REEVALUATING REALISM FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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INTRODUCTION

The rapidity of growth in alternative, subaltern, or postmodern and poststructuralist theories in international relations has partly been in response to the alleged inadequacy of earlier theories in the field, particularly realism. Realist authors, so easily reliable for descriptions, explanations, and prescriptions for international relations amongst the great powers, are now regularly derided for their continued attention to power, dominance, anarchy, force, and states. After all, with state borders rendered increasingly porous by the forces of globalization and with states, particularly weak ones, regularly demonstrating that the monopoly on violence no longer belongs solely to them, the adherence to the principles of realism for understanding international relations appears to be both misguided and archaic.

The above arguments are commonly accepted and espoused by opponents of realism. If, however, a true paradigmatic shift in international relations away from realist theories, or at the very least a definitive rebuttal of the applicability of realism to international relations theory and policy, is to be declared, then a thorough analysis of realism in relation to the questions it seeks to answer must be made. This thesis will seek to provide that analysis. To do so, it will summarize the broad area of realism and realist authors, beginning with the earliest realists and onward to the contemporary debates amongst the neo-realists today. It will then attempt to draw out the core arguments of the major realist theories, classical realism, defensive realism, and offensive realism. These core components are the anarchical structure of international relations, the continued importance of state power (and thus the analysis of security through state-centric lenses),
and power. Though each strand of realist theory claims uniqueness by virtue of a few set elements, this thesis will argue that the core components of each of the sub-theories are not only what define them all as realist but are also coherent and aligned between each of the sub-theories.

I draw heavily upon another neo-realist scholar for inspiration. Though his work has largely focused on a narrow subset of neo-realism, namely military emulation amongst states, his broader aim to rearticulate neo-realism for a subject area not necessarily associated with the theory gives me hope that my project is indeed a viable one. Joao Resende-Santos writes in his book, *Neorealism, States, and the Modern Mass Army*,

Presently, there is no theory of emulation in neorealism aside from a loose collection of propositions that are undeveloped, inconsistent, and incomplete. To construct such a theory, several amendments of neorealism are necessary, albeit consistent with neorealism’s explanatory logic... My work unearths an undeveloped dimension of neorealism – its second image reversed logic. It refines and extends a powerful theoretical tradition to new questions, to a new empirical puzzle, to new (non-European) historical cases, and in new directions hitherto overlooked. Given the central theoretical standing of emulation (and balancing) in the theory, correcting and elaborating its treatment of emulation involves reexamining neorealism’s entire explanatory infrastructure and inner logic. While explaining a historical puzzle, the work shows the theory has much greater explanatory reach, and greater empirical and historical application, than both critics and defenders recognize.¹

Resende-Santos’ book shows that reappraisals of theory can and should occur. The theories themselves are products of a specific historical moment – they were written to explain certain historical phenomenon and to offer insight in such a way as to elucidate future occurrences. Every once in a while, however, these theories must be reevaluated.

because while the systemic constraints parameters may not have changed, certain
elements within the system have. In this case, the growing presence of non-state actors
coupled with the decreased likelihood of wars between great powers has drastically
altered the international security situation. Today’s newspapers cover intrastate conflicts
in Sudan and Somalia while interstate conflicts are much more along the lines of
questions of occupation, such as Iraq or China and Tibet, rather than epic battles fought
between standing armies on clearly marked battlefields.

A summary of the broad concepts within realism will make up the first and
second chapters. I start with E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau to understand realism from
its origins. Certainly, other important political thinkers have been touted as realists,
particularly Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes, but E.H. Carr and Hans
Morgenthau were the first two writers focused on providing a theory of international
relations. Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes and others like them were historians,
storytellers, and normative political theorists and while they shared the same worldview
that has shaped the thinking of realist international relations theorists, they were not
focused on precisely the same issues. Because the body of realist work is so vast I have
chosen only a few of its most preeminent writers. As such, I move on from Carr and
Morgenthau to Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer. Waltz is arguably the most
important of the “structural neorealists.” Mearsheimer and his followers, on the other
hand, are known as offensive neorealists. Mearsheimer, accordingly, is commonly
recognized as the founder of offensive neorealism.

Despite their many differences, each of these authors shares some very basic core
assumptions and arguments. These shared elements are what make up the core of realism
and these elements are similarly why these writers continue to be categorized as realists instead of, say, very belligerent neo-liberal institutionalists. While Chapter One explores how the most important strands of realism have evolved over the last seventy years, Chapter Two will return to the question of a broader realist framework. I will discuss the implications of anarchy, state centric analyses, and power within the realist framework. These core tenets, I argue, comprise not just a larger framework but also a much broader, more comprehensive set of postulates from which to derive a whole host of theoretical answers. In other words, rather than trying to assess realism based on its individual components, I will try to assess the sum total of realism. Many of the critics of realism attack specific components or even specific authors and then expand the argument to conclude the entirety of realism must therefore be tossed aside in the rubbish pile of international relations. These variations of realism, however, are "further articulations and specifications under new or more stringent conditions" of a larger realist paradigm, ones that assume certain core beliefs about the international system and the study of international relations.² Thus, before we are to toss aside the entirety of realism, we must first return to the beginning, to understand the point of departure for these many further articulations and the sources of so much controversy.

Because I will not review the major theoretical challenges to realism at length, this is a good opportunity to discuss them in brief. Liberalism and neoliberalism are the most commonly cited sources of challenges to the realist school. These schools are far from consistent, however, in their various modes of attack on realist thought and summarizing them is difficult. The two major avenues used to derail realist arguments

hinge on refutations of the realist conception of anarchy or on a re-articulation of anarchy such that cooperation is indeed possible. Yet another major point of divergence, one that is repeated in inter-theoretical debates between realists and constructivists, feminists, or

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3 For a good overview of basic liberal and neoliberal arguments against realism, see David A. Baldwin, *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) and Robert O. Keohane, *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). Globalization as an economic and technological movement is helping to validate many of the neoliberal claims of cooperation under anarchy. In fact, some of the globalization advocates argue, these forces are so corrosive on the Westphalian state system that even multilateral cooperation or international regimes composed of individual states are being undercut by non-state actors and “new ways of cooperation.” The end result is that there is a fundamental change in who the central actors in international relations are. Rather than emphasizing only states as the realists do, these theorists point out the growing importance of “the state, transnational actors, and identity entrepreneurs.” See Betrand Badie, “Realism Under Praise, or a Requiem? The Paradigmatic Debate in International Relations,” *International Political Science Review* 22, no. 3 (2001): 253-260.


5 J. Ann Tickner’s book, *Gendering World Politics*, is a fairly comprehensive review of major feminist approaches to international relations while her article, “Hans Morgenthau’s Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation,” based on her dissertation, is a specific rebuttal to the realist writings of Hans Morgenthau. See J. Ann Tickner, *Gendering World Politics: Issues and Approaches in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) and J. Ann Tickner, “Hans Morgenthau’s Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 17, no. 3 (1988): 428-440. One of the fundamental ways that feminism challenges realism is to demand a greater emphasis on the study of women, whether it be women in powerful positions or women who play less traditional roles in foreign policy. Cynthia Enloe narrates stories of such women, including diplomatic wives and female civilians employed on military bases. When scholars include these portraits into a larger narrative of international relations and history, they find important linkages between the role of women in society and other key variables that more traditional forms of international relations seek to explain. See Craig N. Murphy, “Seeing Women, Recognizing Gender, Recasting International Relations,” *International Organization* 50, no. 3 (Summer 1996): 513-38. Another aspect of the feminist critiques of realism is heavily grounded in the notion that “gender-based value differences” lead to “contrasting values and conceptions of politics and security, language, and power.” See Mary Caprioli and Mark A. Boyer, “Gender, Violence, and International Crisis,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45, no. 4 (August 2001): 504. The realist conceptions of these terms, then, become marred by their masculine interpretations and as a result simply reify the violence that they bring to their theory. Violence in the international system is not a matter of fact but rather the reification on the global level of masculine propensities for violence. See J.
peace studies theorists is the intrinsically evil nature of human nature. While there are some realists, most notably the classical realist E.H. Carr, who do hold a more nuanced view of human nature, the vast majority of realists can be categorized as having a decidedly poor opinion of the intrinsic goodness of humanity. Some challengers to realism do in fact share its fundamental distrust in human nature. Post-structuralists such as Michael Foucault, Edward Said, and David Campbell see violence and oppression embedded within all aspects of political life. These authors, who arguably belong to a larger tradition of critical theory, face opposition from other critical authors who share the larger goal of engaging in a sociological and philosophical inquiry into social realities so that “all the circumstances that enslave human beings” might be eradicated. Since the arguments against realism are far too complex to cover adequately within the scope of this thesis, I will focus instead on providing a generalized response to what I feel to be the most salient theoretical challenges. The final chapter of the theoretical section will be a response to those criticisms, drawing largely from the second chapter. Using the discussion of the core tenets of realism, I hope to argue that the broad framework of realism provides many of the answers to its challenges, even when those challenges are aimed directly at the core assumptions. On that same token, for challenges that are

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6 For a brief introduction and review of alternative security approaches, see Carolyn Stephenson,  
largely responsive to specific authors or subsets of realism, I believe a return to the core
tenets will provide adequate responses to the challenges posed by realism’s critics.

Following the theoretical section, this thesis will then address one of the
contemporary issues in international security that have been identified as posing the
greatest challenges to the continued relevancy of realism (transnational terrorism) and
assess the descriptive, explanatory, and prescriptive power of not only the core
components of realism but also the three sub-theories. Realism’s continued ability to
provide prescriptive analysis is particularly important because theory, as the intellectual
underpinnings of foreign policy, can inform and advise policy makers on the many
difficulties they face. By providing a crystallized understanding of the history and
trajectory of international relations, realism can drastically improve the policy maker’s
ability to assess the issue at hand, make a judgment, and produce sound policy. Finally,
by way of conclusion, I hope to offer a distilled realism, one structured from its
predecessors and drawing from their insights but that addresses specifically the
challenges to international security today and for the foreseeable future.
CHAPTER ONE

The development of a realist theory of international relations begins with E.H. Carr’s monumental, albeit delightfully concise, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis*. Focusing on the twenty years between the first and second world wars, Carr’s analysis also includes an astonishing coverage of the history of international relations and foreign policy in Europe and the United States since the foundation of the modern nation-state system following the Thirty Years War in 1648. Drawing heavily on the writings of Machiavelli, Carr outlines “the three essential tenets in Machiavelli’s doctrine” that are the “foundation-stones of the realist philosophy.” First, history is a “sequence of cause and effect, whose course can be analyzed and understood by intellectual effort, but not … directed by ‘imagination.’” Secondly, theory must be derived from practice. Thirdly, “politics are not … a function of ethics, but ethics of politics … Morality is the product of power.”

Some comments on these foundation-stones are necessary. First, though these are the intellectual assumptions upon which much of the realist philosophy is based, they are different from the theoretical assumptions upon which a realist theory of international relations is based. Those theoretical assumptions as well as the resultant core tenets of the theory itself, through derived largely from the epistemological foundations of realism, are

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8 I spend the bulk of my focus on the words of Carr and the other authors. While much has been written interpreting and reinterpreting these theorists, I believe that since much of my argument is predicated on the fact that arguments against realists are the result of inadequately thorough readings of these seminal works, it would serve my purposes best to rely heavily on their words first. The secondary and tertiary analyses of other authors will be incorporated into later chapters.


10 Carr, 63.

11 Carr, 64.

12 Carr, 64.
significantly different in both form and function. A more thorough discussion of those assumptions and tenets will be provided later as I explore the possibility of a core of the entire realist tradition. Secondly, we see immediately why the realists call themselves "realists." Carr maintains that history as it has occurred has followed a set pattern and scholarship on the past must be explanatory and descriptive but never normative. Here is the point where he demarcates Carr the realist from Carr the idealist who actually concludes the book. What is interesting is that while theory is derived from practice, meaning theoretical understandings of international relations must be premised upon events that actually occurred, there is the sense that having learned the lessons of history, Carr believes in the possibility of change. He will hint at the role of explanatory realism for transforming international politics when he writes later in the book, "But we cannot ultimately find a resting place in pure realism; for realism, though logically overwhelming, does not provide us with the springs of action which are necessary even to the pursuit of thought ... In politics, the belief that certain facts are unalterable or certain trends irresistible commonly reflects a lack of desire or lack of interest to change or resist them." After all, mankind will "revolt against naked power." The transition from Carr the analyst to Carr the idealist only becomes crystallized, however, after his conclusion when we realize that though he is a realist when he analyzes international politics, he is an idealist, even a utopian, when he considers possibilities for the future of international relations. In this sense, Carr is anything but the determinist.

The most significant of the three foundation stones is perhaps the third – the notion that morality is ultimately the product of power. There are several implications of

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13 Carr, 89.
14 Carr, 236.
this statement. First, while Carr does not explicitly deny the possibility of a universal morality, he does reject the idea that universal morality is fairly and equally applied. What morals exist and are enforced, he suggests, is simply the product of a political decision made by those in power. The morality at any given point in history is conditioned by a specific set of historical and political circumstances. Yet it is his inability to deny the possibility of a universal morality that adds real depth to his analysis. Much as Carr the analyst provides the intellectual basis for Carr the idealist, Carr admits the necessary recognition by even realists that morality does exist, albeit in a subordinate role, in international politics: "Politics cannot be divorced from power. But the *homo politicus* who pursues nothing but power is as unreal a myth as the *homo economicus* who pursues nothing but gain."\(^{16}\)

Carr is not a realist, as Hobbes was, who believes in the innate brutality and evil of human nature. Politics, after all is not dominated by sociopaths but by *homo politicus* whose actions are "based on a co-ordination of morality and power."\(^{17}\) But he does believe that morality, followed by law, is enforced by a centralized, strong authority wielding power.\(^{18}\) This of course explains why he believes that states, like individuals, have a certain morality but that they are no obligated to behave as morally as individuals are.\(^{19}\) Though states have obligations to other states and indeed to individuals, they are rarely bound to meet those obligations by anything other their own interests. The absence of a centralized authority over states is the defining characteristic of the international

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\(^{15}\) For Carr, all ideas, even those driving the realists, are ultimately conditioned by their historical circumstance. See Carr, 89.

\(^{16}\) Carr, 97.

\(^{17}\) Carr.

\(^{18}\) He also believes that once acquired, power should be used in the service of asserting moral authority. See Carr, 98.

\(^{19}\) Carr, 157.
system that Carr remarks upon. In 1939, the time of the first edition of The Twenty Years’ Crisis, the League of Nations had already proven itself inadequate as an international organization tasked at managing global politics and ensuring peace and stability. Carr sums up the failure of the League and the trend of a lacking authority in international relations:

In international politics, there is no organized power charged with the task of creating harmony; and the temptation to assume a natural harmony is therefore particularly strong. But this is no excuse for burking the issue. To make the harmonization of interests the goal of political action is not the same thing as to postulate that a natural harmony of interests exists; and it is this latter postulate which has caused so much confusion in international thinking.²⁰

By the end of book, we realize that Carr himself wishes for the harmonization of interests in global politics but what is most important for his theory of international relations as it existed was that there was no such synchronization at the time. Without the coordination of state interests amongst themselves, the systemic anarchy of the international system leads to all states simply pursuing their interests. These interests, of course, revolve around the acquisition and maintenance of a state’s power.

The amount of power that a state has is directly correlated with its position in global politics. Thus, states seek power vis-à-vis each other. The game that states play in seeking power is what Carr calls “power politics.” Power politics refers not simply to states with less power seeking to increase their standing, however. As Carr insists, “It is necessary at this point to dispel the current illusion that the policy of those states which are, broadly speaking, satisfied with the status quo and who watchword is “security,” is somehow less concerned with power than the policy of the dissatisfied states, and that the

²⁰ Carr, 51.
The popular phrase “power politics” applies to acts of the latter but not to those of the former.\(^{21}\) In other words, the simple act of maintaining one’s standing in the status quo often requires actions which are just as likely to be categorized as offensive, aggressive, or power-hungry as those normally associated with power politics. The calm of an orderly status quo simply hides the turbulence of the power politics beneath the surface.

