking, and when a prince begins to live by means of rapine he will always find some excuse for plundering others, and conversely pretexts for execution are rarer and are more quickly exhausted.

A prince at the head of his armies and with a vast number of soldiers under his command should give not the slightest heed if he is esteemed cruel, for

without such a reputation he will not be able to keep his army united and ready for action. Among the marvelous things told of Hannibal is that, having a vast army under his command made up of all kinds and races of men and waging war far from his country, he never allowed any dissension to arise either as between the troops and their leaders or among the troops themselves, and this both in times of good fortune and bad. This could only have come about through his most inhuman cruelty which, taken in conjunction with his great valor, kept him always an object of respect and terror in the eyes of his soldiers. And without the cruelty his other characteristics would not have achieved this effect. Thoughtless writers have admired his actions and at the same time deplored the cruelty which was the basis of them. As evidence of the truth of our statement that his other virtues would have been insufficient let us examine the case of Scipio, an extraordinary leader not only in his own day but for all recorded history. His army in Spain revolted and for no other reason than because of his kind-heartedness, which had allowed more license to his soldiery than military discipline properly permits. His policy was attacked

in the Senate by Fabius Maximus, who called him a corrupter of the Roman arms. When the Locrians had been mishandled by one of his lieutenants, his easy-going nature prevented him from avenging them or disciplining his officer, and it was à propos of this incident that one of the senators remarked, wishing to find an excuse for him, that there were many men who knew better how to avoid error themselves than to correct it in others. This characteristic of Scipio would have clouded his fame and glory had he continued in authority, but as he lived under the government of the Senate, its harmful aspect was hidden and it reflected credit on him.

Hence, on the subject of being loved or feared I will conclude that since love depends on the subjects, but the prince has it in his own hands to create fear, a wise prince will rely on what is his own, remembering at the same time that he must avoid arousing hatred, as we have said.

Note

1. By unchecked rioting between opposing factions (1502).

Of the Natural Condition of Mankind

THOMAS HOBBS

OVERVIEW

Hobbes analyzes why conflict and violence between individuals or states are to be expected. Although his focus in Leviathan is on domestic societies, his observations are also relevant to international politics and have had a major impact on realism. In the absence of a sovereign or central, superordinate authority, the anarchic world described by Hobbes is a rather dismal one in which the life of the individual is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” and “kings . . . because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators.”

From Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, introduction by Richard S. Peters. New York: Macmillan/Collier Books, 1962.

Questions to Keep in Mind

1. What are the principal causes of quarrels among human beings? How do they compare with the three causes identified by Thucydides (fear, honor, interest)?
2. What role does justice play in the world described by Hobbes?
3. What is the result of people living without a common power [Leviathan] to keep them in awe?

Men by Nature Equal Nature hath made men so equal, in the faculties of the body, and mind; as that though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body, or of quicker mind than another; yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable, as that one man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he. For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others, that are in the same danger with himself.

And as to the faculties of the mind, setting aside the arts grounded upon words, and especially that skill of proceeding upon general, and infallible rules, called science; which very few have, and but in few things; as being not a native faculty, born with us; nor attained, as prudence, while we look after somewhat else, I find yet a greater equality amongst men, than that of strength. For prudence, is but experience; which equal time, equally bestows on all men, in those things they equally apply themselves unto. That which may perhaps make such equality incredible, is but a vain conceit of one's own wisdom, which almost all men think they have in a greater degree, than the vulgar; that is, than all men but themselves, and a few others, whom by fame, or for concurring with themselves, they approve. For such is the nature of men, that howsoever they may acknowledge many others to be more witty, or more eloquent, or more learned; yet they will hardly believe there be many so wise as themselves; for they see their own wit at hand, and other men's at a distance. But this proveth rather that men are in that point equal, than unequal. For there is not ordinarily a greater sign of the equal distribution of any thing, than that every man is contented with his share.

From Equality Proceeds Diffidence From this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot

both enjoy they become enemies; and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only, endeavour to destroy, or subdue one another. And from hence it comes to pass, that where an invader hath no more to fear, than another man's single power; if one plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient seat, others may probably be expected to come prepared with forces united, to dispossess, and deprive him, not only of the fruit of his labour, but also of his life, or liberty. And the invader again is in the like danger of another.

From Diffidence War And from this diffidence of one another, there is no way for any man to secure himself, so reasonable, as anticipation; that is, by force, or wiles, to master the persons of all men he can, so long, till he see no other power great enough to endanger him: and this is no more than his own conservation requireth, and is generally allowed. Also because there be some, that taking pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest, which they pursue farther than their security requires; if others, that otherwise would be glad to be at ease within modest bounds, should not by invasion increase their power, they would not be able, long time, by standing only on their defence, to subsist. And by consequence, such augmentation of dominion over men being necessary to a man's conservation, it ought to be allowed him.

Again, men have no pleasure, but on the contrary a great deal of grief, in keeping company, where there is no power able to overawe them all. For every man looketh that his companion should value him, at the same rate he sets upon himself: and upon all signs of contempt, or undervaluing, naturally endeavours, as far as he dares, (which amongst them that have no common power to keep them in quiet, is far enough to make them destroy each other), to extort a greater value from his contempters, by damage; and from others, by the example.

So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory.

The first, maketh men invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third, for reputation. The first use violence, to make themselves masters of other men's persons, wives, children, and cattle; the second, to defend them; the third, for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their persons, or by reflection in their kindred, their friends, their nation, their profession, or their name.

Out of Civil States, There Is Always War of Every One against Every One Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man. For WAR, consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the will to content by battle is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of *time*, is to be considered in the nature of war; as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather, lieth not in a shower or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many days together: so the nature of war, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE.

The Incommodities of Such a War Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

It may seem strange to some man, that has not well weighed these things; that nature should thus dissociate, and render men apt to invade, and destroy one another; and he may therefore, not trusting to this inference, made from the passions, desire

perhaps to have the same confirmed by experience. Let him therefore consider with himself, when taking a journey, he arms himself, and seeks to go well accompanied; when going to sleep, he locks his doors; when even in his house he locks his chests; and this when he knows there be laws, and public officers, armed, to revenge all injuries shall be done him; what opinion he has of his fellow-subjects, when he rides armed; of his fellow citizens, when he locks his doors; and of his children, and servants, when he locks his chests. Does he not there as much accuse mankind by his actions, as I do by my words? But neither of us accuse man's nature in it. The desires, and other passions of man, are in themselves no sin. No more are the actions, that proceed from those passions, till they know a law that forbids them: which till laws be made they cannot know: nor can any law be made, till they have agreed upon the person that shall make it.

It may peradventure be thought, there was never such a time, nor condition of war as this; and I believe it was never generally so, over all the world: but there are many places, where they live so now. For the savage people in many places of America, except the government of small families, the concord whereof dependeth on natural lust, have no government at all; and live at this day in the brutish manner, as I said before. Howsoever, it may be perceived what manner of life there would be, where there were no common power to fear, by the manner of life, which men that have formerly lived under a peaceful government, use to degenerate into, in a civil war.

But though there had never been any time, wherein particular men were in a condition of war one against another; yet in all times, kings, and persons of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their forts, garrisons, and guns upon the frontiers of their kingdoms; and continual spies upon their neighbours; which is a posture of war. But because they uphold thereby, the industry of their subjects; there does not follow from it, that misery, which accompanies the liberty of particular men.

In Such a War Nothing Is Unjust To this war of every man, against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be unjust. The notions of

right and wrong, justice and injustice have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law: where no law, no injustice. Force, and fraud, are in war the two cardinal virtues. Justice, and injustice are none of the faculties neither of the body, nor mind. If they were, they might be in a man that were alone in the world, as well as his senses, and passions. They are qualities, that relate to men in society, not in solitude. It is consequent also to the same condition, that there be no propriety, no dominion, no *mine* and *thine* distinct; but only that to be every man's, that he can get: and for

so long, as he can keep it. And thus much for the ill condition, which man by mere nature is actually placed in; though with a possibility to come out of it, consisting partly in the passions, partly in his reason.

The Passions That Incline Men to Peace The passions that incline men to peace, are fear of death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them. And reason suggesteth convenient articles of peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement.

The State of War: Confederation as Means to Peace in Europe

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

OVERVIEW

Rousseau is of importance to students of international relations for a number of reasons, including his emphasis on the logic of anarchy and why this makes cooperation among states difficult to achieve. His famous analogy of the stag hunt, which illustrates the problem of achieving cooperative behavior, was summarized earlier in the text, and Kenneth Waltz provides his analysis in a subsequent reading. In this extract it is apparent that Rousseau is not entirely unsympathetic to the proposed Project for Perpetual Peace of the Abbé de Saint Pierre even as he sees it more as a pipe dream unlikely to be achieved. Rousseau doesn't fault the logic that interstate war is a byproduct of international anarchy, but finds fault in expectations that this condition can so easily be altered through such a peace project. In this regard, Rousseau sees advantages for each prince, state, and Europe as a whole, but if the advantages are so real, why won't this plan come about?

Material excerpted from "Appendix A: Rousseau's Unfinished Manuscript on 'The State of War' and Appendix C: Rousseau's 'Critique' of The Abbé de Saint-Pierre's *Project for Perpetual Peace*" by Jean-Jacques Rousseau from *Reading Rousseau in the Nuclear Age* by Grace G. Roosevelt. Used by permission of Temple University Press. © 1990 by Temple University. All Rights Reserved

Rousseau states that one problem is that ministers might have selfish reasons for encouraging princes to reject the plan—an individual level of analysis explanation. Most important, however, it is the “condition of absolute independence that draws sovereigns away from the rule of law.” In other words, war is a product of the social context within which the state finds itself—one in which there is no authority higher than the state itself.

Note how in the opening paragraph he draws a distinction between a civil state where individuals are subject to laws, but “as nations each enjoys the liberty of nature.” Like Hobbes, Rousseau thus recognizes the importance of what has come to be termed the underlying anarchy of international politics or the international system. At the same time, however, Rousseau emphatically disagrees with the adverse description Hobbes uses to describe the nature of human beings. It is the social context in which human beings or states as “persons” are immersed that influences or constrains their behavior, not their essential nature. Clearly the ontologies of Hobbes and Rousseau are at odds.

Questions to Keep in Mind

1. What is Rousseau’s view of Hobbes’s assertion that the state of nature is a state of war of every-one against everyone else?
2. How do the prince’s concerns for “relative power” undercut the possibility of a perpetual peace? How does this relate to the structural-realist perspective on international politics?
3. What role does the concept of “self-interest” play in Rousseau’s analysis? How does this relate to key realist assumptions?

When I reflect upon the condition of the human race, the first thing that I notice is a manifest contradiction in its constitution. As individuals we live in a civil state and are subject to laws, but as nations each enjoys the liberty of nature. The resulting continual vacillation makes our situation worse than if these distinctions were unknown. For living simultaneously in the social order and in the state of nature, we are subjected to the evils of both without gaining the security of either. The perfections of the social order consists, it is true, in the conjunction of force and law. But for this it is necessary that law direct force. According to the notion that princes must be absolutely independent, however, force alone, which appears as law to its own citizens and “raison d’ état” to foreigners, deprives the latter of the power and the former of the will to resist, so that in the end the vain name of justice serves only to safeguard violence.