Noting that several (European) wars in the 18\(^{\text{th}}\) and 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century were “defensive or preventive in character,” Carr explains that wars are fought “in order that [states] might not find themselves in a more unfavorable position in some future war.” Drawing upon his earlier conclusions that powerful states are rarely simply trying to peacefully preserve the status quo, Carr writes that the inevitability of turmoil of the international system can only lead to the dismal fact that “the exercise of power always appears to beget the appetite for more power.”\(^{22}\)

Carr outlines three components of power: military, economic, and “power over opinion.” Though these are separate components for the sake of theoretical simplicity, they are intricately interwoven and “in its essence, power is an indivisible whole.”\(^{23}\) The state’s military power is so important because of the fact that “the \textit{ultima ratio} of power in international relations is war.” Carr continues, “Every act of the state, in its power aspect, is directed to war, not as a desirable weapon, but as a weapon which it may require in the last resort to use … Potential war being thus a dominant factor in international politics, military strength becomes a recognized standard of political

\(^{21}\) Carr, 105.\(^{22}\) Carr, 112.\(^{23}\) Carr, 108.
values."24 Thus we see that the threat of force is equally as important an element in international relations as the actual use of force.25 Of course, the ability to wage war is not only a means to a state’s political goals but also an “end in itself” because military power is “an essential element in the life of the state.”26

Economic power is closely associated with military power so thus it is important. Also, the modern nation-state is closely associated with the “emergence of a new middle class economically based on industry and trade” and trade and finance are key linchpins of a successful state. Accordingly, the continued acquisition of wealth is simply a normal function of the state.27 Carr does note, however, that the association of wealth with the nation-state is largely the product of how European states came to power.28 Thus, the association is largely one of assumption and previous example, not one of determined future. Though he continues his exposition on the relationship between economics and state power, these are of course predicated on the notion that the unit of analysis of international relations is the nation-state. While he will only return to this question of the survival of the nation-state as a viable governing unit in his conclusion of Twenty Years’ Crisis, the brief hint that he was always concerned with the development of the international system at large and not simply with explaining the system as he saw it at the time suggests a Carr whose work borders on the prescient rather than merely descriptive.

The third component of power is power over opinion which Carr defines as the ability to mobilize either a state’s domestic population or foreign ones in that state’s

24 Carr, 109.
25 Carr, 216.
26 Carr, 111.
27 Carr, 113-4.
28 Carr, 114.
favor. In his discussion about the role of propaganda in the state’s efforts to gain power over opinion, he reveals yet another layer of analysis regarding international morality that had earlier not been explored. Whereas hitherto he asserted the existence of an international morality, however weak and subordinate to power politics, he has yet to offer an explanation for such existence. We know international morality exists, he explains, because the “fact that national propaganda everywhere so eagerly cloaks itself in ideologies of a professedly international character proves the existence of an international common stock of ideas, however limited and weakly held, to which appeals can be made, and of a belief that these common ideas stand somehow in the scale of values above national interests.”

What is most interesting about this passage is not that it provides a rather persuasive argument regarding the existence of international morality but that it provides a rationale for assuming its existence. Carr is introducing, well before Alexander Wendt, the possibility that a mere belief or willingness to believe in an international morality or international community can constitute its existence. He explicitly makes this essentially constructivist argument later when he writes, “There is a world community for the reason (and for no other) that people talk, and within certain limits behave, as if there were a world community.”

The fact that Carr clearly believes that the constructed nature of these concepts has greatly weakened them and also the fact that he clearly expects the manipulation of such lofty ideas by some selfish state power is beside the point. What is so much more important is Carr’s discussion that “reality” can not only be contingent upon the

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29 Carr, 132.
30 Carr, 145.
31 Carr, 162.
circumstances surrounding the effort to understand and describe reality but also that reality can ultimately be shaped by our very desires. This is, after all, the crux of his hope in the conclusion — the notion that having witnessed the worst (at least for the time being) that international politics could offer in the form of World War I, his realist theories could provide the linchpin for a transformative vision of international relations that would actually eradicate the need for realism.

Carr begins his transformative vision by questioning his earlier proclamations that the nation-state is the “ultimate group unit of human society.” He asks, “Are the largest and most comprehensive units of political power in the world necessarily of a territorial character? ... If so, will they continue to take approximately the form of the contemporary nation-state?” He asks these questions because though “it is difficult for contemporary man even to imagine a world in which political power would be organized on a basis not of territory, but of race, creed or class ... few things are permanent in history; and it would be rash to assume that the territorial unit of power is one of them.”

Such a change has two possibilities. First, the “abandonment” of the nation-state system would be “so revolutionary little that holds true of international politics in the present period would apply to the new dispensation.” “International relations” would no longer exist, being supplanted “by a new set of group relationships” and explained not by realism but by a new set of theories. Second, this transformation can be pulled away from power politics if and only if another drastic change in international politics occurs.

This change stems from Carr’s observation of a transition from profit-driven motives in

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32 Carr, 228.  
33 Carr, 228-9.  
34 Carr, 229.  
35 Carr, 229.
domestic economics throughout Europe and the United States to a more holistic economic policy that emphasizes employment, social stability, and equitable distribution over profit, consumption, and maximum production.\textsuperscript{36} He concludes that the social responsibility society will learn from these transitions will inevitably make it "less difficult to realize that these social ends cannot be limited by a national frontier."\textsuperscript{37} As Carr saw it, "So long as power wholly dominates international relations, the subordination of every other advantage to military necessity intensifies the crisis, and gives a foretaste of the totalitarian character of war itself. But once the issue of power is settled, and morality resumes its role, the situation is not without hope."\textsuperscript{38} But with the increasing awareness of social ends outside of power, Carr argues that the utopian vision of an economically driven transformation of international relations away from power politics is possible.

What Carr does not explain is whether or not the nation-state needs to be eradicated in order for his transformative economic policies to occur. This is a crucial gap in his argument. Are nation-states particularly prone to power politics or is it the larger notions of competition? He does suggest that any group organization is likely to be co-opted by mankind to create conflict with other groups\textsuperscript{39} but he does not explain whether he thinks nation-states are more likely to create conflict and engage in power politics than other ways to divide humanity. Furthermore, his analysis of the economic transformation still seems predicated on the continuance of the nation-state model. I can only conclude that Carr is offering two possibilities for lasting peace. Either nation-states engage in less

\textsuperscript{36} Carr, 238.
\textsuperscript{37} Carr, 239.
\textsuperscript{38} Carr, 238.
\textsuperscript{39} See Carr, 231.
competitive economic policies domestically and abroad or mankind learns to cease dividing itself along categorical groupings, forming an international solidarity as opposed to an international community of still disparate groups. Of course, an international solidarity that practices social development and drives economic policies is an option too. There is no evidence in Carr to suggest he would think the latter two options are even remotely possible, particularly since his concluding comments about the failure of world federations and the League of Nations reveal lasting contempt for such organizations. We are left then, with Carr’s hopes for peace pinned upon socially-grounded economic policies.

By 1948, with the publishing of Hans J. Morgenthau’s *Politics Among Nations*, it had become all too clear that not very many policy makers had heeded Carr’s advice. His transformative vision had not come to fruition. World War II, which saw the deployment of the most devastating weapons ever used in war, genocide of unparalleled dimensions, and the slaughter of millions of young men on the battlefield and scores more of innocent civilians off of it, demonstrated once more the devastating ability of nation-states to engage in war. The threat of force had escalated not just into the use of force but total war. Not much had changed in the international system since Carr’s work. International relations, according to Morgenthau, were still defined “as a continuing effort to maintain and to increase the power of one’s own nation and to keep in check or reduce the power of other nations” and it remained “like all politics, a struggle for power.”

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41 Morgenthau, 29.
Like Carr, Morgenthau begins with an exposition of the principles of reason. First, politics "is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature." This is less a comment on the quality of human nature than an emphasis on the objectivity of history and the need to study history according to the trends and patterns it presents. Second, "interests defined in terms of power" are the key explanatory variable in international relations. Third, these interests do not have a fixed meaning throughout history. Thus, power, while being a fixed constant, can take on various forms and functions dependent on the historical circumstance. Germany's quest for territorial domination during World War II was an example of its drive for power but Morgenthau would just as likely have understood Taiwan's recent, and failed, attempts to gain diplomatic recognition from Papua New Guinea as efforts to gain more power. Fourth, prudence, which Morgenthau explains as "the weighing of consequences of alternative political actions," is the "supreme virtue in politics." It is what allows policy makers to juggle the delicate balance between morality and power when making foreign policy decisions. Fifth, realism "refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe." Here Morgenthau echo's Carr's assertion that a state's claim to universal morality is more often than not its own interests couched within the language of a larger moral code. Finally, Morgenthau admits that political realists emphasize power over other facts of reality such as wealth or legal matters because they are primarily interested in politics before ethics, economics, or legal

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42 Morgenthau, 4.
42 Morgenthau, 5.
44 Morgenthau, 12.
45 Morgenthau, 12.
jurisdiction. This last point is a defense against accusations that realists focus too heavily on power. As Morgenthau puts it, the realist is no more at fault for focusing on power than the economist is of emphasizing wealth.

Like Carr and unlike later realists, Morgenthau does not belabor the point of anarchy in the international system. Instead, the concept is automatically assumed within the text. States are the central units of measure and action within the international system and while they hold sovereignty and dominion over their respective territories and peoples, there is nothing in the international system that wields the power over states as states do over their own people. Because there is no such controlling power and because all international politics is ultimately a struggle for power on the part of its state actors, "the aspiration for power on the part of several nations, each trying to maintain or overthrow the status quo, leads of necessity to a configuration that is called the balance of power and to policies aimed at persevering it."47

Before we discuss further Morgenthau’s use of “balance of power” and the “status quo,” however, we must first establish what he means by power and how one is to measure it. In an effort to quantify power, Morgenthau writes that there are several elements of power. The chart below lists these elements.48 Naturally, some of these elements lend themselves to an easier measurement than others. The quantity of armed forces and its military technology, for example, is infinitely easier to measure than either the quality of a state’s armed forces or its leadership. Furthermore, no single factor is

46 Morgenthau, 13.
47 Morgenthau, 179.
48 See Morgenthau, 122-162.
adequate as a determinate for a state’s overall level of power. Finally, a basic computation, however vague because of the qualitative nature of some of the elements, can only provide at best a measure of a state’s absolute power. This value, however, is different from its relative power, which we compute by comparing one state’s absolute power to another state’s. It is this relative power of each state that is most important for Morgenthau.  

49 Morgenthau, 168.  
50 Morgenthau, 166.
This process of computation and comparison of states’ powers is a trying process and it poses unique challenges to the diplomats and policy makers of these states. Whereas for the scholar, it simply poses an interesting academic question, for states that must constantly assess their standing in the international arena against their peers, the calculation of power, and thus the maintenance of a balance of power is of vital importance. 

51 This table is compiled from Morgenthau, 122-162.
importance. Additionally, while the balance of power nominally refers to the efforts of states to maintain the status quo, Morgenthau is quick to remind his readers that he does not mean a static policy when he refers to a policy of the status quo. Rather, he is referring to any and all actions taken to maintain "the distribution of power as it exists at a particular moment in history." Thus, such policies are not necessarily opposed to all change, only the changes which would "amount to a reversal of the power relations among two or more nations." What Morgenthau means to say is not that the status quo is automatically acceptable to all states but rather that states will work to maintain the status quo if and only if there is a roughly equitable distribution of power throughout the system. Reaching this stage, however, requires that states assessing the balance of power in the world to all conclude concurrently that a stable balance has been reached. There are a myriad of problems with this scenario.

While the application of the neat symbolism of a scale from the world of mechanical precision to political science made for an excellent way to crystallize a difficult concept, Morgenthau concedes that the "rational calculation of the relative strength of nations, which is the very lifeblood of the balance of power, becomes a series of guesses the correctness of which can be ascertained only in retrospect." As a result, the "uncertainty of all power calculations not only makes the balance of power incapable of practical application but leads also to its very negation in practice." So long as states engage in any struggle for power, the instability of any precarious balance can only result

52 Morgenthau, 54.
53 Morgenthau, 215.
54 Morgenthau, 218.
in "the limitless aspiration for power." The very notion of the balance of power then becomes highly ironic – in their quest for a balance, states inevitably engage in ever-escalating power struggles that will never actually result in any tangible, stable balance.

There are, however, some potential sources for a restraining influence on such ceaseless battles for power. Morgenthau explains that balance of power politics led to a stable modern-state system in the 18th and 19th centuries because it was restrained by an international society bound by moral consensus. He argues that Europeans and in particular the aristocratic diplomats of the era "knew Europe as ‘one great republic’ with common standards of ‘politeness and cultivation’ and a common ‘system of arts, and laws, and manners’" and that such knowledge “imposed ‘moderations’ upon their actions and instilled in all of them ‘some sense of honor and justice.’” Morgenthau offers a few examples of international moral consensus. He explains that states do not permit foreign policies of mass extermination as a means to its end not because of “considerations of political expediency” but rather because such actions are prohibited by “absolute moral principle, which must be obeyed regardless of considerations of national advantage.”

Here, we see one of the key differences between Carr and Morgenthau. While Carr in his conclusion essentially admits his own idealism and utopianism in wishing for the creation of a world system driven by morality and not simply by power, he maintains that these are normative suggestions for the future of international relations. There is little within the main body of *The Twenty Years’ Crisis* to suggest that Carr saw any such morally-bound reservations as Morgenthau claims to have witnessed. In fact, Morgenthau’s claim

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55 Morgenthau, 219.
56 Morgenthau, 229.
57 Morgenthau, 244.
seems to contradict his own exposition on the fourth principle of realism, namely that all foreign policy be based on prudence.

While he never fully recognizes the contradiction, he does regain some of his cynicism when he declares that however much foreign policy in the 18th and 19th centuries was bound by immutable moral codes, by the 20th century, international morality had deteriorated so far as to no longer have a restraining effect on the escalating nature of the balance of politics.\textsuperscript{58} He writes,

\begin{quote}
This fragmentation of a formerly cohesive international society into a multiplicity of morally self-sufficient national communities, which have ceased to operate within a common framework of moral precepts, is but the outward symptom of the profound change that in recent times has transformed the relations between universal moral precepts and the particular systems of national ethics. The transformation has proceeded in two different ways. It has weakened, to the point of ineffectiveness, the universal, supranational moral rules of conduct, which before the age of nationalism had imposed a system — however precarious and wide-meshed — of limitations upon the foreign policies of individual nations. Conversely, it has greatly strengthened the tendency of individual nations to endow their particular national systems of ethics with universal validity.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

One will recall that it is this particular tendency which both Carr and Morgenthau earlier in his fifth principle of realism worked so diligently to discredit. It is interesting that Morgenthau attributes the phenomenon to the deterioration of international morality to the forces of democratic change during the 20th century while Carr noted its nonexistence as a key component of international politics during the age of the nation-state. Having finally acquiesced to Carr’s contention that there is no international morality, however, Morgenthau’s continued description of the causes of such a dearth in “world opinion” is eloquent enough to quote at length:

\begin{footnotes}
\item[58] Morgenthau, 251.
\item[59] Morgenthau, 259.
\end{footnotes}
The same moral and political concepts take on different meanings in different environments. Justice and democracy came to mean one thing here, something quite different there. A move on the international scene decried by one group as immoral and unjust is praised by another as the opposite. Thus the contrast between the community of psychological traits and elemental aspirations, on the one hand, and the absence of shared experiences, universal moral convictions, and common political aspirations, on the other, far from providing evidence for the existence of a world public opinion rather demonstrates its impossibility, as humanity is constituted in our age.60

The crux of the transition away from the international society of earlier centuries is the distinctly new processes of nationalism unique to the 20th century which, according to Morgenthau, is actually a nationalistic universalism that “claims for one nation and one state the right to impose its own valuations and standards of action upon all the other nations.”61

His logic here is alarmingly circular. Changes in domestic political structures after the 19th century led to a deterioration of international society and moral consensus which in turn led to nationalist universalism which is today the cause of the lack of a viable international society or moral consensus. A generous reading would allow Morgenthau the interpretation that once a world society completely disappears, a vicious cycle of virulent nationalism and the balance of power can only perpetuate the impossibility of another world society. And while I agree that that was largely Morgenthau’s intent, I suspect that his logical inconsistency stems from his earlier characterization of international politics as having a viable world society at one point in time. This inconsistency from other portions of the text not only weakened his overall arguments about realism in general but placed him in the precarious position of doing precisely what

60 Morgenthau, 273.
61 Morgenthau, 339.
Carr set about to discredit – attributing to reality and history things that are actually ideals. Prudence has always played a far greater role in any state’s foreign policy than a nebulous notion of a universal moral values but since a better, more stable, and harmonious world relies on the creation of such universal values, it is far easier to achieve (and more legitimate to even wish to achieve) such lofty goals if one explains that history has seen such phenomena before.