As for what is called the law of nations, it is clear that without any real sanction these laws are only illusions that are more tenuous even than the notion of natural law. The latter at least addresses

itself to the heart of individuals, whereas decisions based on the law of nations, having no other guarantee than the utility of the one who submits to them, are respected only as long as those decisions confirm one’s own self-interest. In the double condition in which we find ourselves, by doing too much or too little for whichever of the two systems we happen to prefer, we in fact have done nothing at all, and thereby have put ourselves in the worst possible position. This, it seems to me, is the true origin of public calamities.

For a moment, let us put these ideas in opposition to the horrible system of Hobbes. We will find, contrary to his absurd doctrine, that far from the state of war being natural to man, war is born out of peace, or at least out of the precautions men have taken to assure themselves of peace. . . .

Critique of the Perpetual Peace Project

As the most worthy cause to which a good man might devote himself, the *Project for Perpetual Peace* must also have been, among all the projects of the

Abbé de Saint-Pierre, the one that he thought about the most and the one that he pursued with the greatest obstinancy. For how else could one explain the missionary zeal with which he clung to this project—despite the obvious impossibility of its success, the ridicule that it brought upon him every day, and the hostility that he was made continually to suffer. It seems that this humane soul was so single-mindedly focused on the public good that he measured the efforts that he gave things solely on the basis of their usefulness, without ever letting himself be discouraged by obstacles and without ever thinking about his own personal self-interest.

If ever a moral truth has been demonstrated, it seems to me that it is the general and the specific usefulness of this project. The advantages that would result from its formation both for each prince and for each nation, as well as for Europe as a whole, are immense, clear, and uncontested. One cannot imagine anything more solid and more precise than the arguments with which the author supports his case. Indeed, so much would the experience allow each individual to gain from the common good, that to realize the European Republic for one day would be enough to make it last forever. However, these same princes who would defend the European Republic with all their might once it existed would now be opposed even to its being set up, and they would invariably prevent it from being established with just as much energy as they would prevent it from being destroyed. The work of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre thus would seem both ineffectual for producing peace and superfluous for maintaining it. Some impatient reader will say that it is therefore nothing but vain speculation. No, it is a solid and sensible book, and it is very important that it exists.

Let us begin by examining the difficulties of those who do not judge arguments with reason but only with events and who have nothing to object to in this project other than that it has not been tried. In effect, they doubtlessly will say, if the advantages are so real, why have the sovereigns of Europe not adopted them already? Why do they neglect their own self-interest, if this self-interest has now been made so clear? Do we see them rejecting all the other ways of increasing their revenues and their power? If this project were as good for that purpose as is claimed, is it plausible that they would be less impressed with it than with those which have failed them so many times before, or that they would prefer a thousand risky chances to one sure gain?

Clearly, all this is plausible unless we pretend that the wisdom of all these sovereigns is equal to their ambition and that the more strongly they desire their own advantages the better they can see them. Instead, the great penalty for excessive *amour propre* is forever to resort to the means that abuse it, and the very heat of the passions is what almost always prevents them from reaching their goal. We must distinguish, then, in politics as well as in morality, real interest from apparent interest. The first is to be found in perpetual peace—that has been demonstrated in the *Project*. The second can be found in the condition of absolute independence that draws sovereigns away from the rule of law in order to submit them to the rule of chance—like a mad sailor who, to show off his knowledge and intimidate his crew, would prefer to drift dangerously among the reefs during a storm than to secure his ship with an anchor. . . .

We must add, in considering the great commercial advantages that would result from a general and perpetual peace, that while they are obviously in themselves certain and uncontested, being common to all they would not be relative advantages to anyone. Since advantage is usually only sensed by virtue of difference, to add to one's relative power one must seek out only exclusive gains.

Ceaselessly deceived by the appearance of things, princes will therefore reject this peace when judging it by their own self-interest. Just think, then, what will happen when they leave such judgments to their ministers, whose interests are always opposed to those of the people and almost always opposed to those of the prince. Ministers need war to make themselves necessary, to precipitate the prince into crises that he cannot get out of without them, and to cause the loss of the state, if it is necessary, rather than the loss of their jobs. They need war to harass the people in the guise of public safety, to find work for their protégés, to make money on the markets, and to form a thousand corrupt monopolies in secret. They need it to satisfy their passions and to push each other out of office. They need it to preoccupy the prince and remove him from the court while dangerous intrigues arise among them. Such resources would all be lost to them if there were a perpetual peace. And the public keeps on demanding why, if the project is possible, it has not been adopted! They fail to see that there is nothing impossible about the project except its adoption. And what will the ministers do to oppose it? What they have always done—they will turn it to ridicule.

Nor is it possible to believe along with the Abbé de Saint-Pierre that, even with the good will which neither princes nor ministers will ever have, it would be easy to find a favorable moment to set this system in motion. For that it would be necessary that the sum of individual interests would not outweigh the common interest, and that each one would believe that he had found in the good of all the greatest good that he could hope for for himself. Now this would require a convergence of wisdom among so many different minds and a convergence of aims among so many different interests that one could hardly hope to get the happy agreement of all these necessary circumstances simply by chance. The only way to make up for the failure of this agreement to come about by chance would be to make it come about by force. Then it would no longer be a question of persuading but of compelling, and then what would be needed is not to write books but to levy troops.

Thus, although the project was very wise, the means of putting it into effect reflect the naiveté of the author. He innocently imagined that all you would

need to do is to assemble a committee, propose his articles, have everyone sign them, and that would be it. We must conclude that, as with all the projects of this good man, he could envision quite well the effect of things after they had been established, but he judged with too little sophistication the methods for getting them established in the first place. . . .

We may not say, therefore, that if his system has not been adopted, it is because it was not good; on the contrary, we must say that it was too good to be adopted. For evil and abuse, which so many men profit from, happen by themselves, but whatever is useful to the public must be brought by force—seeing as special interests are almost always opposed to it. Doubtless perpetual peace is at present a project that seems absurd. . . .

We will not see federative leagues establishing themselves except by revolution, and, on this principle, who would dare to say whether this European league is to be desired or to be feared? It would perhaps cause more harm in one moment than it could prevent for centuries to come.

Explaining War: The Levels of Analysis

KENNETH N. WALTZ

OVERVIEW

Kenneth Waltz remains one of the most influential IR theorists. As noted, he is best known for his Theory of International Politics (1979) and his attempt to develop a truly systemic theory of IR. No other work has generated so much commentary—positive and negative—over the last three decades. It has stimulated numerous efforts utilizing the basic structural-realist assumptions and in the process has been elaborated upon and modified. The work has been praised for its attempt to provide scientific rigor to IR theorizing, and also condemned for leading the field further into a positivist orientation.

Waltz, however, was first best known for Man, the State and War (1959)—a refinement of his doctoral dissertation at Columbia that, given its focus on how political philosophers over the millennia have conceived of the causes of war,

From “Explaining War” in *Man, the State and War* by Kenneth N. Waltz, copyright 2001, Columbia University Press, New York. Reprinted with permission of the publisher..

actually falls more into the classical realist tradition. It also was an early formulation of what came to be known as the levels of analysis—were the causes of war to be found at the individual, state-societal, or interstate system levels of analysis?

In Man, the State, and War, Waltz makes the point that to explain how peace can be better achieved, one must first improve one's understanding of the causes of war. Some argue that human nature is the basic cause of war. Others argue it is the internal organization of states that is the key to understanding war and peace, while still others focus on the impact of the structure of the inter-state system. In terms of the latter, pay attention to Waltz's references particularly to Rousseau, but also Thucydides, the importance of "relative power position," and his assessment of the impact of anarchy on conflict among states. It is here one can see more than a glimmer of his key arguments twenty years later in Theory of International Politics where he develops his structural theory. The observation that those who act for the state [its agents] do not so much impose themselves on events [the system] as events [produced by the system] are imposed on them anticipates his development of his thesis in Theory of International Politics.

Questions to Keep in Mind

1. Does the view of human nature as described in the first image parallel or refute the views of classical realists such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Morgenthau?
2. What are the limitations of the remedies proposed by those who rely on human nature as an explanation for war?
3. What are the limitations of the remedies proposed by those who rely on the internal defects or type of state to explain war?
4. According to Waltz, what is the third-image logic behind Rousseau's statement that states "must inevitably fall into quarrels and dissensions"?
5. In which image(s) do the permissive as opposed to immediate causes of war lie?
6. According to Waltz, which image or level of analysis best reflects the founding fathers' of the United States explanation for interstate war? Would you consider the Federalist writers—Madison, Hamilton, and Jay (see in particular the first nine Federalist papers)—and other Constitutional framers to include Washington (see his Farewell Address apparently drafted by Madison and Hamilton) what we now label as realists?

Introduction

Asking who won a given war, someone has said, is like asking who won the San Francisco earthquake. That in wars there is no victory but only varying degrees of defeat is a proposition that has gained increasing acceptance in the twentieth century. But are wars also akin to earthquakes in being natural occurrences whose control or elimination is beyond the wit of man? Few would admit that they are, yet attempts to eliminate war, however nobly inspired and assiduously pursued, have brought little more than fleeting moments of peace among states. There is an apparent disproportion between effort and product, between desire and result. The peace wish,

we are told, runs strong and deep among the Russian people; and we are convinced that the same can be said of Americans. From these statements there is some comfort to be derived, but in the light of history and of current events as well it is difficult to believe that the wish will father the condition desired.

Social scientists, realizing from their studies how firmly the present is tied to the past and how intimately the parts of a system depend upon each other, are inclined to be conservative in estimating the possibilities of achieving a radically better world. If one asks whether we can now have peace where in the past there has been war, the answers are most often pessimistic. Perhaps this is the wrong question. And indeed the answers will be somewhat less discouraging

if instead the following questions are put: Are there ways of decreasing the incidence of war, of increasing the chances of peace? Can we have peace more often in the future than in the past?

Peace is one among a number of ends simultaneously entertained. The means by which peace can be sought are many. The end is pursued and the means are applied under varying conditions. Even though one may find it hard to believe that there are ways to peace not yet tried by statesmen or advocated by publicists, the very complexity of the problem suggests the possibility of combining activities in different ways in the hope that some combination will lead us closer to the goal. Is one then led to conclude that the wisdom of the statesman lies in trying first one policy and then another, in doing what the moment seems to require? An affirmative reply would suggest that the hope for improvement lies in policy divorced from analysis, in action removed from thought. Yet each attempt to alleviate a condition implies some idea of its causes: to explain how peace can be more readily achieved requires an understanding of the causes of war. It is such an understanding that we shall seek in the following pages.

The First Image: International Conflict and Human Behavior

There is deceit and cunning and from these wars arise.

Confucius

According to the first image of international relations, the focus of the important causes of war is found in the nature and behavior of man. Wars result from selfishness, from misdirected aggressive impulses, from stupidity. Other causes are secondary and have to be interpreted in the light of these factors. If these are the primary causes of war, then the elimination of war must come through uplifting and enlightening men or securing their psychosocial readjustment. This estimate of causes and cures has been dominant in the writings of many serious students of human affairs from Confucius to present-day pacifists. It is the leitmotif of many modern behavioral scientists as well.

Prescriptions associated with first-image analyses need not be identical in content, as a few examples will indicate. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, moved to poetic expression by a visit to the arsenal at Springfield, set down the following thoughts:

Were half the power that fills the world with
terror,
Were half the wealth bestowed on camps
and courts,
Given to redeem the human mind from error,
There were no need of arsenals or forts.

Implicit in these lines is the idea that the people will insist that the right policies be adopted if only they know what the right policies are. Their instincts are good, though their present gullibility may prompt them to follow false leaders. By attributing present difficulties to a defect in knowledge, education becomes the remedy of war. The idea is widespread. Beverly Nichols, a pacifist writing in the 1930s, thought that if Norman Angell "could be made educational dictator of the world, war would vanish like the morning mist, in a single generation."¹ In 1920, a conference of Friends, unwilling to rely upon intellectual development alone, called upon the people of the world to replace self-seeking with the spirit of sacrifice, cooperation, and trust.² Bertrand Russell, at about the same time and in much the same vein, saw a decline in the possessive instincts as a prerequisite to peace.³ By others, increasing the chances of peace has been said to require not so much a change in "instincts" as a channeling of energies that are presently expended in the destructive folly of war. If there were something that men would rather do than fight, they would cease to fight altogether. Aristophanes saw the point. If the women of Athens would deny themselves to husbands and lovers, their men would have to choose between the pleasures of the couch and the exhilarating experiences of the battlefield. Aristophanes thought he knew the men, and women, of Athens well enough to make the outcome a foregone conclusion. William James was in the same tradition. War, in his view, is rooted in man's bellicose nature, which is the product of centuries-old tradition. His nature cannot be changed or his drives suppressed, but they can be diverted. As alternatives to military service, James suggests drafting the youth of the world to mine coal and man ships, to build skyscrapers and roads, to wash dishes and clothes. While his estimate of what diversions would be sufficient is at once less realistic and more seriously intended than that of Aristophanes, his remedy is clearly the same in type.⁴

The prescriptions vary, but common to them all is the thought that in order to achieve a more peaceful world men must be changed, whether in their moral-intellectual outlook or in their psychic-social

behavior. One may, however, agree with the first-image analysis of causes without admitting the possibility of practicable prescriptions for their removal. Among those who accept a first-image explanation of war there are both optimists and pessimists, those who think the possibilities of progress so great that wars will end before the next generation is dead and those who think that wars will continue to occur though by them we may all die.

The Second Image: International Conflict and the Internal Structure of States

However conceived in an image of the world, foreign policy is a phase of domestic policy, an inescapable phase.

Charles Beard, *A Foreign Policy for America*

The first image did not exclude the influence of the state, but the role of the state was introduced as a consideration less important than, and to be explained in terms of, human behavior. According to the first image, to say that the state acts is to speak metonymically. We say that the state acts when we mean that the people in it act, just as we say that the pot boils when we mean that the water in it boils. The preceding [section] concentrated on the contents rather than the container; the present [section] alters the balance of emphasis in favor of the latter. To continue the figure: Water running out of a faucet is chemically the same as water in a container, but once the water is in a container, it can be made to “behave” in different ways. It can be turned into steam and used to power an engine, or, if the water is sealed in and heated to extreme temperatures, it can become the instrument of a destructive explosion. Wars would not exist were human nature not what it is, but neither would Sunday schools and brothels, philanthropic organizations and criminal gangs. Since everything is related to human nature, to explain anything one must consider more than human nature. The events to be explained are so many and so varied that human nature cannot possibly be the single determinant.

The attempt to explain everything by psychology meant, in the end, that psychology succeeded in explaining nothing. And adding sociology to the analysis simply substitutes the error of sociologism for the error of psychologism. Where Spinoza, for example, erred by leaving out of his personal estimate of cause

all reference to the causal role of social structures, sociologists have, in approaching the problem of war and peace, often erred in omitting all reference to the political framework within which individual and social actions occur. The conclusion is obvious: to understand war and peace political analysis must be used to supplement and order the findings of psychology and sociology. What kind of political analysis is needed? For possible explanations of the occurrence or nonoccurrence of war, one can look to international politics (since it is in the name of the state that the fighting is actually done). The former approach is postponed [until the next section]; according to the second image, the internal organization of states is the key to understanding war and peace.

One explanation of the second-image type is illustrated as follows. War most often promotes the internal unity of each state involved. The state plagued by internal strife may then, instead of waiting for the accidental attack, seek the war that will bring internal peace. Bodin saw this clearly, for he concludes that “the best way of preserving a state, and guaranteeing it against sedition, rebellion, and civil war is to keep the subjects in amity one with another, and to this end, to find an enemy against whom they can make common cause.” And he saw historical evidence that the principle had been applied, especially by the Romans, who “could find no better antidote to civil war, nor one more certain in its effects, than to oppose an enemy to the citizens.”⁵ Secretary of State William Henry Seward followed this reasoning when, in order to promote unity within the country, he urged upon Lincoln a vigorous foreign policy, which included the possibility of declaring war on Spain and France.⁶ Mikhail Skobelev, an influential Russian military officer of the third quarter of the nineteenth century, varied the theme but slightly when he argued that the Russian monarchy was doomed unless it could produce major military successes abroad.⁷

The use of internal defects to explain those external acts of the state that bring war can take many forms. Such explanation may be related to a type of government that is thought to be generically bad. For example, it is often thought that the deprivations imposed by despots upon their subjects produce tensions that may find expressions in foreign adventure. Or the explanation may be given in terms of defects in a government not itself considered bad. Thus it has been argued that the restrictions placed upon a government in order to protect the prescribed rights of its citizens act as impediments to the making and

executing of foreign policy. These restrictions, laudable in original purpose, may have the unfortunate effect of making difficult or impossible the effective action of that government for the maintenance of peace in the world.⁸ And, as a final example, explanation may be made in terms of geographic or economic deprivation or in terms of deprivations too vaguely defined to be labeled at all. Thus a nation may argue that it has not attained its “natural” frontiers, that such frontiers are necessary to its security, that war to extend the state to its deserved compass is justified or even necessary.⁹ The possible variations on this theme have been made familiar by the “have-not” arguments so popular in this century. Such arguments have been used both to explain why “deprived” countries undertake war and to urge the satiated to make the compensatory adjustments thought necessary if peace is to be perpetuated.¹⁰

The examples just given illustrate in abundant variety one part of the second image, the idea that defects in states cause wars among them. But in just what ways should the structure of states be changed? What definition of the “good” state is to serve as a standard? Among those who have taken this approach to international relations there is a great variety of definitions. Karl Marx defines “good” in terms of ownership of the means of production; Immanuel Kant in terms of abstract principles of right; Woodrow Wilson in terms of national self-determination and modern democratic organization. Though each definition singles out different items as crucial, all are united in asserting that if, and only if, substantially all states reform will world peace result. That is, the reform prescribed is considered the sufficient basis for world peace. This, of course, does not exhaust the subject. Marx, for example, believed that states would disappear shortly after they became socialist. The problem of war, if war is defined as violent conflict among states, would then no longer exist. Kant believed that republican states would voluntarily agree to be governed in their dealings by a code of law drawn up by the states themselves. Wilson urged a variety of requisites to peace, such as improved international understanding, collective security and disarmament, a world confederation of states. But history proved to Wilson that one cannot expect the steadfast cooperation of undemocratic states in any such program for peace.

For each of these men, the reform of states in the ways prescribed is taken to be the *sine qua non* of world peace. The examples given could be multiplied.

Classical economists as well as socialists, aristocrats and monarchists as well as democrats, empiricists and realists as well as transcendental idealists—all can furnish examples of men who have believed that peace can be had only if a given pattern of internal organization becomes widespread. Is it that democracies spell peace, but we have had wars because there have never been enough democracies of the right kind? Or that the socialist form of government contains within it the guarantee of peace, but so far there have never been any true socialist governments?¹¹ If either question were answered in the affirmative, then one would have to assess the merits of different prescriptions and try to decide just which one, or which combination, contains the elusive secret formula for peace. The import of our criticism, however, is that no prescription for international relations written entirely in terms of the second image can be valid, that the approach itself is faulty. Our criticisms of the liberals apply to all theories that would rely on the generalization of one pattern of state and society to bring peace to the world.

Bad states lead to war. As previously said, there is a large and important sense in which this is true. The obverse of this statement, that good states mean peace in the world, is an extremely doubtful proposition. The difficulty, endemic with the second image of international relations, is the same in kind as the difficulty encountered in the first image. There the statement that men make the societies, including the international society, in which they live was criticized not simply as being wrong but as being incomplete. One must add that the societies they live in make men. And it is the same in international relations. The actions of states, or, more accurately, of men acting for states, make up the substance of international relations. But the international political environment has much to do with the ways in which states behave. The influence to be assigned to the internal structure of states in attempting to solve the war–peace equation cannot be determined until the significance of the international environment has been reconsidered.

The Third Image: International Conflict and International Anarchy

For what can be done against force without force?

Cicero, *The Letters to His Friends*

With many sovereign states, with no system of law enforceable among them, with each state judging its

grievances and ambitions according to the dictates of its own reason or desire—conflict, sometimes leading to war, is bound to occur. To achieve a favorable outcome from such conflict a state has to rely on its own devices, the relative efficiency of which must be its constant concern. This, the idea of the third image, is to be examined [here]. It is not an esoteric idea; it is not a new idea. Thucydides implied it when he wrote that it was “the growth of the Athenian power, which terrified the Lacedaemonians and forced them into war.”¹² John Adams implied it when he wrote to the citizens of Petersburg, Virginia, that “a war with France, if just and necessary, might wean us from fond and blind affections, which no Nation ought ever to feel towards another, as our experience in more than one instance abundantly testifies.”¹³ There is an obvious relation between the concern over relative power position expressed by Thucydides and the admonition of John Adams that love affairs between states are inappropriate and dangerous. This relation is made explicit in Frederick Dunn’s statement that “so long as the notion of self-help persists, the aim of maintaining the power position of the nation is paramount to all other considerations.”¹⁴

In anarchy there is no automatic harmony. The three preceding statements reflect this fact. A state will use force to attain its goals if, after assessing the prospects for success, it values those goals more than it values the pleasures of peace. Because each state is the final judge of its own cause, any state may at any time use force to implement its policies. Because any state may at any time use force, all states must constantly be ready either to counter force with force or to pay the cost of weakness. The requirements of state action are, in this view, imposed by the circumstances in which all states exist.