Kenneth Waltz set out to correct what he felt were deficiencies in classical realism by offering a new, neorealist theory of international relations. Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics*, originally published in 1979, claimed to differ from the classical realists in that his contained a much more focused emphasis on the constraining effects of the system of international relations on the actions of states. Because Waltz’s central argument was that the structure of the international system defined, more or less, the scope of international relations, subsequent political scientists have referred to his work as structural neorealism and most have recognized his emphasis on the structure of the system as a departure from the classicists. For Carr and Morgenthau, the drive for power was an inherent part of the state’s objectives. While both discuss the role of anarchy in conflating miscalculations and stoking conflicts, neither address the international system’s structural anarchy as the sufficient cause of states’ pushes for power.

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63 This clean demarcation between the classical realists and the neorealists is, I believe, more a function of academia’s demands for niches rather than taking stock of available thought. I will discuss the actual role of anarchy in Carr and Morgenthau’s work as I assess the question of anarchy in the next chapter.
Systemic anarchy plays a far greater role in Waltz’s analysis. It creates an international system of “self-help” whereby states are forced to maximize their chances of survival. Under this system of self-help, states at a minimum strive for self-preservation and at a maximum strive for world domination.64 Because the constant threat of the use of force tempers states’ willingness to push their interests too far, states find it more prudent to strive simply for self-preservation under a balance of power.65 As a result, states strive to maintain the balance of power at all times. That balance is best achieved in a bipolar world of two great powers. While a third party, or balancer, such as Morgenthau described, has been a part of the balance of power in the past, the specific conditions for a balancer to be successful are so rarely met that Waltz suspects the case of Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries will never again be seen.66

Throughout the Theory of International Politics, Waltz spends so much time elaborating on the constraints that the structural causes of the international system have on international relations that he does not discuss at length, as Carr and Morgenthau do, future directions for the system. Instead, his major contribution for the possibilities of the international system is that the United States should, as the leading economic power, “take the lead” in helping to solve global problems.67 He is far less interested in such possibilities, however, than he is at understanding “how the possibility that great powers will constructively manage international affairs varies as systems change.”68 Yes even the question of a structural change is an unimportant one. At one point he writes, “The only

65 Waltz, 113-4.
66 Waltz, 164.
remedy for a strong structural effect is a structural change," but he remains so convinced that the systemic pressures and constant threat of force in an anarchic system are adequate to prevent war that he does not explore his point further. He does, however, note that as the system stood in 1979, the conditions for a genuine world community or world government were so far away that lasting cooperation between states was unlikely and further that “attempts at world government ... would be an invitation to prepare for world civil war.” He does not discuss whether or not a structural change to the system would thus make harmonization possible. Because his task is much more limited in scope than either Carr’s or Morgenthau’s, his arguments are both easily summarized and far less interesting. They are, however, at least nominally a departure from the earlier realists and provide the first assertive declarations of a realism based on systemic causes. It is this assertion that will come to dominate one of the basic assumptions of the entire realist school, even though most scholars agree that it was not until Waltz that such structural emphasis occurred.

The other dominant strand of neorealism is offensive neorealism. The core elements of offensive neorealism have been around ostensibly since the early 1980’s as a theoretical divergence from classical realism and structural neorealism. Some of the assumptions of offensive neorealism can be found as early as World War I when G. Lowes Dickinson argued in The European Anarchy that the anarchic state of European powers “created powerful incentives for states to acquire supremacy over the others for

69 Waltz, 111.
70 Waltz, 112.
motive at once of security and domination." A complete theory of offensive neorealism, however, was not solidified until the publication of John Mearsheimer's book, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, which Mearsheimer described as an attempt to fill the "void" in international relations debates over different schools of thought in realism. Though his book is regularly cited as the comprehensive treatment of offensive neorealism from a theoretical and empirical perspective, other authors can be identified as offensive neorealists including Joseph Grieco and Fareed Zakaria. However, in the same way that most surveys of realist theories focus on Kenneth Waltz as the major author of structural relations, so Mearsheimer is considered by many as the most prominent offensive neorealist in international relations. This chapter draws heavily from both Mearsheimer and Zakaria as key authors of offensive neorealism if only because I believe Zakaria often offers equally elegant arguments and does not deserve nearly enough credit as an important neorealist.

Offensive neorealism differs from other neorealist theories in its treatments of how states seek security in order to survive. According to offensive neorealists, a state maximizes its odds of survival if and only if they "behave aggressively ... to seek more power." Though both structural and offensive neorealists believe that the nature of an anarchic international system "encourages states to look for opportunities" to gain more "power vis-à-vis other states," offensive neorealists believe that states ensure their own

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73 Mearsheimer.
74 Snyder, 150.
75 The other reason to include Zakaria is that while Waltz has plenty of followers, not many other theorists have openly identified themselves as offensive neorealists. Zakaria's work is a powerful buttress to Mearsheimer's and validates him as something other than an outlier theorist.
survival by maximizing their relative power whereas structural realists believe states seek only increases in power that help maintain a status quo balance of power. Mearsheimer, 29, 22. While cooperation amongst states is possible, such cooperation occurs “in a world that is competitive at its core — one where states have powerful incentives to take advantage of other states,” therefore, “no amount of cooperation can eliminate the dominating logic of security competition.” Mearsheimer, 53. Rather than rely on cooperation, states must ceaselessly engage in aggressive and offensive behavior because the “best defense is a good offense.” Mearsheimer, 36. For this reason, Zakaria argues that the United States increased its naval capabilities at the turn of the 20th century not because of “new threats or hostile adversaries”, as defensive realists might expect, but rather because the defense of the nation “absolutely requires a fighting force” according to the offense-is-the-best-defense doctrine outlined by offensive neorealism. Zakaria, 128. This does not mean that states engage carelessly in offensive behavior. Snyder, 153. Rather, states must “weigh the costs and risks of offense against the likely benefits.”

Offensive neorealists measure power as the “material capabilities that a state possesses.” Mearsheimer, 53. Material capabilities appear in two forms: military power such as a fighting naval force and latent power. A state’s latent power is its aggregate social and economic means to build its military power; economic wealth, population size, technological capabilities, and industrial might are all measurements of latent power. Because latent power is simply a measurement of a state’s ability to increase its military power, the

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77 Mearsheimer, 29, 22.
78 Mearsheimer, 53.
79 Mearsheimer, 36.
80 Zakaria, 128.
81 Snyder, 153.
82 Mearsheimer, 37.
83 Mearsheimer, 53.
84 Mearsheimer, 55.
“ultimate ratio of international politics” remains a state’s military capabilities.\textsuperscript{85} Mearsheimer emphasizes land power while Zakaria focuses on the power to expand one’s territory. Mearsheimer’s claim is merely the continuation of Zakaria’s focus; as a graduate of West Point, Mearsheimer understands that conquest and occupation of new territory requires large land forces. In addition, he notes that water has unique “stopping power” against navies transporting large armies into hostile territory for land invasions.\textsuperscript{86} Nuclear weapons strengthen a state’s military standing only in so far as they deter other states from using nuclear weapons; because arms races are equally likely for nuclear and conventional forces, competition between states over nuclear weapons is virtually the same as before the invention of these weapons. However, because there is a potential for escalation from a conventional war to a nuclear war, Mearsheimer argues that the presence of a nuclear force might deter states somewhat from engaging in conventional warfare.\textsuperscript{87} If, despite its best efforts, a state fails to become a regional, unchallenged hegemon, it has three options in an offensive neorealist framework: “war is the main strategy for gaining additional increments of power, whereas balancing and buck-passing are the main strategies for preserving the balance of power.”\textsuperscript{88} States defer to these three options if they fail at achieving the “four basic objectives” of great powers: first, to “seek regional hegemony,”\textsuperscript{89} second, to “maximize the amount of the world’s wealth that they

\textsuperscript{85} Mearsheimer, 56.
\textsuperscript{86} Mearsheimer, 114.
\textsuperscript{87} Mearsheimer, 131.
\textsuperscript{88} Mearsheimer, 140.
\textsuperscript{89} Mearsheimer, 140.
control;”"90 third, to “dominate the balance of land power;” and fourth to “seek nuclear superiority over their rivals.”91

Offensive neorealism is perhaps best described as a return to one of the more belligerent tendencies of classical realism – its assertion that states seek to maximize their power. It is fitting then that the last of three major categories of realism – classical, structural, and offensive – is as much a return to the tenets of classical realism as it is a departure from classical realism’s vaguer generalizations on systemic anarchy. Though I have only profiled the works of five realist authors, four of those are names that one most regularly associated with the realist school. There are scores more of brilliant theorists and scholars, some of whose arguments I will rely on in the following chapters, but as a brief and concise overview of the broad scope of development of the realist school, I hope that these short profiles will suffice.

90 Mearsheimer, 143.
91 Mearsheimer, 145.
CHAPTER TWO

The previous chapter reviewed the basic arguments of the three major strains of realism—classical, structural/defensive, and offensive. The latter two also fall into the category of neorealism to distinguish them from classical realism. As shown in Chapter One, the three diverge in important ways but all remain firmly grounded within the realist tradition. This fact naturally leads to the question of a core of realism upon which the variants are then built. This chapter will seek to answer that question.

A theory of international relations inevitably articulates what it considers to be the defining characteristic of international relations and the international system, explores a specific level of a variable that it considers to be the key unit of analysis, offers explanations for determinants of that unit's behavior in international politics, and seeks to explain what the goals of those units are. Presumably, the goals, determinants of action, and consequent actions of these units lead to outcomes. For most theories of international relations, these outcomes encompass the entire scope of international relations and the realist theories are no different. Since these outcomes are ostensibly what all theories of international relations seek to explain, they are not in of themselves particularly interesting. For example, listing international cooperation as something both realists and liberal institutionalists are interested in is so obvious that it need not be explicitly stated. It is how realists and liberal institutionalists explore the question of international cooperation that is interesting and the key to that question is how they answer the question of international cooperation is contained in the categories already listed above.
The table below lists the basic propositions of all theories of international relations and generalizes what each realist theory has to say about them.

**Table 1. Summary of Realist Propositions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classical Realism</th>
<th>Structural/Defensive Neorealism</th>
<th>Offensive Neorealism</th>
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<tr>
<td>Defining characteristic of IR</td>
<td>Anarchic</td>
<td>Anarchic</td>
<td>Anarchic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key unit of analysis/Level of analysis</td>
<td>States/Systemic</td>
<td>States/Systemic</td>
<td>States/Systemic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Determinants of unit behavior</td>
<td>Pursuit of &quot;interests defined in terms of power&quot;</td>
<td>Structural anarchy</td>
<td>Structural anarchy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit goals</td>
<td>Security through maximization of power</td>
<td>Security through balance of power</td>
<td>Security through maximization of power</td>
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Clearly, all three variants of realism characterize international relations as anarchic, consider states to be their key unit of analysis and use a systemic level of analysis for this variable, and maintain power as an important concept in international relations. From these similarities, I will argue that the core of realism revolves three major concepts: the anarchic international system, state-centric analysis, and power.93

The simplicity of the table above unfairly disguises the intricacies of each strain of realism.  

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92 Morgenthau, 5.
93 Robert Gilpin makes this exact same argument about the principles of realism. His response to critics of neorealism, "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism," in Robert O. Keohane's Neorealism and its Critics is by far one of the better generalized response articles defending realism. However, he limited his piece to responding to Richard Ashley's claim that all neorealists have strayed from classical realism's principles and are thus invalidated. While Ashley's argument has a number of faults, among them that that he also argues against classical realism and so why on earth a supposed departure from the classical realists is something he faults is beyond comprehension, one of Gilpin's main purposes was to outline the ways that while diverging significantly from classical realism, the neorealists still adhere to the same core principles. Gilpin rather slyly suggests that he considers himself to be a classical realist (see Gilpin, "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism," 303) and it is in light of this self-admission that my earlier opinion that his book War and Change in World Politics had major flaws in causality claims seem misguided. Gilpin, however, only tried to prove a continuous linkage between all realists. He did not, as I will try to do, show that it is these continuous lines of argumentation which have also contributed not only to realism's endurance in international relations theory but its likely continued relevance in the field.
realism's characterization of these three concepts. The rest of the chapter will explore these concepts in more detail and in doing so hopefully will also provide an explanation for the divergences of the theories on the questions of determinants of unit behavior and unit goals.

**Anarchy**

While all realists characterize the anarchic nature of the international system, neorealists claim that their major point of departure from the classical realists is that their analysis is predicated first and foremost on the structural system of anarchy. Thus, Waltz termed his analysis "structural" realism and other neorealists, including the offensive neorealists, have continued this tradition of distancing themselves from the classical realists. This difference, however, is largely exaggerated and I will show that anarchy, including its importance for the basis of realist thought, is actually significantly more constant throughout the realist school than even realists suggest.

Waltz, like most neorealists after him, assumes that the classical realists attribute state action according to the nature of states (as a derivative of human nature).94 This is partially justified. Morgenthau certainly speaks of situations of a "mitigated security dilemma" during times of higher levels of normative consistencies between states, such as for the Concert of Europe. During these periods of shared normative understandings, states often shared similar domestic attributes. Carr also maintains a fairly historicized view of international relations and his understanding of the dual existence of morality and power do mean would lead him to conclude that there would be periods of more shared norms and values. Though I did not discuss Raymond Aron, another key classical realist,

in the first chapter, he would have certainly shared Morgenthau and Carr’s thoughts about human nature. The distinction, however, between the neorealists and the classical realists is, in my opinion, too sharply defined. After all, a “mitigated” security dilemma still recognizes a security dilemma. To say that certain historical conditions temper the extent to which states are in conflict at given moments is not to say that conflict between states disappears entirely. Nor should we conclude that reduced tensions are a sign of permanently reduced tensions. Stefano Guzzini’s excellent distillation of Morgenthau’s major premises is particularly useful to further elaborate my argument.96

Figure 2. Guzzini’s Chart of Morgenthau’s Basic Arguments

While human nature certainly factors into basic political aims for power, the “will of domination” is a necessary but hardly sufficient source of conflict in international

95 Stefano Guzzini, Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold (New York: Routledge, 1998), 43.
96 Chart from Guzzini, 25.
relations. Instead, in Morgenthau's formulation as in Carr's, a combination of both the will for power and systemic anarchy is necessary for the creation of the international system.