In a manner of speaking, all three images are a part of nature. So fundamental are man, the state, and the state system in any attempt to understand international relations that seldom does an analyst, however wedded to one image, entirely overlook the other two. Still, emphasis on one image may distort one’s interpretation of the others. It is, for example, not uncommon to find those inclined to see the world in terms of either the first or the second image countering the oft-made argument that arms breed not war but security, and possibly even peace, by pointing out that the argument is a compound of dishonest myth, to cover the interests of politicians, armament makers, and others, and honest illusion entertained by patriots sincerely interested in the safety of their

states. To dispel the illusion, Cobden, to recall one of the many who have argued this way, once pointed out that doubling armaments, if everyone does it, makes no state more secure and, similarly, that none would be endangered if all military establishments were simultaneously reduced by, say, 50 percent.¹⁵ Putting aside the thought that the arithmetic is not necessarily an accurate reflection of what the situation would be, this argument illustrates a supposedly practical application of the first and second images. Whether by educating citizens and leaders of the separate states or by improving the organizations of each of them, a condition is sought in which the lesson here adumbrated becomes the basis for the policies of states. The result?—disarmament, and thus economy, together with peace, and thus security, for all states. If some states display a willingness to pare down their military establishments, other states will be able to pursue similar policies. In emphasizing the interdependence of the policies of all states, the argument pays heed to the third image. The optimism is, however, the result of ignoring some inherent difficulties. [Here Waltz takes up Rousseau’s view of man in the early state of nature.—*Ed.*]

In the early state of nature, men were sufficiently dispersed to make any patterns of cooperation unnecessary. But finally the combination of increased numbers and the usual natural hazards posed, in a variety of situations, the proposition: cooperate or die. Rousseau illustrates the line of reasoning with the simplest example. The example is worth reproducing, for it is the point of departure for the establishment of government and contains the basis for his explanation of conflict in international relations as well. Assume that five men who have acquired a rudimentary ability to speak and to understand each other happen to come together at a time when all of them suffer from hunger. The hunger of each will be satisfied by the fifth part of a stag, so they “agree” to cooperate in a project to trap one. But also the hunger of any one of them will be satisfied by a hare, so, as a hare comes within reach, one of them grabs it. The defector obtains the means of satisfying his hunger but in doing so permits the stag to escape. His immediate interest prevails over consideration for his fellows.¹⁶

The story is simple; the implications are tremendous. In cooperative action, even where all agree on the goal and have an equal interest in the project, one cannot rely on others. Spinoza linked conflict causally to man’s imperfect reason. Montesquieu and Rousseau counter Spinoza’s analysis with the

proposition that the sources of conflict are not so much in the minds of men as they are in the nature of social activity. The difficulty is to some extent verbal. Rousseau grants that if we knew how to receive the true justice that comes from God, “we should need neither government nor laws.”¹⁷ This corresponds to Spinoza’s proposition that “men in so far as they live in obedience to reason, necessarily live always in harmony one with another.”¹⁸ The idea is a truism. If men were perfect, their perfection would be reflected in all of their calculations and actions. Each could rely on the behavior of others, and all decisions would be made on principles that would preserve a true harmony of interests. Spinoza emphasizes not the difficulties inherent in mediating conflicting interests but the defectiveness of man’s reason that prevents their consistently making decisions that would be in the interest of each and for the good of all. Rousseau faces the same problem. He imagines how men must have behaved as they began to depend on one another to meet their daily needs. As long as each provided for his own wants, there could be no conflict; whenever the combination of natural obstacles and growth in population made cooperation necessary, conflict arose. Thus in the stag-hunt example the tension between one man’s immediate interest and the general interest of the group is resolved by the unilateral action of the one man. To the extent that he was motivated by a feeling of hunger, his act is one of passion. Reason would have told him that his long-run interest depends on establishing, through experience, the conviction that cooperative action will benefit all of the participants. But reason also tells him that if he forgoes the hare, the man next to him might leave his post to chase it, leaving the first man with nothing but food for thought on the folly of being loyal.

The problem is now posed in more significant terms. If harmony is to exist in anarchy, not only must I be perfectly rational but I must be able to assume that everyone else is too. Otherwise there is no basis for rational calculation. To allow in my calculation for the irrational acts of others can lead to no determinate solutions, but to attempts to act on a rational calculation without making such an allowance may lead to my own undoing. The latter argument is reflected in Rousseau’s comments on the proposition that “a people of true Christians would form the most perfect society imaginable.” In the first place he points out that such a society “would not be a society of men.” Moreover, he says,

“For the state to be peaceable and for harmony to be maintained, all the citizens without exception would have to be [equally] good Christians; if by ill hap there should be a single self-seeker or hypocrite . . . He would certainly get the better of his pious compatriots.”¹⁹

If we define cooperative action as rational and any deviation from it irrational, we must agree with Spinoza that conflict results from the irrationality of men. But if we examine the requirements of rational action, we find that even in an example as simple as the stag hunt we have to assume that the reason of each leads to an identical definition of interest, that each will draw the same conclusion as to the methods appropriate to meet the original situation, that all will agree instantly on the action required by any chance incidents that raise the question of altering the original plan, and that each can rely completely on the steadfastness of purpose of all the others. Perfectly rational action requires not only the perception that our welfare is tied up with the welfare of others but also a perfect appraisal of details so that we can answer the question: Just how in each situation is it tied up with everyone else’s? Rousseau agrees with Spinoza in refusing to label the act of the rabbit-snatcher either good or bad; unlike Spinoza, he also refuses to label it either rational or irrational. He has noticed that the difficulty is not only in the actors but also in the situations they face. While by no means ignoring the part that avarice and ambition play in the birth and growth of conflict,²⁰ Rousseau’s analysis makes clear the extent to which conflict appears inevitably in the social affairs of men.

In short, the proposition that irrationality is the cause of all the world’s troubles, in the sense that a world of perfectly rational men would know no disagreements and no conflicts, is, as Rousseau implies, as true as it is irrelevant. Since the world cannot be defined in terms of perfection, the very real problem of how to achieve an approximation to harmony in cooperative and competitive activity is always with us and, lacking the possibility of perfection, it is a problem that cannot be solved simply by changing men. Rousseau’s conclusion, which is also the heart of his theory of international relations, is accurately though somewhat abstractly summarized in the following statement: That among particularities accidents will occur is not accidental but necessary.²¹ And this, in turn, is simply another way of saying that in anarchy there is no automatic harmony.

If anarchy is the problem, then there are only two possible solutions: (1) to impose an effective control on the separate and imperfect states; (2) to remove states from the sphere of the accidental, that is, to define the good state as so perfect that it will no longer be particular. Kant tried to compromise by making states good enough to obey a set of laws to which they have volunteered their assent. Rousseau, whom on this point Kant failed to follow, emphasizes the particular nature of even the good state and, in so doing, makes apparent the futility of the solution Kant suggests.²² He also makes possible a theory of international relations that in general terms explains the behavior of all states, whether good or bad.²³

In the stag-hunt example, the will of the rabbit-snatcher was rational and predictable from his own point of view. From the point of view of the rest of the group, it was arbitrary and capricious. So of any individual state, a will perfectly good for itself may provoke the violent resistance of other states.²⁴ The application of Rousseau's theory to international politics is stated with eloquence and clarity in his commentaries on Saint-Pierre and in a short work entitled *The State of War*. His application bears out the preceding analysis. The states of Europe, he writes, "touch each other at so many points that no one of them can move without giving a jar to all the rest; their variances are all the more deadly, as their ties are more closely woven." They "must inevitably fall into quarrels and dissensions at the first changes that come about." And if we ask why they must "inevitably" clash, Rousseau answers: Because their union is "formed and maintained by nothing better than chance." The nations of Europe are willful units in close juxtaposition with rules neither clear nor enforceable to guide them. The public law of Europe is but "a mass of contradictory rules which nothing but the right of the stronger can reduce to order: so that in the absence of any sure clue to guide her, reason is bound, in every case of doubt, to obey the promptings of self-interest—which in itself would make war inevitable, even if all parties desired to be just." In this condition, it is foolhardy to expect automatic harmony of interest and automatic agreement and acquiescence in rights and duties. In a real sense there is a "union of the nations of Europe," but "the imperfections of this association make the state of those who belong to it worse than it would be if they formed no community at all."²⁵

The argument is clear. For individuals the bloodiest stage of history was the period just prior

to the establishment of society. At that point they had lost the virtues of the savage without having acquired those of the citizen. The late stage of the state of nature is necessarily a state of war. The nations of Europe are precisely in that stage.²⁶

What then is cause: the capricious acts of the separate states or the system within which they exist? Rousseau emphasizes the latter:

Every one can see that what unites any form of society is community of interests, and what disintegrates [it] is their conflict; that either tendency may be changed or modified by a thousand accidents; and therefore that, as soon as a society is founded, some coercive power must be provided to co-ordinate the actions of its members and give to their common interests and mutual obligations that firmness and consistency which they could never acquire of themselves.²⁷

But to emphasize the importance of political structure is not to say that the acts that bring about conflict and lead to the use of force are of no importance. It is the specific acts that are the immediate causes of war,²⁸ the general structure that permits them to exist and wreak their disasters. To eliminate every vestige of selfishness, perversity, and stupidity in nations would serve to establish perpetual peace, but to try directly to eliminate all the immediate causes of war without altering the structure of the "union of Europe" is utopian.

What alteration of structure is required? The idea that a voluntary federation, such as Kant later proposed, could keep peace among states, Rousseau rejects emphatically. Instead, he says, the remedy for war among states "is to be found only in such a form of federal Government as shall unite nations by bonds similar to those which already unite their individual members, and place the one no less than the other under the authority of the Law."²⁹ Kant made similar statements only to amend them out of existence once he came to consider the reality of such a federation. Rousseau does not modify his principle, as is made clear in the following quotation, every point of which is a contradiction of Kant's program for the pacific federation:

The Federation [that is to replace the "free and voluntary association which now unites the States of Europe"] must embrace all the important Powers in its membership; it must have a Legislative Body, with powers to pass laws and ordinances binding

upon all its members; it must have a coercive force capable of compelling every State to obey its common resolves whether in the way of command or of prohibition; finally, it must be strong and firm enough to make it impossible for any member to withdraw at his own pleasure the moment he conceives his private interest to clash with that of the whole body.³⁰

It is easy to poke holes in the solution offered by Rousseau. The most vulnerable point is revealed by the questions: How could the federation enforce its law on the states that comprise it without waging war against them? and How likely is it that the effective force will always be on the side of the federation? To answer these questions Rousseau argues that the states of Europe are in a condition of balance sufficiently fine to prevent any one state or combination of states from prevailing over the others. For this reason, the necessary margin of force will always rest with the federation itself. The best critical consideration of the inherent weakness of a federation of states in which the law of the federation has to be enforced on the states who are its members is contained in the *Federalist Papers*. The arguments are convincing, but they need not be reviewed here. The practical weakness of Rousseau's recommended solution does not obscure the merit of his theoretical analysis of war as a consequence of international anarchy.

Conclusion

The third image, like the first two, leads directly to a utopian prescription. In each image a cause is identified in terms of which all others are to be understood. The force of the logical relation between the third image and the world-government prescription is great enough to cause some to argue not only the merits of world government but also the ease with which it can be realized.³¹ It is of course true that with world government there would no longer be international wars, though with an ineffective world government there would no doubt be civil wars. It is likewise true, reverting to the first two images, that without the imperfections of the separate states there would not be wars, just as it is true that a society of perfectly rational beings, or of perfect Christians, would never know violent conflict. These statements are, unfortunately, as trivial as they are true. They have the unchallengeable quality

of airtight tautologies: perfectly good states or men will not do bad things; within an effective organization highly damaging deviant behavior is not permitted. The near perfection required by concentration upon a single cause accounts for a number of otherwise puzzling facts: the pessimism of St. Augustine, the failure of the behavioral scientists as prescribers for peace, the reliance of many liberals on the forces of history to produce a result not conceivably to be produced by the consciously directed efforts of men, the tendency of socialists to identify a corrupting element every time harmony in socialist action fails to appear. It also helps to explain the often rapid alternation of hope and despair among those who most fully adopt a single-cause approach to this or to almost any other problem. The belief that to make the world better requires changing the factors that operate within a precisely defined realm leads to despair whenever it becomes apparent that changes there, if possible at all, will come slowly and with insufficient force. One is constantly defeated by the double problem of demonstrating how the "necessary changes" can be produced and of substantiating the assertion that the changes described as necessary would be sufficient to accomplish the object in view.

The contrary assertion, that all causes may be interrelated, is an argument against assuming that there is a single cause that can be isolated by analysis and eliminated or controlled by wisely constructed policy. It is also an argument against working with one or several hypotheses without bearing in mind the interrelation of all causes. The prescriptions directly derived from a single image are incomplete because they are based upon partial analyses. The partial quality of each image sets up a tension that drives one toward inclusion of the others. With the first image the direction of change, representing Locke's perspective as against Plato's, is from men to societies and states. The second image catches up both elements. Men make states, *and* states make men; but this is still a limited view. One is led to a search for the more inclusive nexus of causes, for states are shaped by the international environments. Most of those whom we have considered in preceding [sections] have not written entirely in terms of one image. That we have thus far been dealing with the consequences arising from differing degrees of emphasis accounts for the complexity of preceding [sections] but now makes somewhat easier the task of suggesting how the images can be interrelated without distorting any one of them.

The First and Second Images in Relation to the Third

It may be true that the Soviet Union poses the greatest threat of war at the present time. It is not true that were the Soviet Union to disappear the remaining states could easily live at peace. We have known wars for centuries; the Soviet Union has existed only for decades. But some states, and perhaps some forms of the state, are more peacefully inclined than others. Would not the multiplication of peacefully inclined states at least warrant the hope that the period between major wars might be extended? By emphasizing the relevance of the framework of action, the third image makes clear the misleading quality of such partial analyses and of the hopes that are often based upon them. The act that by individual moral standards would be applauded may, when performed by a state, be an invitation to the war we seek to avoid. The third image, taken not as a theory of world government but as a theory of the conditioning effects of the state system itself, alerts us to the fact that so far as increasing the chances of peace is concerned there is no such thing as an act good in itself. The pacification of the Hukbalahaps was a clear and direct contribution to the peace and order of the Philippine state. In international politics a partial “solution,” such as one major country becoming pacifistic, might be a real contribution to world peace; but it might as easily hasten the coming of another major war.

The third image, as reflected in the writings of Rousseau, is based on an analysis of the consequences arising from the framework of state action. Rousseau’s explanation of the origin of war among states is, in broad outline, the final one so long as we operate within a nation–state system. It is a final explanation because it does not hinge on accidental causes—irrationalities in men, defects in states—but upon his theory of the framework within which *any* accident can bring about a war. That state A wants certain things that it can get only by war does not explain war. Such a desire may or may not lead to war. My wanting a million dollars does not cause me to rob a bank, but if it were easier to rob banks, such desires would lead to much more bank robbing. This does not alter the fact that some people will and some will not attempt to rob banks no matter what the law enforcement situation is. We still have to look to motivation and circumstance in order to explain individual acts. Nevertheless one can predict that, other things being equal, a weakening of law enforcement

agencies will lead to an increase in crime. From this point of view it is social structure—institutionalized restraints and institutionalized methods of altering and adjusting interests—that counts. And it counts in a way different from the ways usually associated with the word “cause.” What causes a man to rob a bank are such things as the desire for money, a disrespect for social proprieties, a certain boldness. But if obstacles to the operation of these causes are built sufficiently high, nine out of ten would-be bank robbers will live their lives peacefully plying their legitimate trades. If the framework is to be called cause at all, it had best be specified that it is a permissive or underlying cause of war.

Applied to international politics this becomes, in words previously used to summarize Rousseau, the proposition that wars occur because there is nothing to prevent them. Rousseau’s analysis explains the recurrence of war without explaining any given war. He tells us that war may at any moment occur, and he tells us why this is so. But the structure of the state system does not directly cause state A to attack state B. Whether or not that attack occurs will depend on a number of special circumstances—location, size, power, interest, type of government, past history and tradition—each of which will influence the actions of both states. If they fight against each other it will be for reasons especially defined for the occasion by each of them. These special reasons become the immediate, or efficient, causes of war. These immediate causes of war are contained in the first and second images. States are motivated to attack each other and to defend themselves by the reason and/or passion of the comparatively few who make policies for states and of the many more who influence the few. Some states, by virtue of their internal conditions, are both more proficient in war and more inclined to put their proficiency to the test. Variations in the factors included in the first and second images are important, indeed crucial, in the making and breaking of periods of peace—the immediate causes of every war must be either the acts of individuals or the acts of states.

If every war is preceded by acts that we can identify (or at least try to identify) as cause, then why can we not eliminate wars by modifying individual or state behavior? This is the line of thinking followed by those who say: To end war, improve men; or: To end war, improve states. But in such prescriptions the role of the international environment is easily distorted. How can some of the acting units

improve while others continue to follow their old and often predatory ways? The simplistic assumption of many liberals, that history moves relentlessly toward the millennium, is refuted if the international environment makes it difficult almost to the point of impossibility for states to behave in ways that are progressively more moral. Two points are omitted from the prescriptions we considered under the first and second images: (1) If an effect is produced by two or more causes, the effect is not permanently eliminated by removing one of them. If wars occur because men are less than perfectly rational and because states are less than perfectly formed, to improve only states may do little to decrease the number and intensity of wars. The error here is in identifying one cause where two or more may operate. (2) An endeavor launched against one cause to the neglect of others may make the situation worse instead of better. Thus, as the Western democracies became more inclined to peace, Hitler became more belligerent. The increased propensity to peace of some participants in international politics may increase, rather than decrease, the likelihood of war. This illustrates the role of the permissive cause, the international environment. If there were but two loci of cause involved, men and states, we could be sure that the appearance of more peacefully inclined states would, at worst, not damage the cause of world peace. Whether or not a remedy proposed is truly a remedy or actually worse than none at all depends, however, on the content and timing of the acts of all states. This is made clear in the third image.

War may result because state A has something that state B wants. The efficient cause of the war is the desire of state B; the permissive cause is the fact that there is nothing to prevent state B from undertaking the risks of war. In a different circumstance, the interrelation of efficient and permissive causes becomes still closer. State A may fear that if it does not cut state B down a peg now, it may be unable to do so ten years from now. State A becomes the aggressor in the present because it fears what state B may be able to do in the future. The efficient cause of such a war is derived from the cause that we have labeled permissive. In the first case, conflicts arise from disputes born of specific issues. In an age of hydrogen bombs, no single issue may be worth the risk of full-scale war. Settlement, even on bad grounds, is preferable to self-destruction. The use of reason would seem to require the adoption of a doctrine of “non-recourse

to force.” One whose reason leads him down this path is following the trail blazed by Cobden when in 1849 he pointed out “that it is almost impossible, on looking back for the last hundred years, to tell precisely what any war was about,” and thus implied that Englishmen should never have become involved in them.³² He is falling into the trap that ensnared A. A. Milne when he explained the First World War as a war in which ten million men died because Austria-Hungary sought, unsuccessfully, to avenge the death of one archduke.³³ He is succumbing to the illusion of Sir Edward Grey, who, in the memoirs he wrote some thirty years ago, hoped that the horrors of the First World War would make it possible for nations “to find at least one common ground on which they should come together in confident understanding: an agreement that, in the disputes between them, war must be ruled out as a means of settlement that entails ruin.”³⁴

It is true that the immediate causes of many wars are trivial. If we focus upon them, the failure to agree to settlement without force appears to be the ultimate folly. But it is not often true that the immediate causes provide sufficient explanation for the wars that have occurred. And if it is not simply particular disputes that produce wars, rational settlement of them cannot eliminate war. For, as Winston Churchill has written, “small matters are only the symptoms of the dangerous disease, and are only important for that reason. Behind them lie the interests, the passions and the destiny of mighty races of men; and long antagonisms express themselves in trifles.”³⁵ Nevertheless Churchill may be justified in hoping that the fear induced by a “balance of terror” will produce a temporary truce. Advancing technology makes war more horrible and presumably increases the desire for peace; the very rapidity of the advance makes for uncertainty in everyone’s military planning and destroys the possibility of an accurate estimate of the likely opposing forces. Fear and permanent peace are more difficult to equate. Each major advance in the technology of war has found its prophet ready to proclaim that war is no longer possible. Alfred Nobel and dynamite, for example, or Benjamin Franklin and the lighter-than-air balloon. There may well have been a prophet to proclaim the end of tribal warfare when the spear was invented and another to make a similar prediction when poison was first added to its tip. Unfortunately, these prophets have all been false. The development of atomic and hydrogen weapons may nurture the peace wish of some, the war sentiment

of others. In the United States and elsewhere after the Second World War, a muted theme of foreign-policy debate was the necessity of preventive war—drop the bomb quickly before the likely opponent in a future war has time to make one of his own. Even with two or more states equipped with similar weapon systems, a momentary shift in the balance of terror, giving a decisive military advantage temporarily to one state, may tempt it to seize the moment in order to escape from fear. And the temptation would be proportionate to the fear itself. Finally, mutual fear of big weapons may produce, instead of peace, a spate of smaller wars.

The fear of modern weapons, of the danger of destroying the civilizations of the world, is not sufficient to establish the conditions of peace identified in our discussions of the three images of international relations. One can equate fear with world peace only if the peace wish exists in all states and is uniformly expressed in their policies. But peace is the primary goal of few men or states. If it were the primary goal of even a single state, that state could have peace at any time—simply by surrendering. But, as John Foster Dulles so often warned, “Peace can be a cover whereby evil men perpetrate diabolical wrongs.”³⁶ The issue in a given dispute may not be: Who shall gain from it? It may instead be: Who shall dominate the world? In such circumstances, the best course of even reasonable men is difficult to define; their ability always to contrive solutions without force, impossible to assume. If solutions in terms of none of the three images is presently—if ever—possible, then reason can work only within the framework that is suggested by viewing the first and second images in the perspective of the third, a perspective well and simply set forth in the *Federalist Papers*, especially in those written by Hamilton and Jay.