Accordingly, the dichotomy between neorealists and classical realists that neorealists so often point out on the origins of international relations is false. This misunderstanding is perhaps derived from the fact that the classical realists having devoted much less time in their analysis to the presence of anarchy. Instead, a few choice references to the structure of the international system exist to place power politics in context. Carr explains that he understands international politics to be lacking an “organized power charged with the task of creating harmony” and Morgenthau very briefly mentions that international law is so weak because it is decentralized and has no “central lawgiving and law-enforcing authority.”97 Morgenthau comes back to a discussion of anarchy only as he begins to contemplate the possibilities for a last shift away from the international relations of his day. Thus, in his analysis of possibilities for a new world government, which he claims is the sole hope for “international peace,” we may read his implied statement that there is no world government today.98 Clearly, classical realists would agree with the neorealist claim that anarchy is simply “the absence of government.”99 Their focus on power as a critical component of all political action is not in lieu of an understanding of the constraints of an anarchic system but rather in addition to it. Ironically, the cohesion of these two ideas is articulated best by Waltz when he writes that while it is the “specific acts [of states] that are the immediate

97 Carr, 41 and Morgenthau, 285.
98 Morgenthau, 516.
99 Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 102.
causes of war,” it is still the “structure [of the international system] that permits them to exist and wreak their disasters.”\(^{100}\) In other words, it is the “national drive for survival under conditions of anarchy which provides the foundation of International Relations.”\(^{101}\) William Wohlforth clearly had Waltz’s words in mind when he declared that “any realist discussion of international change must combine the domestic and international levels of analysis.”\(^{102}\)

Robert Gilpin argues along similar lines when he claims that the anarchy of the international system is somewhat tempered by the control exerted on it be “a coalition of states” with a preponderance of power.\(^{103}\) This is interesting because in some sense he is arguing that the great powers, by virtue of their standing in the system, define the international system according to rules which serve their interests. Thus, for Gilpin, the entire system can be changed at the whim of individual states: “The argument ... is that a goal of state’s foreign policy is to change the international system in ways that will enhance the state’s own interests.”\(^{104}\) While he acknowledges that the structure of the international system does play a role in state actions, he argues the influence is as important as “domestic conditions”\(^{105}\) on the desire of states to “change the system.”\(^{106}\) The careful balance he strikes between understanding the role that the nature of the state system has to play and the constraining effects of the anarchic system is far closer to the a classical realist’s formulation of the causes of international relations than Waltz’s

\(^{100}\) Waltz, \textit{Man, the State, and War}, 184-5.
\(^{101}\) Guzzini, 35.
\(^{104}\) Gilpin, \textit{War and Change}, 50.
\(^{105}\) Gilpin, \textit{War and Change}, 87.
\(^{106}\) Gilpin, \textit{War and Change}, 85.
structural approach. Gilpin’s proximity to Morgenthau and Carr also helps explain the emphasis his article, “The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism,” on finding core values from classical realism that emanate throughout the entire body of realist work.

If all realists agree on the role of anarchy as the major constraining force (if not the sole factor) in international politics, what then are the implications of this structural dynamic? First, “states in anarchy fear for their survival as independent actors.” This is because all organizations spend just as much time and effort maintaining themselves as meeting their objectives: “In making political decisions, the first and most important concern is not to achieve the aims the members of an organization may have but to secure the continuity and health of the organization itself.” Secondly, the self-help attitudes that develop underneath the anarchic system ensure that states exist in a state of insecurity, thus limiting their willingness to cooperate. These two implications of the anarchic system will be explored at greater length in Chapter Four because they are the immediate realist responses to many critics, particularly neoliberal institutionalists who point to instances of international cooperation as proof that the international system is not marked by a Hobbesian state of nature.

Anarchy also limits increases in coherence in normative values. Under the realist framework, coherence in normative values, followed closely by international laws and institutions, becomes an effect of the anarchic system rather than proof that the structure of the system has fundamentally changed. Additionally, because the appearance of institutions and international law is often spearheaded by powerful states seeking to

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108 Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 111.
impose their will on other states, such conditions of relative normative coherence are in fact masks of the continued conflict between states.\textsuperscript{109} Waltz and Mearsheimer both recognize the existence of international norms and institutions yet both reiterate the classical realist explanation – that these instances of international order and cooperation are rather the results of power politics in the international arena. Thus Waltz grudgingly speaks of an international system that is “flecked with particles of government and alloyed with elements of community” while Mearsheimer writes passionately of the “false promise of international institutions” to bring permanent peace to international relations.\textsuperscript{110}

State-Centric Analysis

The focus realism has on state-centric analysis is not an indication that all realists believe in the lasting importance of states in international relations. Instead, it is a reflection of the realist belief that global politics will always be defined by large groups and that the nation-state happens to be the dominant form for such groupings today. While there is some discussion within the realist school on the importance of individual action, such as Morgenthau’s emphasis on the quality of a state’s diplomacy as a measure of its aggregate nation power, there is a general consensus that a study of international relations must understand states as single, unitary actors. This systemic understanding of states emphasizes analyzing state action as a whole rather than attempting to understand all the sub-systemic political actions that contributed to foreign policy. This understanding is as much for theoretical parsimony as anything else but it is also

\textsuperscript{109} Carr, 87.
grounded in historical reality: a “bellicose” state with particularly hawkish leaders or constituents will still “travel down the path toward hostilities under certain circumstances.” By that same token, a state whose government originally espouses a non-interventionist foreign policy, such as the Bush administration early in its tenure, can be driven (or will happily take the opportunity) to invade another state.

Realism’s heavy emphasis on a systemic level of analysis for states is unique to the theory, much more so than for other theories in international relations, because the school focuses so heavily on human conflicts of the deadliest and most destructive kinds. While there has been some speculation about the acquisition of nuclear weapons by terrorist organizations, to date states are the only actors capable of engaging in global nuclear war. Similarly, states continue to pose the greatest danger to other states. The contemporary war in Iraq is an excellent case in point. Only another state such as the United States would have had the resources necessary to overthrow the state of Iraq and completely replace it with a new state and governmental apparatus, however weak and ineffectual. In this slightly tautological but still important sense, realism understands the importance of states as unitary actors in international relations because a state as a unitary actor is one of the strongest explanatory variables in the types of problems realism sets out to understand.

There is, however, another explanation for the continued, and valid, use of viewing the nation-state as a single, unitary actor. For the same reason that Carr considers international community to be defined in part by the assumption of its existence, so the continued acknowledgement by citizens, political elites, and international organizations

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111 Zakaria, 34.
alike of organic units called states has reified the existence and relevance of the nation-state. Thus realism focuses so heavily on states not because it is ignorant of other actors and key players in international relations but rather because it understands states as the driving forces behind one of the singular most important issues in international relations — war. Non-governmental organizations do not declare war on each other. The dubious claims of a “global war on terrorism,” notwithstanding, states also do not declare war on non-state actors though they may engage militarily with such actors. Similarly, most political scientists and even lay citizens will not recognize the declaration of hostilities toward a state by a non-state actor as a genuine declaration of war in the strictest sense. Instead, we label such declarations as insurgencies or rebellions. And finally, the latest demonstrations of nationalist sentiment in the People’s Republic of China in response to global protests against Chinese human rights records are poignant reminders that individual citizens often continue to see themselves as part of a larger national whole ruled by a state. Nationalism, despite the predictions of a boundary-less world created by globalizing forces, is as strong as ever. Increasing global awareness spearheaded by ever faster forms of communication across the globe has done nothing to formulate a “world community” committed to global peace.\textsuperscript{112} Such a community would require nothing short of a “moral and political transformation of unprecedented dimensions.”\textsuperscript{113} Until such transformations occur, the realists will continue to recognize the primacy of states as unitary actors in today’s international political arena.

\textit{Power}

\textsuperscript{112} Morgenthau, 516.
\textsuperscript{113} Morgenthau, 516.
All realists believe in the importance of power in international relations. Much of the intra-realist debate revolves around ways of defining and measuring power and to what extents a state will seek to increase its power. Often, the role of power in international relations is explained by the theoretical term, the “balance of power.” Just like power, the balance of power is in fact a theoretical construct whose meaning and usage are regularly debated. While the term may or may not be used explicitly to describe international politics, it is generally understood to be a key component in realist understandings of interstate interactions. Besides being a valuable explanatory variable in of itself, power also serves the interesting purpose of allowing realists to tie in the domestic and international levels of analysis. As William Wohlforth explains in his article on realist theories and their ability to account for the end of the Cold War, power is the intervening variable between the two levels of analysis in international relations. At the international level, systemic anarchy inflates differences in state power to sources of conflict and mistrust while at the domestic level, states must reconcile their own capabilities as both a means and an end. A state’s aggregate power is a constraint on its ability to carry out its foreign policy but the maximization of its power is also a constant objective of that state. All of these domestic considerations, of course, are further complicated by the realities of disparate power capabilities between states at the international level.\textsuperscript{114}

How a realist defines power is often encapsulated by how he measures it. As a general rule, power is both instrumental and material but some realists do emphasize one

\textsuperscript{114} Wohlforth, 107-9.
more than the other. There are some constant strains in how realists measure power. Almost all consider military power to be the “ultima ratio” of international relations because force or the threat of force within an anarchic system challenges the very existence of a state. A state’s ability to either pose a credible threat to other states or defend itself against such threats greatly determines its place in a hierarchy of power. Within this one component of power we see how power can be both instrumental and material. While a quantitative measure of military power for any given state is easily measured, the usefulness of such military capacity often serves as an instrument in helping a state achieve its goals, whether through the actual use of force or by threatening the use of force. Mearsheimer’s elements of power highlight the pivotal role military power plays in international relations. His notion of latent power, of which economic wealth, population size, technological capabilities, and industrial might are all sub-elements, rather explicitly links all of the elements of a state’s aggregate power into one coherent framework. Rather than operating on separate levels, as other definitions that include economic and social variables might suggest, all the components of power contribute to a state’s aggregate ability to impose its will on other states. Mearsheimer’s use of the term “latent” also hints at a subtlety in measurement for his non-military

\[\text{\textsuperscript{115}}\text{Michael C. Williams, }\textit{The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations} \text{(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 109-110.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{116}}\text{For an excellent discussion of how to measure military capabilities and the overall strength of the American armed forces, see Robert L. Paarlberg, “Knowledge as Power: Science, Military Dominance, and U.S. Security,” }\textit{International Security} \text{29, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 122-151. Paarlberg also discusses weaknesses in the American defense infrastructure and offers prescriptions on remedying those weaknesses. Among the key problems, he argues, is a deficiency in American science education for its young children, a deficiency that he predicts could harm America’s technological competitiveness in the future.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{117}}\text{Carr, 109.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{118}}\text{Morgenthau, 111.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{119}}\text{Mearsheimer, }\textit{The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, }55.\]
components of power; these components are not valuable in of themselves but for how they contribute to the capacity of a state to carry out war.

I would argue that Mearsheimer’s variables are much more important than even he would recognize. While he articulated the latent components of a nation’s aggregate power as specifically subservient and in service of a state’s ability to maximize its military power, I would argue that each of his categories is instead “latent” for the hidden variable dimensions within each category. A true measure of a state’s population size, as any decent demographer can report, will focus not only on the total size of a state’s population but will also certain demographic details such as the age and gender distribution of the population, birth and death rates, fertility rates, and infant mortality. These statistics offer a much broader understanding of the state’s population. Similarly, technological capabilities should not merely be measured in available technologies but also in overall education and literacy rates and what extent that state pushes for future technological innovation. Thus, the task of actually providing calculated values for Mearsheimer’s variables proves the variables to be much more useful than they might originally appear. Furthermore, in an age of Powerpoint presentations and bullet-point presentations to policy makers, the ability to at least begin packaging power estimations in a way that is both concise and rich is incredibly useful. However, even if other realists continue to find Mearsheimer’s precise categorizations too materialistic, most realists maintain that there are at least three components of a state’s power – military, economic, and social. By that same token, most realists, like Carr, believe that the need to separate
power into components is largely for theoretical simplicity and measurement. Power is and should be viewed and understood as “an indivisible whole.”

The difficulty realists have in trying to find precise methods of material measurement for power underscores the realist argument that power is inherently difficult to measure. States are forced to constantly reevaluate their own power and the power of other states but often fail to generate wholly accurate reports on power hierarchies. Of course, such assessments are made much more important, though hardly less difficult to accomplish, given that power is relative. All realists believe that states are “positional” and thus compare themselves not to some objective standard of power (“the US must have this much power”) but rather to other states (“the US must be more powerful than China”). The relational nature of power combined with the inherent difficulties states have with assessing levels of power contribute to the theoretical confusion and disagreement over the balance of power.

Morgenthau spends a good deal of time discussing the balance of power but he first explains that the term at any given time could have one or more of these definitions: first, as a policy aimed at a certain state of affairs; second, as an actual state of affairs; third, as an approximately equal distribution of power; or fourth, as any distribution of power. Balance of power, in the first sense, is also known as balance of power politics and it is this trend of jockeying for positions of power amongst states that most clearly unites all realist thinkers. When authors write about the balance of powers, however, they are referring to a state of equal distribution as either an ideal or as an actuality in the status quo. It is the use of the balance of power as an actual occurrence in international

120 Carr 108.
121 Morgenthau, 168.
relations that has created the most lasting and important rift between realists. As discussed in chapter one, Morgenthau does not actually believe in the balance of power as a static, truly achievable state of affairs in international relations. Thus, structural neorealist visions that a viable system of stability and peace would be found within a definitive balance of power scenario for Morgenthau was inevitably flawed. The return to an understanding of the balance of power as a series of actions rather than a state of affairs and the consequent need for states to seek to maximize their power instead of maintaining the status quo is offensive neorealism's second largest contribution. The first as discussed earlier is Mearsheimer's broad definitions of power that while comprehensive in scope still allow for a viable system of quantifiable assessment. Interestingly, John Ruggie's interpretations of Waltz's work on the balance of power hold similar conclusions about the "indeterminate" nature of "power-balancing" as both classical realists and offensive neorealists. But, he continues, that indeterminacy decreases in proportion to a decrease in the number of great powers in the system. A balance between fewer states is thus a much more stable balance than that of five great powers. Both Ruggie and Waltz simply assume that fewer great powers within a system will lead to fewer chances as miscalculation that might result in interstate war. Both gentlemen are using balance of power to mean a roughly equitable distribution of powers and as a result, states within such a balance will prefer to moderately adjust their domestic policies to quietly maintain that delicate balance.

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122 Guzzini, 28.
Such an interpretation is valid if and only one counts the outbreak of war as the sole indicator of a disturbance of the balance. If instead we view a disruption as any change in the balance of power (as opposed to a disruption of peace), we see immediately the impossibility of structural neorealism's defensive posture. Rather than simply be content to "satisfy" their wish for more power, states, who are unable to determine if other states are making policy adjustments to increase their power, are forced to constantly make adjustments to maximize their power.\textsuperscript{124} The multi-faceted nature of power means that any adjustment in military size, economic wealth, or social variables can drastically alter a state's aggregate power. As a result, no state has a guarantee that a supposed balance of power is indeed stable, even within the two-party balance that Waltz places so much emphasis on. Zakaria points to multiple examples of states that should, under Waltz's theories, have worked simply to maintain a balance, but instead enacted aggressive expansion policies, often to the actual detriment of their power.\textsuperscript{125} Gilpin and Waltz's conclusion about the defensive nature of balance of power politics also works only for great powers that are already in positions of power. Less powerful states, given the opportunity, may calculate that the benefits of expansionist policies of their own outweigh the cost of leaving any balancing or bandwagoning arrangements with other states. Waltz himself concedes that great powers hold a precarious dominance over weaker states not out of a moral legitimacy but a potentially challengeable claim to being more powerful.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{124} Gilpin, \textit{War and Change in World Politics}, 20.
\textsuperscript{125} Zakaria, 29.
\textsuperscript{126} Waltz, \textit{Theory of International Politics}, 113.
Given the inherent difficulties of maintaining a balance of power, the existence of which is highly doubtful to begin with, states are forced to engage in balance of power politics. Such policies require not only constant maneuvering but more specifically maneuvering for more power. Since there is no way of knowing just how much power a state needs before it is more powerful than its competitor, states will instead prefer to maximize their power. Of course, these maximization policies are not at any and all costs. Even the most adamant offensive neorealists recognize that states seek to expand their power only when opportunities for expansion would be more beneficial than the costs of such expansions.\textsuperscript{127} The divergence of structural neorealism from classical realism and offensive neorealism's understanding of the expansionist approach to power is perhaps the most difficult divergence to explain in the realism. Unlike the other divergences which I have tried to show are actually the result of false dichotomies and incomplete readings of fellow realists' work, this divergence cannot be explained by those arguments. Despite its divisive effect on realism, however, it does not lessen the overall importance of power in realism. Because this particular difference is a genuine and valid disagreement amongst realists, I have instead chosen simply to argue that the structural neorealist perception is both inconsistent with the historical record (as Zakaria argues) and with the other assumptions about anarchy and power that all realists do share (as Mearsheimer argues).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has tried to expand upon what I believe to be the three core fundamentals of realism. The concepts of systemic anarchy, state-centric analyses, and

\textsuperscript{127} Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, 27 and Snyder, 153.
power are pervasive throughout all strands of realist thought. Though there are key
differences in how each realist defines, measures, or applies each of these concepts, these
nuances do not detract from unifying effect of these concepts. These three principle ideas
also allow realism to maintain its ability to describe, explain, predict, and prescribe
policies for international relations today. While realism is recognized to be at its strongest
for providing a solid theory of international relations between powerful states, I will
argue that the principles of realism allow it to continue its position as an excellent theory
for the entirety of international relations. Before I do so, however, I will need to cover
some of the basic theoretical challenges to realism posed by other theories of
international relations.
CHAPTER THREE

As noted in the introduction, realism faces a litany of incisive criticisms. Some of these are targeted towards specific sub-theories of realism, such as Tickner's work on Morgenthau or the neoliberal-neorealist debate. Other criticisms are aimed at the entirety of the realist project. Milner's questioning of the realist notions of anarchy, critical theory, feminism, and constructivism all fall into this category. Finally, there are some theorists, such as neoliberals, who share certain core assumptions with the realists and neorealists, but follow those assumptions to a different logical conclusion. In the case of the neorealists, where neorealists envision structural anarchy as leading only to continued conflict and power politics, neoliberals believe that from cooperation is actually more likely under situations of structural anarchy. This chapter will strive to respond to these criticisms using the framework of the core assumptions of realism outlined in chapter two: anarchy, states as unitary actors, and power.