What would happen, Jay asks, if the thirteen states, instead of combining as one state, should form themselves into several confederations? He answers:

Instead of their being “joined in affection” and free from all apprehension of different “interests,” envy and jealousy would soon extinguish confidence and affection, and the partial interests of each confederation, instead of the general interests of all America, would be the only objects of their policy and pursuits. Hence, like most *bordering* nations, they would always be either involved in disputes and war, or live in the constant apprehension of them.³⁷

International anarchy, Jay is here saying, is the explanation for international war. But not international anarchy alone. Hamilton adds that to presume a lack of hostile motives among states is to forget that men are “ambitious, vindictive, and rapacious.” A monarchical state may go to war because the vanity of its king leads him to seek glory in military victory; a republic may go to war because of the folly of its assembly or because of its commercial interests. That the king may be vain, the assembly foolish, or the commercial interests irreconcilable: none of these is inevitable. However, so many and so varied are the causes of war among states that “to look for a continuation of harmony between a number of independent, unconnected sovereigns in the same neighborhood, would be to disregard the uniform course of human events, and to set at defiance the accumulated experience of the ages.”³⁸

Jay and Hamilton found in the history of the Western state system confirmation for the conclusion that among separate sovereign states there is constant possibility of war. The third image gives a theoretical basis for the same conclusion. It reveals why, in the absence of tremendous changes in the factors included in the first and second images, war will be perpetually associated with the existence of separate sovereign states. The obvious conclusion of a third-image analysis is that world government is the remedy for world war. The remedy, though it may be unassailable in logic, is unattainable in practice. The third image may provide a utopian approach to world politics. It may also provide a realistic approach, and one that avoids the tendency of some realists to attribute the necessary amorality, or even immorality, of world politics to the inherently bad character of man. If everyone’s strategy depends upon everyone else’s, then the Hitlers determine in part the action, or better, reaction, of those whose ends are worthy and whose means are fastidious. No matter how good their intentions, policy makers must bear in mind the implications of the third image, which can be stated in summary form as follows: Each state pursues its own interests, however defined, in ways it judges best. Force is a means of achieving the external ends of states because there exists no consistent, reliable process of reconciling the conflicts of interest that inevitably arise among similar units in a condition of anarchy. A foreign policy based on this image of international relations is neither moral nor immoral, but embodies merely a reasoned response to the world about us. The third

image describes the framework of world politics, but without the first and second images there can be no knowledge of the forces that determine policy; the first and second images describe the forces in world politics, but without the third image it is impossible to assess their importance or predict their results.

Notes

1. Beverly Nichols, *Cry Havoc!* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1933), 164.
2. Margaret E. Hirst, *The Quakers in Peace and War* (London: Swarthmore Press, 1923), 521–25.
3. Bertrand Russell, *Political Ideals* (New York: Century Co., 1917), p. 42. In one way or another the thought recurs in Lord Russell's many writings on international relations.
4. William James, "The Moral Equivalent of War," in *Memories and Studies* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), 262–72, 290.
5. Jean Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, abridged and trans. M. J. Tooley (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, n.d.), 168.
6. "Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration," Apr. 1, 1861, in *Documents of American History*, ed. Henry Steele Commager, 3d ed. (New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1946), 392.
7. Hans Herzfeld, "Bismarck und die Skobelewespisode," *Historische Zeitschrift* 142 (1930): 279–302.
8. Cf. Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), 67–68, 102, 126, 133–36, 272, and esp. 931; and Secretary of State Hay's statement in Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (New York: Book League of America, 1928), 374. Note that in this case the fault is one that is thought to decrease the ability of a country to implement a peaceful policy. In the other examples, the defect is thought to increase the propensity of a country to go to war.
9. Cf. Bertrand Russell, who in 1917 wrote: "There can be no good international system until the boundaries of states coincide as nearly as possible with the boundaries of nations" (*Political Ideals*, 146).
10. Frank H. Simonds and Brooks Emery, *The Great Powers in World Politics* (New York: American Book Co., 1939), passim; W. S. Thompson, *Danger Spots in World Population* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), esp. the Preface and chaps. 1 and 13.
11. Cf. Vladimir Dedijer, "Albania, Soviet Pawn," *Foreign Affairs* 30 (1961): 104: Socialism, but not Soviet Union state capitalism, means peace.
12. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. B. Jowett, 2d ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1900), bk. 1, par. 23.
13. John Adams to the citizens of the town of Petersburg, Virginia, June 6, 1798, reprinted in the program for the visit of William Howard Taft, Petersburg, May 19, 1909.

14. Frederick S. Dunn, *Peaceful Change* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1937), 13.
15. Richard Cobden, esp. *Speeches on Peace, Financial Reform, Colonial Reform and Other Subjects Delivered during 1849* (London: James Gilbert, n.d.), 135.
16. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G.D.H. Cole, Everyman's Library Edition (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1950); see esp. *Inequality*, 234 ff.
17. *Ibid.*, 34.
18. Benedict de Spinoza, *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, trans. R.H.M. Elwes, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, 1951), *Ethics*, pt. 4, prop. 35, proof.
19. Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, 135–36 (bk. 4 and chap. 8), italics added. The word "equality" is necessary for and accurate rendering of the French text but does not appear in the translation cited.
20. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Lasting Peace through the Federation of Europe and the State of War*, trans. C. E. Vaughan (London: Constable and Co., 1917), 72.
21. This parallels Hegel's formulation: "It is to what is by nature accidental that accidents happen, and the fate whereby they happen is thus a necessity" [G.W.F.] Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), sec. 324.
22. Kant is more willing to admit the force of this criticism than is generally realized.
23. This is not, of course, to say that no differences in state behavior follow from the different constitutions and situations of states. This point raises the question of the relation of the third image to the second, which will be discussed below.
24. Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, 290–91.
25. Rousseau, *A Lasting Peace*, 46–48, 58–59.
26. *Ibid.*, 38, 46–47. On p. 121, Rousseau distinguishes between the "state of war," which always exists among states, and war proper, which manifests itself in the settled intention to destroy the enemy state.
27. *Ibid.*, 49.
28. In *ibid.*, 69, Rousseau presents his exhaustive list of such causes.
29. *Ibid.*, 38–39.
30. *Ibid.*, 59–60.
31. Cf. Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 158–59; and William Esslinger, *Politics and Science* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), passim.
32. Richard Cobden, *Speeches on Questions of Public Policy*, 2 vols., ed. John Bright and James E. Thorold Rogers (London: Macmillan & Co., 1870), 2: 165.
33. A. A. Milne, *Peace and War* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1934), 11.
34. Edward Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 2 vols. (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1925), 2: 285.

35. Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis*, 1911–1914, 4 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923–29), 1: 52.
36. "Excerpts from Dulles Address on Peace," Washington, D. C., Apr. 11, 1955, in *New York Times*, Apr. 12, 1955, 6.
37. Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison. *The Federalist* (New York: Modern Library, 1941), 23–24 (no. 5).
38. *Ibid.*, 27–28 (no. 6); cf. 18 (no. 4, Jay) and 34–40 (no. 7, Hamilton).

Hard and Soft Power in American Foreign Policy

JOSEPH S. NYE, JR.

OVERVIEW

As noted in the text, power is a key concept for IR theorists, particularly realists. It is utilized, for example, in balance-of-power, power-transition, and hegemonic-power theorizing. Using the United States as his principal case, the author sees the power of a state as including both hard and soft components—the former traditional economic and military and the latter composed of cultural dimensions or the values that define the identity and practices of a state. Soft power involves attracting others to your agenda in world politics and not just relying on carrots and sticks. Soft power entails getting others to want what you want. Combining hard and soft power assets effectively—"smart" power as Nye now calls it—is essential to attaining national objectives and affecting the behavior of others. Soft power becomes manifest in international institutions (listening to others) and in foreign policy (promoting peace and human rights). An advocate of multilateralism, the author—a policy-oriented classical realist—sees sustaining American power as dependent upon "strategic restraint, reassuring partners and facilitating cooperation," not just "because of unmatched American hard power." Consistent with classical realism as well as theorists working within the liberal image of international relations, we find in this article an argument that addresses the ideational, not just the material, dimensions of power. Nye also addresses the limits of balance-of-power and hegemonic-power theories as applied to the United States.

Questions to Keep in Mind

1. How have the sources of power changed over the centuries?
2. What are the causative factors that explain the foundations of power moving away from an historical emphasis on military force and conquest?
3. Why are soft-power resources not under the exclusive control of the state?
4. In terms of measurement, what problems does the concept of soft power pose? To what extent is it expressed in relations between or among states or in control over outcomes?
5. Some realists have predicted that it is only a matter of time before the power supremacy of the United States will be challenged by other rising powers. To what extent could the U.S. exercise of soft power explain why that prediction has yet to come about?

The ability to obtain the outcomes one wants is often associated with the possession of certain resources, and so we commonly use shorthand and define power as possession of relatively large amounts of such elements as population, territory, natural resources, economic strength, military force, and political stability. Power in this sense means holding the high cards in the international poker game. If you show high cards, others are likely to fold their hands. Of course, if you play your hand poorly or fall victim to bluff and deception, you can still lose, or at least fail to get the outcome you want. For example, the United States was the largest power after World War I, but it failed to prevent the rise of Hitler or Pearl Harbor. Converting America's potential power resources into realized power requires well-designed policy and skillful leadership. But it helps to start by holding the high cards.

Traditionally, the test of a great power was "strength for war."¹ War was the ultimate game in which the cards of international politics were played and estimates of relative power were proven. Over the centuries, as technologies evolved, the sources of power have changed. In the agrarian economies of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, population was a critical power resource because it provided a base for taxes and the recruitment of infantry (who were mostly mercenaries), and this combination of men and money gave the edge to France. But in the nineteenth century, the growing importance of industry benefited first Britain, which ruled the waves with a navy that had no peer, and later Germany, which used efficient administration and railways to transport armies for quick victories on the Continent (though Russia had a larger population and army). By the middle of the twentieth century, with the advent of the nuclear age, the United States and the Soviet Union possessed not only industrial might but nuclear arsenals and intercontinental missiles.

Today the foundations of power have been moving away from the emphasis on military force and conquest. Paradoxically, nuclear weapons were one of the causes. As we know from the history of the Cold War, nuclear weapons proved so awesome and destructive that they became muscle bound—too costly to use except, theoretically, in the most extreme circumstances.² A second important change was the rise of nationalism, which has made it more difficult for empires to rule over awakened populations. In the nineteenth century, a few adventurers conquered most of Africa with a handful of soldiers, and Britain ruled India with a colonial force that was a tiny fraction of the indigenous population. Today, colonial rule is not only widely condemned but far too costly, as both Cold War superpowers discovered in Vietnam and Afghanistan. The collapse of the Soviet empire followed the end of European empires by a matter of decades.

A third important cause is societal change inside great powers. Postindustrial societies are focused on welfare rather than glory, and they loathe high casualties except when survival is at stake. This does not mean that they will not use force, even when casualties are expected—witness the 1991 Gulf War or Afghanistan today. But the absence of a warrior ethic in modern democracies means that the use of force requires an elaborate moral justification to ensure popular support (except in cases where survival is at stake). Roughly speaking, there are three types of countries in the world today: poor, weak preindustrial states, which are often the chaotic remnants of collapsed empires; modernizing industrial states such as India or China; and the postindustrial societies that prevail in Europe, North America, and Japan. The use of force is common in the first type of country, still accepted in the second, but less tolerated in the third. In the words of British diplomat Robert Cooper, "A large number of the most powerful states

no longer want to fight or to conquer.”³ War remains possible, but it is much less acceptable now than it was a century or even half a century ago.⁴

Finally, for most of today’s great powers, the use of force would jeopardize their economic objectives. Even nondemocratic countries that feel fewer popular moral constraints on the use of force have to consider its effects on their economic objectives. As Thomas Friedman has put it, countries are disciplined by an “electronic herd” of investors who control their access to capital in a globalized economy.⁵ And Richard Rosecrance writes, “In the past, it was cheaper to seize another state’s territory by force than to develop the sophisticated economic and trading apparatus needed to derive benefit from commercial exchange with it.”⁶ Imperial Japan used the former approach when it created the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere in the 1930s, but Japan’s post–World War II role as a trading state turned out to be far more successful, leading it to become the second largest national economy in the world. It is difficult now to imagine a scenario in which Japan would try to colonize its neighbors, or succeed in doing so.