Let us begin with the common misconception that all realists hold a negative view of the nature of man. This misconception stems from the distinction between Thomas Hobbes, a famous precursor to realism, and John Locke, commonly associated with liberalism. Realists, it is commonly assumed, believe that men are inherently evil and prone to conflict. Liberals, on the other hand, begin with a much more benign view of human nature and assume that humans by nature are a much kinder, gentler, morally driven lot. I would argue that this is a false dichotomy. Though some realists, particularly neorealists such as Waltz who specifically outlines human nature as the "first image" of
causes of conflict, this is far from being the automatic assumption made by all realists. In fact, I have left out human nature as a core assumption of the realist school for this very reason – there is no consensus amongst realists regarding human nature and even more importantly, several important, key realists, have reached their conclusions without ever once assuming that all humans are by nature evil. George Kennan, the American classical realist responsible for developing and coining the American foreign policy of “containment” during the Cold War, argued that morality has its “place in the heart of the individual and in the shaping of his own conduct, whether as a citizen or as a government official,” but that it should be never be “the general criterion for the determination of the behavior of states and above all as a criterion for measuring and comparing the behavior of different states.” Carr argues that “every political situation contains mutually incompatible elements of utopia and reality, of morality and power.” Consequently, all political action must be a “coordination of morality and power.” Morgenthau focuses much of his energy on developing his notions of political power but does so only from the standpoint of states. The “problem” of human nature is, for Morgenthau, a secondary or tertiary concern at best. Even Waltz does not focus on human nature, arguing instead that both the structure of states and the structure of the international system are far better explanatory variables for conflict.

My argument is not that realists believe in the infallible intrinsic goodness of humanity. Rather, it is that realists have a much more complicated view of human nature.

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128 Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, 3.
130 Kennan, 49.
131 Carr, 94.
132 Carr, 97.
133 Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, 36.
and morality than commonly assumed. Often, even those regularly cited as blaming violence on human nature make such assertions with heavy caveats. Human beings, they argue, are just as capable of moral, good actions as they are of evil ones and their nature within a purely hypothetical "state of nature" does little to determine a persistent, regular pattern of behavior outside the state of nature, i.e., all of social human interaction. One scholar even argues that Hobbes himself did not have a necessarily pessimistic view of human nature. He saw Hobbes's work on self-interested individuals as a normative response to the conditions of society.¹³⁴ While this might be a stretch, it is worth considering that even those normally considered resolute pessimists on the human condition might in fact have been proposing possibilities for stability in peace. If one considers that Waltz, like many realists, argues that the "constant possibility that force will be used limits manipulations, moderates demands, and serves as an incentive for the settlement of disputes," that Hobbes would find calm even within the rather chaotic state of nature he envisioned is not altogether surprising.¹³⁵

There is another false dichotomy commonly made between realism and liberalism, one that poses realists as the basic challenger of all liberal principles. Michael Williams questions this dichotomy when he considers the epistemological history of the two theories in international relations:

Why is it that the relationship between Realism and liberalism has been so badly misunderstood within International Relations? Two quite straightforward explanations spring quickly to mind. The first emerges from the fairly obvious observation that the Realist-liberal divide has functioned most often not as a serious point of departure for debate, but as a narrow and usually caricatured set of alternatives, often achieved by reducing an already hackneyed 'liberalism' to an even more suspiciously

¹³⁴ Williamas, 146.
amorphous, ill-defined and – as it turns out – almost wholly mythical ‘idealism’ against which easy, supposedly Realist points can be made. A second aspect of the explanation is to be found in the peculiarly unified and uncritical nature of pre-war American liberalism that provided the intellectual backdrop for Realism’s ascendance within the development of the field of International Relations as an ‘American social science.’ ... As a consequence of the peculiarly narrow forms of liberalism operative within American political discourse, the criticisms of liberal rationalism, facile legalism, and naïve pluralism provided by someone like Morgenthau could easily be taken as rejections of liberalism as a whole. Thus while Realism came to be seen (correctly) as counter to naïve liberal rationalism, this critique was erroneously identified with the liberal tradition per se, and realism was accordingly – erroneously – identified with an implacable hostility to liberalism tout court. 136

It does not help, Williams continues, that neoliberals starting with Kenneth Waltz, have highlighted this tactfully “easy” but textually false distinction. 137 Realism, according to Williams and immediately obvious from even the lightest skimming of Carr’s Twenty Year’s Crisis, developed as an opposition to a specific set of liberal theories and not as a challenge to the entire body of liberal tradition. In asserting that states as unitary actors attempt to make rational decisions, the realist conceptions of anarchy, states as unitary actors, and balance of power politics provide a much more nuanced understanding of rationality within an inherently difficult to comprehend system. Furthermore, since all realists fundamentally begin their queries with a basic attempt to understand the source of conflict, thereby trying to offer not just understanding but normative suggestions for reducing violence, realists are carrying out the same project as virtually every other theory of international relations that focuses on minimizing conflict, including liberalism. That realists often harbor significantly less optimism about the viability of such attempts should by no means detract from the fact that they are still engaged in the attempt.

136 Williams, 137.
137 Williams, 138.
There are, however, specific areas where liberal and realist theories, particularly classical versions of both, do divide. I have already discussed the question of human nature, which I argue is not actually a clear division between liberal and classical realist though some neoliberals appear to harbor less faith in the overall positive nature of humankind. A more important distinction, as Helen Milner very thoroughly argued, is the question of anarchy as the structure of the international system. Milner cites many realist claims about the function of anarchy or even its primacy in international relations theory but never really grasps the basic form of anarchy that realism argues. In a thorough review of realists and neoliberals alike, she repeatedly tries to avoid the obvious – that the definition of anarchy is the lack of world government. It is because of this basic misunderstanding of a fairly simple point that Milner is able to construct the vast majority of her critique of realism. When she does get to a definition of anarchy, she arrives at two competing definitions. The first is a derivative of the Hobbesian notion of anarchy, that of “chaos” or a “lack of order.”138 This definition, being so drastically different than what the realists mean by anarchy, is difficult to respond to. Most realists, however reluctantly, point to varying forms of organization within the international system. Carr notes that insofar as people “talk...and behave as if there were a world community” all theorists must take the existence of such a community as a fact.139 Mearsheimer acknowledges a number of arguments for the increased presence and influence of such a community but points out that none of these arguments, including examples of the United Nations as a potential source for world government, economic interdependence through globalization, and the proliferation of international institutions on a variety of issues, have proven to

138 Milner, 145.
139 Carr, 162.
show "much coercive leverage" over state behavior.\textsuperscript{140} Mearsheimer only briefly deals with the question of growing economic interdependence but Waltz rather succinctly, and bluntly, answers the question of profit over power: "Insofar as they are in a self-help situation, survival outranks profit as a goal, since survival is a prerequisite to the achievement of other ends."\textsuperscript{141} The question, then, is not of order or chaos but rather one of world government, a sovereign entity capable of wielding such force over all other actors as replicates on the international level that of the power of a state on a domestic level.

The second definition is that which is commonly accepted by realists (and even many contemporary neoliberals), a lack of world government. Milner's immediate response to this definition is to question, "But what exactly is lacking? What is meant by government or authority?"\textsuperscript{142} Indeed, a more incisive comment would have been to point out the difference between governance and government and to suggest that the former is present and also more important to disproving anarchy but she never makes that distinction. I have already offered, in a previous chapter, a fairly exhaustive review of the realist understanding of anarchy. Even the most skimmed reading of virtually any of the realists, and as argued in chapter three some non-realists, would quickly reveal at the very least a consistent argumentation regarding both the definition of anarchy and what exactly is meant by a lack of world government. That there are is no replication of a state at the international level and the importance of sovereignty to all states suggests that there is no state of states. In short, Milner's posing of a fairly vague question is not a sufficient

\textsuperscript{140} Mearsheimer, \textit{Tragedy of Great Power Politics}, 363.
\textsuperscript{141} Waltz, \textit{Theory of International Politics}, 134.
\textsuperscript{142} Milner, 148.
response to the body of realist literature concerning the subject. There is, subsequently, also no government apparatus to help this nonexistent world state function. Milner even questions the Waltz’s use of the Weberian notion of a monopoly of force as the way to define a state. Arguing that the United States does not maintain such a monopoly (pointing to the constitutional right to bear arms), she argues that “when the right to use force legitimately ... is diffused to 240 million people, can a government in Waltz’s terms be said to exist?”

In brief, yes, such a government can be said to exist. The right to bear arms does not guarantee to the American public the right to challenge the sovereignty of the state. Rather, it protects individuals from state infringement on personal life and liberty. And, as a relic of colonial America, it is also a reinforcement rather than an exception to the state’s monopoly of force. The right to bear arms was originally intended to protect individual citizens whose state had failed them to begin with. A right that serves to protect the people should the state fail to is not actually an indication that the state has already failed. A much stronger argument from Milner would have been that all states routinely face challenges to its sovereignty. But, as Chapter Six will show, such cases prove only that some states will collapse and not the entire construct of the state system itself. Failed states may challenge other states by adding to the problems of global security but they do not challenge the entire structure of international relations nor do they prove invalid a theory that proposes to explain such a structure.

Some neoliberals have shifted away from the classical liberal critiques of anarchy to assume, like realists, an anarchic international system. These theorists argue that

\[143\] Milner, 149.
contrary to the realist propositions, anarchy makes cooperation between states more possible. In David Baldwin’s edited volume, *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: the Contemporary Debate*, neoliberals Axelrod and Keohane and neorealist Grieco engage each other in arguably one of the best series of inter-theory debates available. I have summarized Axelrod and Keohane’s cogent argument in the previous chapter. Though recognizing that neorealists and neoliberals agree that “international anarchy means the absence of a common interstate government,” Grieco points out that because realists take the understanding of anarchy to mean a serious lack of guarantees for state survival in addition to the neoliberal belief that “the lack of a common government only means that no agency can reliably enforce promises,” neorealists subsequently understand the consequences of anarchy much differently than neoliberals: “Given its understanding of anarchy, realism argues that individual well-being is not the key interest of states; instead it finds that survival is their core interest.” Furthermore, because states consider gains in power in relative not absolute terms, their concerns about their position in the international system will constrain their “willingness to cooperate.” This is because “the relative gains problem” highlights the “persistence of uncertainty in international relations.” Because anarchy makes survival a tenuous reality and because balance of power politics is always calculated in terms of relative gains, Grieco concludes that “there are at least two major barriers to international cooperation: state concerns about cheating and state concerns about relative achievements of gains.” Thus, though

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147 Grieco, “Understanding the Problem of International Cooperation,” 313.
neoliberalism does provide a sufficient answer to the first barrier, it is "unable to identify, analyze, or account for the latter."\textsuperscript{149}

Realists are also undeterred by the existence of such case studies as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which many neoliberals point to as proving the possibility of international cooperation. Further, and this falls also in the constructivist camp, the continuing evolution of organizations such as ASEAN has reshaped the norms of the participating states to be more accepting of cooperation. The realists are highly skeptical of the great hopes placed on regional organizations such as ASEAN. While ASEAN has proven that it prefers a "consensus-drive, conflict avoidance formula," the historical record of ASEAN has in fact shown that ASEAN itself has become a vehicle for the political machinations of the more powerful actors in the greater Asia/Pacific region, namely China and Japan.\textsuperscript{150} And, in an interesting reversal of the constructed norms argument, the norms that ASEAN supposedly defuses throughout the region "are essentially what states, pursuing their strategic self-interest, make of them."\textsuperscript{151} ASEAN, then, is simply another manifestation of what Carr described as the duplicitous nature of international morality.\textsuperscript{152} This blend of regional hegemons, regional multilateral institutions, and the appearance of cohesion is what Evelyn Goh calls the "great power dynamics" of the East Asian regional security strategy.\textsuperscript{153} The coercive power of Japanese and Chinese military might in the region, coupled with the flexibility of many of the smaller states in the region in choosing their methods of engagement with the

\textsuperscript{149} Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation," 118.
\textsuperscript{151} Jones and Smith, 150.
\textsuperscript{152} Carr, 89.
regional order, has created a regional security order that serves as an excellent case study for the multiplicity of state responses to anarchy.¹⁵⁴

While the second core assumption of realism, that of states as unitary actors, is a direct response to criticisms that realism does not fully account for domestic factors, such as the structure of a state, that contribute to conflict, the third core concept also offers some insight. Williams argues that realism’s articulation of the balance of power reveals a “sophisticated” realism that is deeply engaged with a study of the “relationship between domestic political order and its international consequences.”¹⁵⁵

As discussions of the balance of power have often stressed, sophisticated Realism does not view the rational pursuit of the national interest and the operation of the balance of power as naturally occurring phenomena in any simple sense. The conception of the state as a rational actor is the outcome of a process of political construction, and wilful Realist thought is deeply concerned with the intellectual and sociological resources that might be mobilized in order to have this form of state action prevail.¹⁵⁶

Morgenthau’s impassioned plea for the important role of diplomacy in creating the necessary conditions for global peace underscores William’s argument.¹⁵⁷ Kennan’s prescriptions in The Realities of American Foreign Policy, grounded as they are in what characterizes as a careful study of the fundamental nature of American society, can also be seen as an engagement with domestic politics and its implications for foreign policy. Even the usually state-centric Mearsheimer strayed significantly from his usual systemic level analysis when he joined ranks with Stephen Walt to criticize the mishandling of American foreign policy in the Middle East because of Jewish lobby groups.

¹⁵⁴ Goh, 118. While Goh herself is actually using Hedley Bull’s “holistic” approach to power politics, I would argue that her (and Bull’s) assessment are simply a more nuanced understanding of power politics, one that accounts for and accurately describes the many options available to states with the foresight to see foreign policy beyond military domination and open conflict.
¹⁵⁵ Williams, 135.
¹⁵⁶ Williams, 135.
¹⁵⁷ See Morgenthau, 567.
Mearsheimer and Walt argued that the United States had strayed from protecting its interests as “the primary object of American foreign policy,” because of “domestic politics” and the “activities of the ‘Israel lobby.’” Again we see that realism understands states to be rational actors in a normative sense – states should attempt to protect its interests “in terms of power” but that more often than not, the failure to do so arises from either outside sources, such as the inherent difficulty of calculating power balances between states, or internal sources, such as domestic politics. The complex realist articulation of power politics provides, as Williams so eloquently argued, a compelling engagement of domestic and international politics.