As mentioned above, none of this is to suggest that military force plays no role in international politics today. For one thing, the information revolution has yet to transform most of the world. Many states are unconstrained by democratic societal forces, as Kuwait learned from its neighbor Iraq, and terrorist groups pay little heed to the normal constraints of liberal societies. Civil wars are rife in many parts of the world where collapsed empires left power vacuums. Moreover, throughout history, the rise of new great powers has been accompanied by anxieties that have sometimes precipitated military crises. In Thucydides’s immortal description, the Peloponnesian War in ancient Greece was caused by the rise to power of Athens and the fear it created in Sparta.⁷ World War I owed much to the rise of the kaiser’s Germany and the fear that created in Britain.⁸ Some foretell a similar dynamic in this century arising from the rise of China and the fear it creates in the United States.

Geoeconomics has not replaced geopolitics, although in the early twenty-first century there has clearly been a blurring of the traditional boundaries between the two. To ignore the role of force and the centrality of security would be like ignoring oxygen. Under normal circumstances, oxygen is plentiful and we pay it little attention. But once those conditions change and we begin to miss it, we can focus on nothing else.⁹ Even in those areas where the

direct employment of force falls out of use among countries—for instance, within Western Europe or between the United States and Japan—nonstate actors such as terrorists may use force. Moreover, military force can still play an important political role among advanced nations. For example, most countries in East Asia welcome the presence of American troops as an insurance policy against uncertain neighbors. Moreover, deterring threats or ensuring access to a crucial resource such as oil in the Persian Gulf increases America’s influence with its allies. Sometimes the linkages may be direct; more often they are present in the back of statesmen’s minds. As the Defense Department describes it, one of the missions of American troops based overseas is to “shape the environment.”

With that said, economic power *has* become more important than in the past, both because of the relative increase in the costliness of force and because economic objectives loom large in the values of postindustrial societies.¹⁰ In a world of economic globalization, all countries are to some extent dependent on market forces beyond their direct control. When President Clinton was struggling to balance the federal budget in 1993, one of his advisors stated in exasperation that if he were to be reborn, he would like to come back as “the market” because that was clearly the most powerful player.¹¹ But markets constrain different countries to different degrees. Because the United States constitutes such a large part of the market in trade and finance, it is better placed to set its own terms than is Argentina or Thailand. And if small countries are willing to pay the price of opting out of the market, they can reduce the power that other countries have over them. Thus American economic sanctions have had little effect, for example, on improving human rights in isolated Myanmar. Saddam Hussein’s strong preference for his own survival rather than the welfare of the Iraqi people meant that crippling sanctions failed for more than a decade to remove him from power. And economic sanctions may disrupt but not deter non-state terrorists. But the exceptions prove the rule. Military power remains crucial in certain situations, but it is a mistake to focus too narrowly on the military dimensions of American power.

Soft Power

In my view, if the United States wants to remain strong, Americans need also to pay attention to our soft power. What precisely do I mean by soft power?

Military power and economic power are both examples of hard command power that can be used to induce others to change their position. Hard power can rest on inducements (carrots) or threats (sticks). But there is also an indirect way to exercise power. A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries want to follow it, admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness. In this sense, it is just as important to set the agenda in world politics and attract others as it is to force them to change through the threat or use of military or economic weapons. This aspect of power—getting others to want what you want—I call soft power.¹² It co-opts people rather than coerces them.

Soft power rests on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences of others. At the personal level, wise parents know that if they have brought up their children with the right beliefs and values, their power will be greater and will last longer than if they have relied only on spankings, cutting off allowances, or taking away the car keys. Similarly, political leaders and thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci have long understood the power that comes from setting the agenda and determining the framework of a debate. The ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with intangible power resources such as an attractive culture, ideology, and institutions. If I can get you to *want* to do what I want, then I do not have to force you to do what you do *not* want to do. If the United States represents values that others want to follow, it will cost us less to lead. Soft power is not merely the same as influence, though it is one source of influence. After all, I can also influence you by threats or rewards. Soft power is also more than persuasion or the ability to move people by argument. It is the ability to entice and attract. And attraction often leads to acquiescence or imitation.

Soft power arises in large part from our values. These values are expressed in our culture, in the policies we follow inside our country, and in the way we handle ourselves internationally. The government sometimes finds it difficult to control and employ soft power. Like love, it is hard to measure and to handle, and does not touch everyone, but that does not diminish its importance. As Hubert Védrine laments, Americans are so powerful because they can “inspire the dreams and desires of others, thanks to the mastery of global images through film and television and because, for these same reasons, large numbers of students from other countries come to

the United States to finish their studies.”¹³ Soft power is an important reality.

Of course, hard and soft power are related and can reinforce each other. Both are aspects of the ability to achieve our purposes by affecting the behavior of others. Sometimes the same power resources can affect the entire spectrum of behavior from coercion to attraction.¹⁴ A country that suffers economic and military decline is likely to lose its ability to shape the international agenda as well as its attractiveness. And some countries may be attracted to others with hard power by the myth of invincibility or inevitability. Both Hitler and Stalin tried to develop such myths. Hard power can also be used to establish empires and institutions that set the agenda for smaller states—witness Soviet rule over the countries of Eastern Europe. But soft power is not simply the reflection of hard power. The Vatican did not lose its soft power when it lost the Papal States in Italy in the nineteenth century. Conversely, the Soviet Union lost much of its soft power after it invaded Hungary and Czechoslovakia, even though its economic and military resources continued to grow. Imperious policies that utilized Soviet hard power actually undercut its soft power. And some countries such as Canada, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian states have political clout that is greater than their military and economic weight, because of the incorporation of attractive causes such as economic aid or peacekeeping into their definitions of national interest. These are lessons that the unilateralists forget at their and our peril.

Britain in the nineteenth century and America in the second half of the twentieth century enhanced their power by creating liberal international economic rules and institutions that were consistent with the liberal and democratic structures of British and American capitalism—free trade and the gold standard in the case of Britain, the International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, and other institutions in the case of the United States. If a country can make its power legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. If its culture and ideology are attractive, others more willingly follow. If it can establish international rules that are consistent with its society, it will be less likely to have to change. If it can help support institutions that encourage other countries to channel or limit their activities in ways it prefers, it may not need as many costly carrots and sticks.

In short, the universality of a country’s culture and its ability to establish a set of favorable rules

and institutions that govern areas of international activity are critical sources of power. The values of democracy, personal freedom, upward mobility, and openness that are often expressed in American popular culture, higher education, and foreign policy contribute to American power in many areas. In the view of German journalist Josef Joffe, America's soft power "looms even larger than its economic and military assets. U.S. culture, low-brow or high, radiates outward with an intensity last seen in the days of the Roman Empire—but with a novel twist. Rome's and Soviet Russia's cultural sway stopped exactly at their military borders. America's soft power, though, rules over an empire on which the sun never sets."¹⁵

Of course, soft power is more than just cultural power. The values our government champions in its behavior at home (for example, democracy), in international institutions (listening to others), and in foreign policy (promoting peace and human rights) also affect the preferences of others. We can attract (or repel) others by the influence of our example. But soft power does not belong to the government in the same degree that hard power does. Some hard power assets (such as armed forces) are strictly governmental, others are inherently national (such as our oil and gas reserves), and many can be transferred to collective control (such as industrial assets that can be mobilized in an emergency). In contrast, many soft power resources are separate from American government and only partly responsive to its purposes. In the Vietnam era, for example, American

government policy and popular culture worked at cross-purposes. Today popular U.S. firms or non-governmental groups develop soft power of their own that may coincide or be at odds with official foreign policy goals. That is all the more reason for our government to make sure that its own actions reinforce rather than undercut American soft power. [A]ll these sources of soft power are likely to become increasingly important in the global information age of this new century. And, at the same time, the arrogance, indifference to the opinions of others, and narrow approach to our national interests advocated by the new unilateralists are a sure way to undermine our soft power.

Power in the global information age is becoming less tangible and less coercive, particularly among the advanced countries, but most of the world does not consist of postindustrial societies, and that limits the transformation of power. Much of Africa and the Middle East remains locked in preindustrial agricultural societies with weak institutions and authoritarian rulers. Other countries, such as China, India, and Brazil, are industrial economies analogous to parts of the West in the mid-twentieth century.¹⁶ In such a variegated world, all three sources of power—military, economic, and soft—remain relevant, although to different degrees in different relationships. However, if current economic and social trends continue, leadership in the information revolution and soft power will become more important in the mix. Table 2.1 provides a simplified

Table 2.1

Leading States and Their Power Resources, 1500–2000

Period	State	Major Resources
Sixteenth century	Spain	Gold bullion, colonial trade, mercenary armies, dynastic ties
Seventeenth century	Netherlands	Trade, capital markets, navy
Eighteenth century	France	Population, rural industry, public administration, army, culture (soft power)
Nineteenth century	Britain	Industry, political cohesion, finance and credit, navy, liberal norms (soft power), island location (easy to defend)
Twentieth century	United States	Economic scale, scientific and technical leadership, location, military forces and alliances, universalistic culture and liberal international regimes (soft power)
Twenty-first century	United States	Technological leadership, military and economic scale, soft power, hub of transnational communications

description of the evolution of power resources over the past few centuries.

Power in the twenty-first century will rest on a mix of hard and soft resources. No country is better endowed than the United States in all three dimensions—military, economic, and soft power. Our greatest mistake in such a world would be to fall into one-dimensional analysis and to believe that investing in military power alone will ensure our strength.

Balance or Hegemony?

America's power—hard and soft—is only part of the story. How others react to American power is equally important to the question of stability and governance in this global information age. Many realists extol the virtues of the classic nineteenth-century European balance of power, in which constantly shifting coalitions contained the ambitions of any especially aggressive power. They urge the United States to rediscover the virtues of a balance of power at the global level today. Already in the 1970s, Richard Nixon argued that “the only time in the history of the world that we have had any extended periods of peace is when there has been a balance of power. It is when one nation becomes infinitely more powerful in relation to its potential competitors that the danger of war arises.”¹⁷ But whether such multipolarity would be good or bad for the United States and for the world is debatable. I am skeptical.

War was the constant companion and crucial instrument of the multipolar balance of power. The classic European balance provided stability in the sense of maintaining the independence of most countries, but there were wars among the great powers for 60 percent of the years since 1500.¹⁸ Rote adherence to the balance of power and multipolarity may prove to be a dangerous approach to global governance in a world where war could turn nuclear.