Of course, the rather heavy emphasis that I have placed on power as a core explanatory assumption is precisely what many other theorists find problematic about realism. Since my rather broad categorization of critical theory as a school focused primarily on eradicating oppression allows me to treat a very diverse set of theories as one cogent school, I argue that realism is not fundamentally challenged by the emancipatory project of critical theory. Power, in the realist conceptualization, does not carry with it notions of oppression or even of stable and enduring hierarchy. While some critical theorists would immediately point to the omission is a fundamental flaw, in actuality it allows for realism to engage with a far larger set of sources for oppression. By arguing that power and security are so difficult to maintain, realists point out the essentially equal nature of states. Though some states are more powerful at a given point in time and history, realists are quick to point to the rise and fall of empires as an indication of the impermanence of such domination. Carr’s assessment of historical

trends in international relations reveals an intimate awareness of the importance of small, weak, or otherwise non-great power states. Criticizing the European and American tendencies following World War I to equate state interests with that of the greater international community, a policy Carr called the “doctrine of the harmony of interests,” Carr notes presciently that the policy “was tenable only if you left out of account the interest of the weak who must be driven to the wall, or called in the next world to redress the balance of the present.”Morgenthau points out that power politics allows weaker states to gain legitimacy beyond their domestic military and economic capacities might allow. He also points out the continued independence of many states, far from being the result of an international trend for decolonization, stems almost entirely from great powers that fought for their independence so as to minimize the strength of other great powers. When Waltz argues that weaker states do not challenge larger states simply because “it is not sensible to tangle with them,” he does not suggest that strong states hold any permanent domination over weaker ones. Instead, his argument is merely an observation of prudence. Like great powers, weak states engage, ideally, in prudent foreign policy. Under such a conceptualization of prudence in power politics, realism can only view great powers and weaker states as fundamentally equitable actors. Indeed, Morgenthau’s prescient prediction of the rise of China as a future contender in global great power politics, echoed by Mearsheimer’s rather ominous warnings of China’s unpeaceful rise, suggests that realism is far better equipped to explain the rise of smaller states in the twenty-first century as well as providing valuable normative guidelines for

159 Carr, 50.
160 Morgenthau, 188.
161 Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 113.
162 Morgenthau, 364
how weaker states are to become strong. Critical theory, on the other hand, by simply assuming that power politics implies realism’s devotion to a sustained system of domination and oppression, cannot account for the rise of China, Brazil, and India as powerful players in the international system nor can it fully provide guidelines for how these states are to maintain their astronomical rise in power in the coming decades.

Though realism is compatible with the larger aim of most critical theory, the field, as evident in Campbell’s work, also raises important questions about the ability of realism to deal with key questions about the latent forces at work when determining power calculations, threats, and other problems of international relations. To highlight his argument that realists are not nearly as disconnected from the postmodern, critical theorists as usually assumed, Williams provides two passages which discuss the role of the American identity with American foreign policy during the Cold War. The first passage, “it comes as little surprise,” he plucks from David Campbell’s “pioneering post-structuralist work,” Writing Security. The other, Williams tells us, is from Hans Morgenthau’s The Purpose of American Politics, originally published in 1960. The passages, though written in drastically different styles, reach essentially the same conclusion — that American society faced severe challenges to its identity and constructed certain oppositions and enemies in order to reaffirm and solidify its own national identity. “America,” both authors argue, became defined not as an objective island onto itself but rather in contrast to a constructed other that we then vilified. Williams’ point in comparing the two passages comes across crystal clear: “What I am arguing is that the

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164 Williams, 163-4.
idea that there are unbreachable chasms between post-structuralism and Realism is simply fallacious.\textsuperscript{165} Morgenthau's explanation of the broad reach of the term power is also useful to understand just how nuanced realism is with regards to the idea: "Power may comprise anything that establishes and maintains the control of man over man. Thus power covers all social relationships that serve that end, from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls another."\textsuperscript{166} While neorealists have strived to make power a more explicit and measurable variable for the sake of theoretical testability, it is this philosophical understanding of power that underpins all realist theories which generates the most leverage against critical charges that realism cannot fully account for all the manifestations of power.

The feminist charges that feminist theories of international relations offer a better alternative to realism because it "is centered on an investigation of the forms of power that men exercise over women" are largely answered by the same assertions above.\textsuperscript{167} Insofar as the realist conceptualization of power is significantly more encompassing than most other theories precisely because it understands the importance of political, economic, and social components of power, it is a far better "emancipatory" theory than its competitors. If, however, one focuses, as the feminists claim, simply on a gendered agenda, then there immediately becomes a virtually impassable gulf between realists and feminists. There is so little adequate realist response to feminism not because realists are all misogynist men or lust only for power, as is often the stereotype of realists, but rather because so most realists are simply not interested in the central question that feminists

\textsuperscript{165} Williams, 164.\textsuperscript{166} Morgenthau, 11.\textsuperscript{167} Tickner, "You Just Don't Understand," 620.
seek to answer. Thus, the feminist expansion of their project, which is according to this student certainly laudable and important, is automatically seen as irrelevant to realists. Furthermore, since like most theories of international relations, realism seeks to explain and thus eventually solve for international conflict, there is the implied result that realism seeks to provide a better world for all its inhabitants. There is yet another immediate reason why realists cannot generate an answer that will satisfy feminists. Most realists simply do not start with the assumption that men automatically exercise power over women nor do they admit to male exploitation, domination, oppression, or any form of hierarchical status over women. If one does not start with the premise that women need to be freed, then one does not continue researching the question of how women should be freed.

This refusal to recognize male domination is, I believe, two fold. First, and this is related to the earlier acknowledgment that realists simply may not be interested in similar research questions, realists theories do not differentiate between male and female. Human nature, for those realists with particularly cynical views of human morality, is equally appalling for both men and women. For those realists who still consider human beings to be both moral and flawed, the same equality between men and women apply. Secondly, the realist understanding of power in all of its forms should in large part also take into account any systemic gender-based oppression. While feminists could, and rightly so, argue that simply lumping all oppressions together is an inadequate method of dealing with such inequalities, I believe the first reason for realism’s failure to include women is far more damning to the feminist charges. By implying, for there is little in realist literature that actually directly deals with gender differentiation, equality amongst all
humanity, realists avoid the possibility that theorized differences between men and women continue to reify the very forces of social domination that have oppressed women in the first place. While the theory itself cannot account for domestic violence and the continued subjugation of women around the world, it does provide a theoretical basis for moving beyond such violence against women. Much of the subjugation stems from a socialized belief that women are both different and inferior to men. While many feminists argue that women are different but equal, the distinction becomes a slippery slope. So long as differences are continually stressed, the possibility for moral judgments on such differences (e.g., whether women being more pacifistic carries a positive value judgment or whether such distinctions allow women to be seen as “weaker”) becomes a serious challenge for the realization of the overall feminist project of gender equality.

The final challenge to realism that I will try to address comes from constructivism. Earlier, I discussed Carr’s rather interesting notion that the international community exists if only because people function as if it does. In this sense, the “international community” is a reality that is nothing more than a social construction but nonetheless one we must pay attention to. This underscores the bulk of the realist response to constructivist charges. Realism’s core assumptions do not necessarily imply that such things are determined, unchanging fact. That there is no coercive state at the international level is as much a result of state’s refusals to adhere to any such attempts at such authority is an indication that anarchy itself is an assumption predicated on an understanding of social construction. Realism considers states to be the single most important set of unitary actors on the international level today but that is also largely because few other forms of organization of humans affects the international system in
such grand scales. Furthermore, because realism is primarily concerned with conflict and states are singularly capable of the most destructive types of violence in the international system, realism naturally places states above other actors in the system. Finally, the complex makeup of power within the realist conceptualization allows the term to be a variable in the truest sense of the world. Because states must balance their military capabilities with economic and diplomatic goals in order to maximize their power relative to other states, power becomes completely reliant on how any given state constructs its understanding of the term at any given point and time.\(^{168}\) The biggest problem with the constructivist challenges is not only that it accounts for social constructions that realists have long ago recognized but that it cannot be a viable source for theory-guided change.

Mearsheimer’s response to Wendt in “The False Promise of International Institutions” is excellent in laying out the latter point. Though there are some “epistemic dilemmas of Mearsheimer’s position,”\(^{169}\) he does raise valid questions about how constructivism is to be held responsible for its practical effects:

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The principle of social construction brings with it an inescapable ethical and practical imperative: constructions must not just be understood, they must be appraised and evaluated in terms of their ethical claims and practical consequences. While it is clear as Wendt argues, that no necessary assumptions about the functioning of a given system follow from the adoption of a constructivist position, this view begs the question of responsibility – the concern with the practical and consequential entailments of different constructions – that was crucial to the wilful Realist tradition. In this sense, Wendt’s otherwise useful claim that constructivism be viewed solely as a ‘method’ rather than as a substantive
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\(^{168}\) Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 20.

\(^{169}\) Williams explains that for much of his argumentation, Mearsheimer places himself in a double bind. Either theory guides practice, as Mearsheimer believes in the case of neorealism, or theory is inadequate and thus has the potential of being dangerous for policy, which he believes is the case for constructivism. One simply cannot argue both but Mearsheimer does. See Williams, 151.
claim about the nature of international politics risks being seriously misleading.\textsuperscript{170}

But what of constructivism's claim that it does offer possibilities for real social change? A specific example from Wendt's article would be a useful tool of analysis here. For Wendt, "if the United States and Soviet Union decide that they are no longer enemies, then 'the cold war is over.'\textsuperscript{171} But the uncertainty of the continued status of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union meant that they would still have been on fairly tense terms. Technically, The United States never once fought the Soviet Union. The tensions between the two states were political and manifested themselves in physical violence in smaller, proxy wars. Therefore, Wendt's hypothetical situation of a cessation of hostilities would actually have only resulted in precisely the same tense political stand-offs as actually were in place during the cold war. One is reminded, after all, that the Cold War ended not because of a mutual agreement to stop being enemies but because one of the two parties quite literally collapsed. In other words, the Soviet Union failed to survive.

Enemy or friendly status, according to realists, is a very tenuous distinction and often falls prey to contemporary international pressures. France, arguably an American NATO ally, has shown little willingness to support American foreign policy initiatives of late. A recently renewed effort by the Israeli government to win a presidential appeal for the Israeli spy serving a life sentence in the United States is a timely reminder that even allies routinely engage in the same activities normally associated with enemies.\textsuperscript{172}

\textsuperscript{170} Williams, 152.
\textsuperscript{171} Wendt, "Anarchy is what States Make of It," 397.
Though the United States and the People’s Republic of China are technically on cordial terms, there are regular tense standoffs between the two states, in particular over China’s continued efforts to expand its offensive and force project military capabilities.\(^{173}\) While such worries over the rise of China’s military capabilities might be interpreted as fear-mongering tactics and simply proof that we have constructed a threat that did not previously exist, the other examples point to the problems of making simple distinctions between “enemy” and “friend” and then assuming all inter-state problems be resolved with a re-labeling of relationships. The alternative, realist prescription for finding a stable peace in the international system can again be found within its core principles. Williams reads in Morgenthau’s collected works a “focus on interests and material, instrumental calculation” that was “the outcome of a recognizing the socially constructed, contingent, and practically produced nature of political life.”\(^{174}\)

While we have seen that the three core assumptions of realism can adequately respond to a variety of challenges from competing theories of international relations, we have not examined whether these principles still have the same explanatory power for contemporary international security challenges that they have had in the past. The next section of this thesis deals with these questions by examining transnational terrorism to determine whether realism can move beyond its traditional area of power politics to address some of the more pressing security challenges today.


\(^{174}\) Williams, 147.
CHAPTER FOUR

September 11\textsuperscript{th} 2001 brought the field of terrorism studies into the academic world’s spotlight, so to speak. Before then, even though the Cold War had ended over ten years earlier, security studies and international relations continued to focus on great power politics and states. Despite the growing trend in intra-state conflict noted by peace researchers, most scholars of international security continued to believe that the foremost threats to international peace would remain within the field of major wars between states. The events of 9/11, however, validated what so many terrorism experts had been arguing for years, namely that individuals or non-state organizations (as distinct from non-governmental organizations) could significantly affect international security. Suddenly, as the world watched the Twin Towers collapse in on themselves, other states were not the only actors in the world and the “rising dragon” problem of China seemed nothing more than an academic exercise. It is this disconnect between the “phenomenon” of terrorism and the seeming failure of mainstream realist theories of international relations to account for such turbulences in international security that this paper seeks to address. Specifically, can the broader core principles of realism that have been outline in this thesis account for the presence of terrorism in the international security? And perhaps most importantly, does realism offer any guidelines for policy makers hoping to respond to non-state actors engaged in terrorist activities?

The field of terrorism studies is as wide and varied as the body of realist literature but there are some major themes. First, most of the terrorism experts either begin with an exhaustive review of what “terrorism” means or they begin by citing such an exhaustive
study. Either way, the definition of terrorism is a fundamental question in terrorism studies, one that not only drives the research questions and problems of the field but also helps shape my inquiry into realism and terrorism. The second common theme is the field’s attempt to understand why terrorists do what they do. Much as realists explain state action based on state attempts to maximize security and power, so terrorism studies researchers try to understand the motives and calculation factors for why terrorists engage in terrorism. Yet while realists all concur on the broader sources of state motives, terrorism experts include sociological, economical, psychological, biological, and strategic factors as why terrorists choose their actions. Before I begin my assessment of realism’s ability to account for terrorism in the international system, I will first try to outline the work being done in these two central questions of terrorism studies. This will, ideally, frame my understanding of how precisely to position “terrorism” within an international relations context.

Perhaps the most important element of understanding what terrorism is is understanding what terrorism is not. Terrorism is not an evil or morally-bound set of actions. Terrorists are not evil nor are they irrational sociopaths. The contemporary pejorative connotations of terrorism are themselves political, indicative of a certain set of tolerances and beliefs. Mass media outlets and public officials all over the world label organizations or individuals as terrorists when it is convenient to do so, when the vilification of such actors serves a political project. In fact, the first appearance of the term “terrorism,” to describe the actions of the French state during the Jacobin’s Reign of
Terror was a positive use of the term, with upbeat, liberal proclamations for the success of revolution. 175

Over time, however, the use of the term changed. Eqbal Ahmad, associate of Frantz Fanon during the Algerian liberation movement against the French and a close friend of Edward Said, laments, "The official approach to terrorism is rather complicated, but not without characteristics. To begin with, terrorists change. The terrorist of yesterday is the hero of today, and the hero of yesterday becomes the terrorist of today. In a constantly changing world of images, we have to keep our heads straight to know what terrorism is and what it is not." 176 The problem, thus, is not that public officials or heads of state cannot define terrorism but rather that they are unwilling to. Ahmad continues, "Officials don’t define terrorism because definitions involve a commitment to analysis, comprehension, and adherence to some norms of consistency." 177 Thus, the myriad of definitions available within just American agencies that differ significantly is much more an indication of bureaucratic infighting for funding and relevance than the impossibility of reaching a precise definition. Another prolific writer in the field of terrorism studies, Richard Pearlstein echoes Ahmad’s call for an alternative source of definitions, one that can offer objective, scholarly precision, “The definition of terrorism is a technical issue, not an emotional one.” 178 Here we see the beginnings of terrorism scholars’ main source of disconnect with the official or even popular media’s understanding of terrorism. The refusal to engage in hyperbole, demagoguery, and moral judgments is first and foremost

177 Ahmad, 48.
why I began to see the connections between terrorism studies and postcolonial studies. As the influential Middle Eastern scholar, Bernard Lewis, reminds us, “If one looks at the historical record, the Muslim approach to war does not differ greatly from that of Christians or that of Jews in the very ancient and modern periods when this option was open to them.”

United States Code offers an excellent starting point for why official definitions are inadequate at best and horrifically politically biased at worst. U.S. Code 22 U.S.C. 2656f mandates that the Department of State prepare an annual report, for the general public, on all known terrorist individuals and organizations in the world. The law defines terrorism as “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.” This definition offers some insight into some key components of terrorism, namely premeditation, political motivation, noncombatant targets, and subnational or clandestine agents.

What the definition ignores is the important role that the threat of force plays in terrorism. Because so much of the success of terrorism relies on the fear generated by it, the same effect can be achieved by the threat of violence as violence itself. Or, to put it more concisely, “Terrorism is theater.”

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182 Hoffman, 32.
183 Pillar, 25.
In the interest of brevity, I will provide the definition which I will use for the rest of this chapter. The definition comes from Bruch Hoffman, who after negotiating for forty-two pages between different definitions from various scholars, international organizations, international law, and various countries' domestic codes, as well as the different applications of the term over history, concludes, "By distinguishing terrorists from other types of criminals and irregular fighters and terrorism from other forms of crime and irregular warfare, we come to appreciate that terrorism is

- "ineluctably political in aims and motives;
- violent – or equally important, threatens violence;
- designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target;
- conducted either by an organization with an identifiable chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure (whose members wear no uniform or identifying insignia) or by individuals or a small collection of individuals directly influenced, motivated, or inspired by the ideological aims or example of some existent terrorist movement and/or its leaders; and
- perpetrated by a subnational group or non-state entity." 185

We see that Hoffman has expanded somewhat upon the Department of State’s definition as reflected in 22 U.S.C. 2656f. Hoffman has included the notion of premeditation within his third point, that each act is specifically "designed" to have a particular psychological effect beyond the actual victims affected. Pearlstein concurs with this understanding of terrorism's indirect violence. In the introduction to his study on terrorism where he also begins by noting the difficulties in defining the term but reaffirming the absolute necessity in engaging in the technical process of doing so, he explains that terrorism can be "easily distinguished from direct violence" because it "conveys a threat to some third

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185 Hoffman, 40.
party” other than the victims directly affected186. Individuals are just as important to Hoffman as influential transnational terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda. In this way, Hoffman’s definition is as inclusive of Timothy McVeigh as he is of larger albeit often decentralized, organizations.

Hoffman’s definition does not preclude the fact that a single actor capable of engaging in terrorism, and thus earning the label of terrorist, can just as easily be labeled according to another type of political action. In other words, “the blurriness of the definitional lines is a salutary reminder that terrorism is but one form of behavior along a continuum of possible political behaviors of those who strongly oppose the status quo.”187 In this way, while “terrorist” designates an individual or an organization that has chosen to engage in terrorism, such individuals or organizations can just as easily be a part of a larger insurgency movement whose politics of sovereignty perhaps involve the strategic decision to use terrorism. Accordingly, terrorism is much more specific to a set of actions and decisions than it is to a group. A group can have many labels, of which just one might be terrorist. This point highlights again the explicit non-judgmental nature of the definition of terrorism used in this paper, by Hoffman, and by many of Hoffman’s peers in the field.

Hoffman also is surprisingly quiet on the matter of civilian or noncombatant targets. Many others, including Audrey Kurth Cronin, incorporate the targeting of civilians as a component of the definition of terrorism.188 While Cronin’s definition of terrorism as the “threat or use of seemingly random violence against innocents for

186 Pearlstein, 1-2.
187 Pillar, 27.
political ends by a non-state actor” is similar to Hoffman’s, I prefer Hoffman’s non-specific stance on civilian targets. This allows the definition to include attacks on embassies, military units not actively engaged in war, and other targets of questionable combatant or civilian status. Under Cronin’s definition, only strictly civilian targets such as Pan-Am flight 103 or the Twin Towers in New York would allow the designation of an attack as terrorism. Her definition would also make the case of the American Airlines flight 77, the plane the crashed into the Pentagon on September 11th, a highly complicated one. On the one hand, the high jacking and crashing of a civilian airliner means that particular event was one of terrorism but the subsequent crashing into the Pentagon, along with the loss of lives within the Pentagon, would not. Additionally, without a separate set of qualifiers for what constitutes civilians when attacks regularly occur against government but non-military personnel, Cronin’s definition inadequately accounts for attacks against embassies and other government buildings that house non-military but certainly not “innocent” personnel. And since she uses the term “innocent” rather than “civilian,” her definition further complicates the matter by being unable to distinguish whether military personnel not on active combat status qualify as innocent or whether their permanent role in the armed forces designates them automatically as innocent. Rather than engage in these lengthy, and quite trivial, debates about who is or is not “innocent,” I prefer Hoffman’s definition for its streamlined, yet comprehensive approach. It covers almost all the events that one regularly hears associated with terrorism yet clearly differentiates terrorism from conventional acts of war committed by soldiers on behalf of states and criminal activities.
Though terrorism as a tactic is arguably centuries old, many scholars argue that it is the nature of terrorism in recent decades that has brought it to the forefront of mainstream international security studies. Though her definition is incomplete, her assessment of recent trends in transnational terrorism is highly astute. Relying on database statistics on incidents of international terrorism, Cronin concludes that there are four major trends in transnational terrorism since the 1990s: “an increase in the incidence of religiously motivated attacks, a decrease in the overall number of attacks, an increase in the lethality per attack, and the growing targeting of Americans.”\textsuperscript{189} In 2000, Walter Enders and Todd Sandler argued, presciently, that post-Cold War incidents of transnational terrorism were characterized by a “significant increase in severity” and that terrorists appeared to be “trying to achieve a greater impact from fewer events.”\textsuperscript{190} While the overall number of incidents had decreased in the period, Enders and Sandler found that the lethality of each incident had drastically increased. If the world had not been paying attention, September 11\textsuperscript{th} certainly brought the question of transnational terrorism to the forefront of global but in particular American attention. There are several approaches for explaining these new trends in transnational terror. While most of these theories and schools of thought owe a great deal to the pioneering work in the 1960's and 1970's done on political violence, particularly by scholars such as Ted Gurr, they deal,\textsuperscript{191} for the most part, specifically with the transnational terrorist activity that falls within Cronin’s trends.

\textsuperscript{189} Cronin, “Behind the Curve,” 42.
\textsuperscript{190} Walter Enders and Todd Sandler, “Is Transnational Terrorism Becoming More Threatening?: A Time-Series Investigation,” \textit{Journal of Conflict Resolution} 44, no. 3 (June 2000), 308.
The most common approach is that of scholars attempting to get at the “roots” of terrorism. Their disparate methods, however, yield vastly different results. Some scholars, such as postcolonial scholars and historians, point to the legacy of colonization in regions such as the Middle East. This line of thinking can be traced to Frantz Fanon who wrote, “The colonized man liberates himself in and through violence.” While many have accused Fanon of callously instigating violence, Mahmood Mamdani qualifies Fanon and explains,

This was a description of the violence of the colonial system, of the fact that violence was central to producing and sustaining the relationship between the settler and the native. It was a claim that anticolonial violence is not an irrational manifestation but belongs to the script of modernity and progress, that is indeed a midwife of history. And last and most important, it was a warning that, more than celebrate this turning of the tables, we need to think through the full implications of victims becoming killers.

Other historians go back much further than either Mamdani or even Fanon when seeking to trace the roots of contemporary transnational terrorism. These scholars often point to terrorist referrals to “the Crusaders” as a signifier of the origins of hostilities. The association of the Crusades with contemporary American and Zionist imperialists, and not the original Christian warriors of the Middle Ages, is made even more poignant by Osama Bin Laden’s repeated references to Americans and their Israeli counterparts as Crusaders. While the majority of Americans are certainly Christians, they are a far cry from the European Christians who embarked on long journeys to the Holy Land. As for

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192 Frantz Fanon, as quoted in Mahmood Mamdani, Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 9.
193 Mamdani, 9.
194 For these scholars, the most important phenomenon is not terrorism in general, as marked by separatist groups like the IRA or even apocalyptic cults like Aum Shinrikyo, but rather the global reach of political Islamist transnational terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah or al Qaeda. While I find their narrow approach too limiting, it is useful to note that the majority of case studies that have pointed to Cronin’s trends are indeed instigated or executed by these Islamist organizations.
the Israelis, the Jews can hardly be considered complicit within the Crusades of centuries past. Clearly the naming of Americans and Jews as Crusaders is much more a part of the European colonial legacy than it is of the actual Crusades themselves. Sadly, the current Bush administration’s naming of its Global War on Terror as a contemporary crusade has done little to deter the continued association of the United States with medieval barbarism in the name of religion. Naturally, when these Islamist organizations couch their motivations in terms of fighting against imperialism, they are referring only to European (and now predominantly American) invasions into Muslim territory.

Imperialism, on the other hand, is never used to explain or describe the vast empires held by Arabs or Turks in the name of Islam. The combination of memories of vast empires held by Muslims followed by vast empires held by Christians over the Muslims and the use of different judgments on essentially two imperialisms can partly be explained by the larger theories of aggression, namely frustration-aggression and narcissism-aggression.

Within the first, psychoanalysts explain violent behavior, or threats of behavior, such as

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196 Lewis, 55.
197 The above reference to a larger Muslim population’s identification with contradictory views towards different types of imperialism is not to suggest that all Muslims suffer from the psychological theories used to explain terrorism. On the contrary, the fact that a population sees its own imperial past in somewhat different terms than how it views others is not unique to Muslims. Americans readily identify the Ottoman and European empires as major imperial legacies in world history but are much more reluctant to term its current global activities, including the continued holdings of semi-colonial territories around the world, as imperial. The point is, rather, that while selective memories are universally endemic to religious, ethnic, or national groups, heightened “awareness” amongst individuals regarding historical grievances is in part derived from and by extension exaggerations of such collective selective memories. Furthermore, the fact that Islamists refuse to recognize the imperial legacies of Islam in no way lessens the impact of European imperialism in the region. The French and British empires first advanced into the Middle East in the mid-nineteenth century and their tenure lasted until 1945. During the last phase of the French and British empires in the Middle East, each was given a mandate by the League of Nations to administer “mandatory” authority over their respective territories to facilitate the return to independence of these former colonies. (Lewis, 56-7) As Lewis writes, “If we turn from the general to the specific, there is no lack of individual policies and actions, pursued and taken by individual Western governments, that have aroused the passionate anger of Middle Eastern and other Islamic peoples, expressed in their various struggles—to win independence from foreign rule or domination; to free resources, notably oil, from foreign exploitation; to oust rulers and regimes seen as agents or imitators of the West.” (Lewis, 72)
the hatred expressed for Western imperialists but not for Islam’s own legacy of imperialism as a result of frustration with the Muslim world’s inability to compete with the West in terms of various political or economic indicators. Unfortunately, frustration-aggression theories are largely contested for being too vague in their explanation of frustration and sources of frustration.198 Despite these criticisms, however, some examples of frustration-aggression can still be found. Writing about the Palestinian Liberation Organization’s decision to switch from its largely non-violent efforts to plea for global attention to the Palestinians’ plight, Ahmad concludes that their ultimate decision to hijack planes was an expression of frustration. He writes,

The Palestinians, for example ... were dispossessed in 1948. From 1948 to 1968 they went to every court in the world. They knocked on every door. They had been completely deprived of their land, their country, and nobody was listening. In desperation, they invented a new form of terror: the airplane hijacking. Between 1968 and 1975 they pulled the world up by its ears. That kind of terror is a violent way of expressing long-felt grievances.199

Ahmad cites other organizations who resorted to violence out of frustration with their situations. Of them, the Stern Gang was perhaps one of the largest and most active. Ahmad describes the feelings of the Jewish terrorist group, “Terrorism is an expression of anger, of feeling helpless, angry, alone. You feel like you have to hit back. Wrong has been done to you, so you do it.”200 The political motivations for the Stern Gang’s activities were largely outrage at the international community for its complicity, by failing to prevent or stop, the Holocaust.

199 Ahmad, 50.
200 Ahmad. 50.
Narcissism-aggression theory, of the two major sources of psychological analyses, is the more commonly accepted for the dual interpretations of imperialism and the subsequent resort to transnational terrorism. Narcissism is defined as an “internal, intrapsychic, regulatory ‘tool’ that enables the individual to defend the self from damage and harm.” The specific psychological bases for terrorism are “narcissistic injury” and “narcissistic disappointment.” The first refers to a “massive, profound, and permanent damage or harm to an individual’s self-image or self-esteem.” The second is more complicated, requiring two levels of analysis, internal and external. On the internal level, narcissism disappointment refers to the ego’s inability “to measure up to the ego ideal, or positive and desirable standards of conduct, and consequently is punished by the superego, or conscience.” On the external and interpersonal level, narcissism disappointment is either the “profound disappointment in the self prompted by an individual’s pronounced inability to measure up to what he perceives as positive and desirable standards of conduct” or a “harsh disillusionment with individuals or groups that represent or advocate those standards of conduct, and a resultant disappointment in the self for ever having embraced those standards.” In the vast majority, 90 percent by some analysts of psychological terrorism, of terrorists, either narcissism injury or disappointment, or a combination of both, is a significant piece of the terrorist’s psychological profile.201

Faisal Devji’s explorations into the seeming contradictions in the lives of the terrorist suspects of the 2004 Madrid bombings highlight the probability of a narcissism-disappointment on an internal level. One of the suspects, Jamal Ahmidan, was

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supposedly from a well-assimilated Muslim family in Madrid. His family owned several clothing stores in Madrid and appeared to be doing quite well. Additionally, newspapers reported that many of Ahmadan’s friends in Spanish society were people one might not expect to associate with Islamist terrorists; among the list of Ahmadan’s friends were “women who sported crop tops, tattoos, and piercings.”202 Rather than express surprise at these reports, Devji calls the case of Ahmadan “entirely typical.”203  Fanon recognizes a similar duality in the performances of “colored students” studying in the colonial motherland, France. Their simultaneous existence as both black and highly educated student forces them to endure the painful attempt to assimilate in a culture that does not fully accept them for who they are. On the one hand, white France rejects these students because of their color, declaring “the Negro is a savage,” while on the other white French society considers these students to be civilized.204  The contradictory judgments imposed on the students the need to conform, to belong to that colonial society (Spain for Ahmadan and France for Fanon and his peers) but in each society, neither is fully accepted. In addition, the steps necessary to assimilate fully require a repudiation of the self in some sense, betraying one’s own humanity for the sake of acceptance by a dominant society. This is why Ahmadan’s involvement in the Madrid bombings despite his supposed successful assimilation is no surprise to Devji and it is also why Fanon wrote so extensively on the feeling of “devaluation of self.”205

203 Devji, 17.
204 Frantz Fanon, Black Skin White Masks (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 69.
205 Fanon, 75.
Clearly, we see that genealogical/historical approach can quickly overlap with the psychological approach. The use of psychology to explain the strategic decision to use terrorism for political ends is not meant to identify psychological illnesses as a cause for terrorism. Using “ego” somewhat differently than the psychologists, Hoffinan concurs that “unlike the ordinary criminal or the lunatic assassin, the terrorist is not pursuing purely egocentric goals; he is not driven by the wish to line his own pocket or satisfy some personal need or grievance.” While the latter portion of that claim seems contradictory to the earlier passage, Hoffinan continues, “The terrorist is fundamentally an altruist: he believes that he is serving a ‘good’ cause designed to achieve a greater good for a wider constituency – whether real or imagined – that the terrorist and his organization purport to represent. (italics in original)” Compare Hoffinan’s use of “altruism” to explain the basic beliefs of the terrorist to the psychologists’ use of “standards of conduct” on both the individual and interpersonal levels of analysis; both Hoffman and a psychologist would conclude that the terrorist is not a sociopath, nor is he a psychological miscreant with a slew of mental illnesses. Instead, both offer similar conclusions in that both understand the terrorist to be an actor informed by a specific conscience and hence a specific set of norms, morals, and values.

A psychological understanding also underscores studies that stress the strategic decision making behind terrorism. Though Martha Crenshaw carefully denied the link between her study of terrorist behavior with psychological analyses, the major premise of

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206 Hoffman, 37.
207 Hoffman, 37.
her work is that terrorism “is assumed to display a collective rationality.” Such an analysis is completely in line with the psychological analyses of Freud and Fanon precisely because they deny the possibility of irrationality. In so far as psychological factors play significant roles in an actor’s strategic decision making, particularly in demarcating the options that are possible/tenable from the completely impossible ones, they are particularly relevant in understanding terrorist behavior. Crenshaw’s notion of miscalculations within her strategic decision making framework highlight the importance of postcolonial understandings of psychology. These miscalculations are less the result of “limited rationality” but rather the result of a difference in perception of the problem, and thus of the possibilities and strategies to solve that problem. Crenshaw also explicitly refers to the strategic decision to turn to terrorism after a particular organization has repeated failures affecting political change while using other methods. She notes that a heightened and repeated sense of frustration with each successive failure contributes greatly to the likelihood that an organization will eventually turn to terrorism. She cites the development of terrorism in Ireland following the failure of constitutionalism as an excellent example of the decision calculus behind terrorism. Indeed, much of Crenshaw’s work relies on the highly economical notions of cost-benefit analysis. Such cost-benefit analysis, however, can be better understood by terrorism experts if they also recognize that the perception of the costs and benefits becomes greatly altered given different psychological factors. These factors, in turn, are as noted earlier the result of larger sociological problems. Since so many of the sociological problems associated with

209 Crenshaw, 55.
terrorism today are the result of colonial legacies, past and present, postcolonial studies clearly have the most potential in illuminating terrorism studies.