Many regions of the world and periods in history have seen stability under hegemony—when one power has been preeminent. Margaret Thatcher warned against drifting toward “an Orwellian future of Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia—three mercantilist world empires on increasingly hostile terms. . . . In other words, 2095 might look like 1914 played on a somewhat larger stage.”¹⁹ Both the Nixon and Thatcher views are too mechanical because they ignore soft power. America is an exception, says Josef Joffe, “because the ‘hyper power’ is also the most alluring and seductive society in history. Napoleon had to rely on

bayonets to spread France's revolutionary creed. In the American case, Munichers and Muscovites *want* what the avatar of ultra-modernity has to offer.”²⁰

The term “balance of power” is sometimes used in contradictory ways. The most interesting use of the term is as a predictor about how countries will behave; that is, will they pursue policies that will prevent any other country from developing power that could threaten their independence? By the evidence of history, many believe, the current preponderance of the United States will call forth a countervailing coalition that will eventually limit American power. In the words of the self-styled realist political scientist Kenneth Waltz, “both friends and foes will react as countries always have to threatened or real predominance of one among them: they will work to right the balance. The present condition of international politics is unnatural.”²¹

In my view, such a mechanical prediction misses the mark. For one thing, countries sometimes react to the rise of a single power by “bandwagoning”—that is, joining the seemingly stronger rather than weaker side—much as Mussolini did when he decided, after several years of hesitation, to ally with Hitler. Proximity to and perceptions of threat also affect the way in which countries react.²² The United States benefits from its geographical separation from Europe and Asia in that it often appears as a less proximate threat than neighboring countries inside those regions. Indeed, in 1945, the United States was by far the strongest nation on earth, and a mechanical application of balancing theory would have predicted an alliance against it. Instead, Europe and Japan allied with the Americans because the Soviet Union, while weaker in overall power, posed a greater military threat because of its geographical proximity and its lingering revolutionary ambitions. . . . Nationalism can also complicate predictions. For example, if North Korea and South Korea are reunited, they should have a strong incentive to maintain an alliance with a distant power such as the United States in order to balance their two giant neighbors, China and Japan. But intense nationalism resulting in opposition to an American presence could change this if American diplomacy is heavy-handed. Non-state actors can also have an effect, as witnessed by the way cooperation against terrorists changed some states' behavior after September 2001.

A good case can be made that inequality of power can be a source of peace and stability. No matter how power is measured, some theorists

argue, an equal distribution of power among major states has been relatively rare in history, and efforts to maintain a balance have often led to war. On the other hand, inequality of power has often led to peace and stability because there was little point in declaring war on a dominant state. . . . Robert Gilpin has argued that “*Pax Britannica* and *Pax Americana*, like the *Pax Romana*, ensured an international system of relative peace and security.” And the economist Charles Kindleberger claimed that “for the world economy to be stabilized, there has to be a stabilizer, one stabilizer²³ Global governance requires a large state to take the lead. But how much and what kind of inequality of power is necessary—or tolerable—and for how long? If the leading country possesses soft power and behaves in a manner that benefits others, effective counter-coalitions may be slow to arise. If, on the other hand, the leading country defines its interests narrowly and uses its weight arrogantly, it increases the incentives for others to coordinate to escape its hegemony.

Some countries chafe under the weight of American power more than others. *Hegemony* is sometimes used as a term of opprobrium by political leaders in Russia, China, the Middle East, France, and others. The term is used less often or less negatively in countries where American soft power is strong. If hegemony means being able to dictate, or at least dominate, the rules and arrangements by which international relations are conducted, as Joshua Goldstein argues, then the United States is hardly a hegemon today.²⁴ It does have a predominant voice and vote in the International Monetary Fund, but it cannot alone choose the director. It has not been able to prevail over Europe and Japan in the World Trade Organization. It opposed the Land Mines Treaty but could not prevent it from coming into existence. The U.S. opposed Russia’s war in Chechnya and civil war in Colombia, but to no avail. If hegemony is defined more modestly as a situation where one country has significantly more power resources or capabilities than others, then it simply signifies American preponderance, not necessarily dominance or control.²⁵ Even after World War II, when the United States controlled half the world’s economic production (because all other countries had been devastated by the war), it was not able to prevail in all of its objectives.²⁶

Pax-Britannica in the nineteenth century is often cited as an example of successful hegemony, even though Britain ranked behind the United States and

Russia in GNP. Britain was never as superior in productivity to the rest of the world as the United States has been since 1945, but Britain also had a degree of soft power. Victorian culture was influential around the globe, and Britain gained in reputation when it defined its interests in ways that benefited other nations (for example, opening its markets to imports or eradicating piracy). America lacks a global territorial empire like Britain’s, but instead possesses a large, continental-scale home economy and has greater soft power. These differences between Britain and America suggest a greater staying power for American hegemony. Political scientist William Wohlforth argues that the United States is so far ahead that potential rivals find it dangerous to invite America’s focused enmity, and allied states can feel confident that they can continue to rely on American protection.²⁷ Thus the usual balancing forces are weakened.

Nonetheless, if American diplomacy is unilateral and arrogant, our preponderance would not prevent other states and non-state actors from taking actions that complicate American calculations and constrain our freedom of action.²⁸ For example, some allies may follow the American bandwagon on the largest security issues but form coalitions to balance American behavior in other areas such as trade or the environment. And diplomatic maneuvering short of alliance can have political effects. As William Safire observed when presidents Vladimir Putin and George W. Bush first met, “Well aware of the weakness of his hand, Putin is emulating Nixon’s strategy by playing the China card. Pointedly, just before meeting with Bush, Putin traveled to Shanghai to set up a regional cooperation semi-alliance with Jiang Zemin and some of his Asian fellow travelers.”²⁹ Putin’s tactics, according to one reporter, “put Mr. Bush on the defensive, and Mr. Bush was at pains to assert that America is not about to go it alone in international affairs.”³⁰

Pax Americana is likely to last not only because of unmatched American hard power but also to the extent that the United States “is uniquely capable of engaging in ‘strategic restraint,’ reassuring partners and facilitating cooperation.”³¹ The open and pluralistic way in which our foreign policy is made can often reduce surprises, allow others to have a voice, and contribute to our soft power. Moreover, the impact of American preponderance is softened when it is embodied in a web of multilateral institutions that allows others to participate in decisions and that act as a sort of world constitution to limit

the capriciousness of American power. That was the lesson we learned as we struggled to create an antiterrorist coalition in the wake of the September 2001 attacks. When the society and culture of the hegemon are attractive, the sense of threat and need to balance it are reduced.³² Whether other countries will unite to balance American power will depend on how the United States behaves as well as the power resources of potential challengers.

Notes

1. A. J. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), xxix.
2. Whether this would change with the proliferation of nuclear weapons to more states is hotly debated among theorists. Deterrence should work with most states, but the prospects of accident and loss of control would increase. For my views, see Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Nuclear Ethics* (New York: Free Press, 1986).
3. Robert Cooper, *The Postmodern State and the World Order* (London: Demos, 2000), 22.
4. John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).
5. Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), chapter 6.
6. Richard N. Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 16, 160.
7. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin, 1972), book I, chapter 1.
8. And in turn, as industrialization progressed and railroads were built, Germany feared the rise of Russia.
9. Henry Kissinger portrays four international systems existing side by side: the West (and Western Hemisphere), marked by democratic peace; Asia, where strategic conflict is possible; the Middle East, marked by religious conflict; and Africa, where civil wars threaten weak postcolonial states. “America at the Apex,” *The National Interest*, summer 2001, 14.
10. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Power and Interdependence*, 3rd ed. (New York: Longman, 2000), chapter 1.
11. James Carville quoted in Bob Woodward, *The Agenda: Inside the Clinton White House* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 302.
12. For a more detailed discussion, see Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), chapter 2. This builds on what Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz called the “second face of power” in “Decisions and Nondecisions: An Analytical Framework,” *American Political Science Review*, September 1963, 632–42.
13. Védérine, *France in an Age of Globalization*, 3.
14. The distinction between hard and soft power is one of degree, both in the nature of the behavior and in the tangibility of the resources. Both are aspects of the ability to achieve one’s purposes by affecting the behavior of others. Command power—the ability to change what others do—can rest on coercion or inducement. Co-optive power—the ability to shape what others want—can rest on the attractiveness of one’s culture and ideology or the ability to manipulate the agenda of political choices in a manner that makes actors fail to express some preferences because they seem to be too unrealistic. The forms of behavior between command and co-optive power range along a continuum: command power, coercion, inducement, agenda setting, attraction, co-optive power. Soft power resources tend to be associated with co-optive power behavior, whereas hard power resources are usually associated with command behavior. But the relationship is imperfect. For example, countries may be attracted to others with command power by myths of invincibility, and command power may sometimes be used to establish institutions that later become regarded as legitimate. But the general association is strong enough to allow the useful shorthand reference to hard and soft power.
15. Josef Joffe, “Who’s Afraid of Mr. Big?” *The National Interest*, summer 2001, 43.
16. See Cooper, *Postmodern State*; Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*.
17. Nixon quoted in James Chace and Nicholas X. Rizopoulos, “Towards a New Concert of Nations: An American Perspective,” *World Policy Journal*, fall 1999, 9.
18. Jack S. Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495–1975* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 97.
19. Margaret Thatcher, “Why America Must Remain Number One,” *National Review*, July 31, 1995, 25.
20. Josef Joffe, “Envy,” *The New Republic*, January 17, 2000, 6.
21. Kenneth Waltz, “Globalization and American Power,” *The National Interest*, spring 2000, 55–56.
22. Stephen Walt, “Alliance Formation and the Balance of Power,” *International Security*, spring 1985.
23. Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 144–45; Charles Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929–1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 305.
24. Joshua S. Goldstein, *Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 281.
25. See Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 235.
26. Over the years, a number of scholars have tried to predict the rise and fall of nations by developing a general historical theory of hegemonic transition. Some have tried to generalize from the experience of Portugal,

Spain, the Netherlands, France, and Britain. Others have focused more closely on Britain's decline in the twentieth century as a predictor for the fate for the United States. None of these approaches has been successful. Most of the theories have predicted that America would decline long before now. Vague definitions and arbitrary schematizations alert us to the inadequacies of such grand theories. Most try to squeeze history into procrustean theoretical beds by focusing on particular power resources while ignoring others that are equally important. Hegemony can be used as a descriptive term (though it is sometimes fraught with emotional overtones), but grand hegemonic theories are weak in predicting future events. See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Politics of the World Economy: The States, the Movements, and the Civilizations: Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 38, 41; George Modelski, "The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State," *Comparative Studies in Society and*

History, April 1978; George Modelski, *Long Cycles in World Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987). For a detailed discussion, see Nye, *Bound to Lead*, chapter 2.

27. William Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security* 24, 1 (summer 1999): 5–41.

28. Stephen Walt, "Keeping the World 'Off-Balance': Self-Restraint and US Foreign Policy," Kennedy School Research Working Paper Series 00–013, October 2000.

29. William Safire, "Putin's China Card," *New York Times*, June 18, 2001, A29.

30. Patrick Tyler, "Bush and Putin Look Each Other in the Eye," *New York Times*, June 17, 2001, A10.

31. Ikenberry, "Institutions, Strategic Restraint," 47; also Ikenberry, "Getting Hegemony Right," *The National Interest*, spring 2001, 17–24.

32. Josef Joffe, "How America Does It," *Foreign Affairs*, September–October 1997.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Below are lists of works on realism categorized by theme; these lists only scratch the surface of a very rich, extensive literature. As with any such taxonomy, the categories overlap as do the works within them. Nevertheless, we hope they will be helpful as an overview of representative works (or parts of them) that are reflective of the realist image of international relations.

- On Classical and Neoclassical Realism
- On Realism and Structural Realism (Neorealism)
- On Power, Balance of Power, Anarchy, and Security
- On War, Its Causes, and Remedies
- On Leadership, Hegemony, and Hegemonic Stability
- On Power, War, and Peace: Rational Choice and Statistical Analyses
- On Deterrence
- On Anarchy and Cooperation under Anarchy
- On Empires
- On International Political Economy
- On Long Cycles, History, and International Relations Theory
- Other, Earlier Work in the Field
- Realist Critiques, Challenges, and Modifications

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