Max Abrahms, though accepting that the strategic model is the “dominant paradigm in terrorism studies,” challenges this model as explaining terrorist motives. In 2006, Abrahms explained that terrorists, contrary to asserted claims, do not actually regularly achieve the political aims for which they commit their acts. He would revise his argument in 2008 by arguing that while terrorists are indeed fairly rational characters, they use terrorism as a tactic not for its political results but rather to “develop strong affective ties with fellow terrorists.” His argument is compelling, particularly in light of studies that show affiliation with terrorist organizations or knowing someone in terrorist organizations was by far the most common attribute (and thus predictor) for detainees in Guantanamo Bay. It turns out that while not everyone involved in terrorism is a true believer in the cause or even shares the same political objectives, all became exposed or enveloped into these organizations because a friend or relative was already involved. What his claim does not offer, however, is an explanation for why terrorists choose to join those particular organizations rather than any other form of civic engagement. Thus, though Abrahms is explicitly critiquing the strategic model, he is doing nothing more than offering a variant of the same rational-calculus model that Crenshaw develops. The strategic model, in all its variants, offers us a decently useful

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way to understand why individuals and organizations might choose terrorism as a tactic but offers little understanding for their motivations in becoming so politicized in the first place. The psychological explanations of frustration-aggression and narcissism-aggression attempt to read psychoanalytic reasons into genealogical histories of terrorism but there is another simpler and more easily testable explanatory tool for understanding contemporary transnational terrorism: power. Understanding transnational terrorism through a lens of power suggests that there are two fronts of struggle, domestic and international.

First, one author points out that transnational terrorist organizations, particularly those engaged in waging global jihad, are embroiled in a local struggle for power against traditional forms of authority in Islamic society. Devji argues that Transnational terrorist groups, like Al Qaeda, that are specifically engaged in waging jihad, do so by breaking down the traditional forms of authority from which they derive. These organizations, then, are as embroiled with a struggle for power within their own cultural and political space as they are within the international sphere. That these organizations and the individuals either within them or mimicking them spend so much time ascertaining the moral and legal authority for their actions only highlights this struggle for power.

\[\text{215 Despite all the inherent problems of measuring a nebulous variable such as "power," I feel compelled to argue that the task of measuring power is far easier than proving definitively psychoanalytical analyses. But that is also why I study political science and not Freud.}\\\]

\[\text{216 Devji, 112.}\\\]

\[\text{217 Here, I contradict Devji's conclusions. While he explicitly claims that this search for juridical legitimacy "has little if anything to do with jihad's quest for power or religious credibility" and argues instead that it represents the diffusion of traditional forms of authority in Islam to the empowerment of individuals, I would argue that the diffusion of power is in of itself a power struggle. I see no difference between his two statements while he clearly finds them to be different. The fact remains that any traditional hierarchical structures of authority in Islam, the ulama clerical class, is losing power to both individual Muslims and also more importantly to Islamist transnational terrorist organizations. While these are clearly not state actors, the strains of realism can be found, perhaps because realism is at its heart a theory of political struggle.}\]
While Devji’s work is convincing and powerful. Olivier Roy reaches similar conclusions in his book, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*. The second, and most important for the purposes of this chapter, locus for a struggle for power occurs on the international arena. Many scholars see transnational terrorism as a direct response to vast global inequities, militarily, politically, culturally, and economically, in the globalized world. The inequalities have only become clearer in an age of global information networks. To add insult to injury, these networks have the additional effect of seemingly homogenizing global society, creating what Benjamin R. Barber memorably termed “McWorld.” In response, “the new international terrorism is increasingly engendered by a need to assert identity or meaning against forces of homogeneity, especially on the part of cultures that are threatened by, or left behind by, the secular future that Western-led globalization brings.”

Ironically, the increased flow of information technology and services, such as air travel, has also drastically increased the ability of individuals and groups to engage in terrorists. Transnational terrorist organizations, those like al-Qaeda with the capacity to engage in terrorism across state boundaries, are the major benefactors of such increased flow of technology and services although the global banking system has helped increase cash flow to virtually every group. Osama Bin Laden is an excellent example of the complex ties between globalization and tribalization. His personal wealth is a major source of financing for al-Qaeda operations and yet it derives almost entirely from a

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220 Cronin, “Behind the Curve,” 52.
private fund started by his father to manage Bin Laden’s massive twenty-five to thirty million dollar inheritance. That fund invested the inheritance in foreign holdings outside of Saudi Arabia, capitalizing on foreign economic growth and maturing to anywhere between two hundred and fifty and five hundred million dollars.\textsuperscript{221} The mass media is another site of contention between globalization and its resisters. While the internet has perhaps been the single greatest facilitator for the rapid spread of Western imperial values in recent years, importing hedonistic American values and “godless” French secularism to regions where such values are not welcome, it has also greatly improved the ability of terrorist organizations to conduct daily business. Both the internet and contemporary mass media have, paradoxically, also been extremely pivotal in spreading the message and reaching its secondary audiences, as Hoffman explained in his definition. In order to reach targets beyond its primary victims, terrorist organizations have relied heavily on the media to both report their activities (and often published claims of responsibility) and on the Internet to recruit, train, and publicize.\textsuperscript{222} Within the last week alone, almost as soon as simultaneous bombs detonated in Algeria, the group al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb quickly claimed responsibility.\textsuperscript{223}

Scholars who seek to understand why al Qaeda targeted the United States on September 11\textsuperscript{th} are quick to point out that “American global primacy is one of the causes of this war.”\textsuperscript{224} Richard Betts argues, “To groups like al Qaeda, the United States is the enemy because American military power dominates their world, supports corrupt

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Pearlstein2007} Pearlstein, \textit{Fatal Future?}, 56.
\bibitem{Pearlstein2007_2} Pearlstein, \textit{Fatal Future?}, 2-3.
\end{thebibliography}
governments in their countries, and backs Israelis against Muslims; American cultural power insults their religion and pollutes their societies; and American economic power makes all these intrusions and desecrations possible.\textsuperscript{225} Cronin agrees, “To some degree, terrorism is directed against the United States because of its engagement and policies in various regions.”\textsuperscript{226} Tying back the question of American primacy in a globalized world, she writes, “Anti-Americanism is closely related to antiglobalization, because (intentionally or not) the primary driver of the powerful forces resulting in globalization is the United States.”\textsuperscript{227} In an extremely succinct yet comprehensive summary of the layered context for transnational terrorism today, Cronin writes,

> The characteristics and causes of the current threat can only be analyzed within the context of the deadly collision occurring between U.S. power, globalization, and the evolution of international terrorism. … Terrorism that threatens international stability, and particularly U.S. global leadership, is centered on power-based political causes that are enduring: the weak against the strong, the disenfranchised against the establishment, and the revolutionary against the status quo. Oversimplified generalizations about poverty and terrorism, or any other single variable, are caricatures of a serious argument. The rise in political and material expectations as a result of the information revolution is not necessarily helpful to stability, in the same way that rising expectations led terrorists to take up arms against the czar in Russia a century ago. Indeed the fact that so many people in so many nations are being left behind has given new ammunition to terrorist groups; produced more sympathy for those willing to take on the United States; and spurred Islamic radical movements to recruit, propagandize, and support terrorism throughout many parts of the Muslim world. The al-Qaeda network is an extremist religious terrorist organization, its Taliban puppet regime was filled with religious zealots, and its suicide recruits were convinced that they were waging a just holy war. But the driving forces of twenty-first-century terrorism are power and frustration, not the pursuit of religious principle. To dismiss the broad enabling environment would be to focus more on the symptoms than the causes of modern terrorism.\textsuperscript{228}

\textsuperscript{225} Betts, 377.
\textsuperscript{226} Cronin, “Behind the Curve,” 52.
\textsuperscript{227} Cronin, “Behind the Curve,” 52.
\textsuperscript{228} Cronin, “Behind the Curve,” 54-5.
There is one additional argument of note about the nature of and motivations behind transnational terrorism today and that is that the threat is poses is not real at all. Barry Buzan offers this intriguing hypothesis in his article, “Will the ‘global war on terrorism’ be the new Cold War?” In it, he argues that terrorism is a genuine threat to state security not only because it might actually pose a significant material threat but rather because states believe it pose such a threat. By distinguishing between “a traditional materialist analysis of threat” and a “securitization” threat, Buzan argues that constructed threats are just as important as materially real ones because “the success ... of the securitization ... determines whether [state] action is taken.”

Buzan’s argument echoes distantly of Wendt’s rather flippant claim that had the United States and Soviet Union simply viewed each other as friends, the Cold War would have ended a lot sooner. He makes his argument to highlight his belief that the American pursuit of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) is fundamentally at odds with American “domestic and international political and (especially) economic orders based on liberal values.”

By consistently over securitizing the threat of terrorism to national security, the United States risks undoing the very principles, including competitive market economics, that comprise the American way of life. Buzan’s argument would be difficult to dispel were it not for the inconvenient fact that over 3,000 American lost their lives in one single day of coordinated attacks seven years ago. Even if the United States is by and large exaggerating the extent of the terrorist threat, it must uphold “the most basic obligation

229 Barry Buzan, “Will the ‘global war on terrorism’ be the new Cold War?” International Affairs 82, no. 6 (2006), 110.
230 Buzan, 1115.
231 Buzan, 1117.
borne by a liberal, democratic state," that of "protecting the life and property of the citizens." Because the events of 9/11, and all acts of transnational terrorism for that matter, "attack the root of liberal states' authority" by challenging the "state’s ability to protect the citizens ... [and] uphold its compact to exercise state powers in a manner that upholds its most fundamental responsibility," liberal democratic states such as the United States have no choice but to respond to transnational terror, even if it means engaging in threat construction and securitization.

Cronin's summary gives us a particularly good starting point for inserting realist analysis into terrorism studies. Or, to put it another way, her broad overview of the international context in which transnational terrorism must be understood highlights, not contradicts, the explanatory power of realism for this challenge to international security. Given what Pearlstein called the "polyplex global system," transnational terrorism appears to thrive precisely because while it rejects American and Western domination, the lack of any genuine international governing authority allows these organizations the political leeway to wage their battles. It is both the preponderance of authority and power concentrated in one state and the absence of a global governing authority that paradoxically produces transnational terrorist organizations. In short, anarchy continues to define the system and it is that anarchy, coupled with American dominance, that has helped lead to the trends that Cronin and other describe.

233 Donohue, 314.
234 Pearlstein, Fatal Future?, 11.
The presence of transnational terrorist organizations on the global arena no more dispels the validity of realism’s second premise, that of states as the most important unitary actors in the international system, than claims from other theorists citing the presence of the United Nations, multinational corporations, or international non-government organizations. In fact, insofar as an author cited here includes prescriptions for counterterrorism, the author invariably refers to how a state’s counterterrorism policy. Tellingly, even Buzan’s article discussed threat construction in the context of the United States as a unitary actor. Because terrorism is so often interpreted as a rejection of the nation-state system in general and of American state power specifically, several authors suggest that it is particularly important that states “not just respond, but ... seem to respond.” Transnational terrorism, then, is a reification of the state system in its very rejection of it.

While several explanatory factors for the nature of transnational terrorism today have been discussed in this chapter, it is the argument that transnational terrorism is a response to global power inequities is perhaps most powerful. Not only does it essentially answer the fundamental questions of why organizations resort to terror (it is a tool of the weak against the strong) but it also explains the sources for grievances that these organizations are trying to address (global inequity, former European and currently American primacy). Furthermore, understanding in transnational terrorism in terms of power also allows room for the fiercely contested psychological analyses. These analyses are careful to point out that the terrorists are indeed rational but their decisions and

235 While some would argue that terrorist organizations by definition are NGO’s, others point out that organizations that serve the larger needs of humanity should never be equated with organizations dedicated to destroying lives in pursuit of political goals.

236 Donohue, 314.
mindsets are also conditioned by supposed wrongs that lead to, among other things, frustration-aggression or narcissism-aggression. At the heart (excuse the pun), of these psychological theories however is the recognition that personal feelings of empowerment (or disempowerment, as the case may be) are adequate sources for the violent behavior exhibited in transnational terrorism.

The core principles of realism can provide a useful framework of analysis for understanding transnational terrorism and the context in which it occurs. They also provide a useful departure point for generating prescriptive policy guidelines for states engaged in counterterrorism strategies. Obviously, as stated earlier, states, even those merely imagining a threat, must respond and defend themselves. The very nature of terrorism challenges state authority in a way that threatens the sovereign integrity of the state. A state’s grand strategy, argues Barry Posen, should “set priorities and focus available resources — money, time political capital, and military power — on the main effort.”237 A strategy should have “both a military and a diplomatic dimension” and it should be capable of handling immediate threats while simultaneously addressing the long-term causes and effects of transnational terrorism.238 Posen suggests that the past American strategy of “selective engagement,” which argues “that the United States has an interest in stable, peaceful, and relatively open political and economic relations in the part of the world that contains important concentrations of economic and military resources: Eurasia,” is “broadly consistent with the requirements of an extended

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238 Posen, 42.
counterterror war." Posen points out that prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, many of the diplomatic ties the United States forged immediately following the September 11th attacks followed much more closely to selective engagement than the primacist strategies pushed by some administrative officials. Ultimately, the selective engagement strategy is a balanced approach to primacy, one that recognizes power as a multilayered and complex notion.

Successful efforts to defend and maintain American power rely on a nuanced understanding of power. While force projection is often an adequate immediate response to transnational terrorist organizations, other weapons a state has at its disposal are much better suited for a protracted fight against terrorism. These weapons include diplomacy, particularly in the wooing of ally states or even of convincing state sponsors of terror to desist from their support of these organizations. Shortly after the September 11 attacks, former United States Attorney General Phillip Heymann argued in favor of using American clout abroad as one of its tools in the fight against transnational terrorist organizations: "It is likely that, at a low cost to its citizens, the United States can threaten damage and offer incentives that more than offset the benefits to almost any state of harboring terrorists." Robert Trager and Dessislava Zagorcheva are just as optimistic about the possibilities of deterring terrorism as Heymann. They argue that a central

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239 Posen, 54.
240 Posen, 55.
objective of grand strategy must be “preventing terrorist adversaries from cooperating with one another.”

In addition to exploiting ideological and methodological inconsistencies within the al Qaeda movement, Cronin advocates utilizing the same tools that terrorist organizations have mastered to share their own propaganda — mass multimedia as a medium and the internet as the forum. This means that in addition to American policies of democracy promotion, which need to be conducted very carefully to avoid further backlash,243 the United States must use a coordinated multimedia effort to exploit what studies already show — that “many of al Qaeda’s potential constituents have been deeply repulsed by recent attacks.” These studies reveal that “publics in predominantly Muslim states increasingly see Islamic extremism as a threat to their own countries, express less support for terrorism, have less confidence in bin Laden, and reflect a declining belief in the usefulness of suicide attacks.” Cronin points out that had the international community and media more publicly and routinely focused on the “images of the murdered and maimed victims, many of whom resemble family members of would-be recruits, lying on the ground as a result of a terrorist act,” a much clearer message about the threat of terrorism would have been sent to supporters of al Qaeda than simply lamenting in general terms about the loss of death or of challenges to a nebulous “Western” way of life.245 In other words, to attract global public support in the fight

243 Cronin is admittedly wary of democracy promotion for its tendency to be seen as cultural and social imperialism.
244 Cronin, “How Al Qaeda Ends,” 45.
245 Cronin, “How Al Qaeda Ends,” 44.
against terrorism, states must learn to project not only themselves and their own citizens as victims but rather the global community at large.

Cronin also offers a general list of prescriptions that fall easily within Heymann's recommended selective engagement approach as well as the nuanced understanding of power that realism offers. She writes,

The prescriptions for countering and preventing terrorism should be twofold: First, the United States and other members of the international community concerned about this threat need to use a balanced assortment of instruments to address the immediate challenges of the terrorists themselves ... Second, the United States and its counterterrorist allies must employ a much broader array of longer-term policy tools to reshape the international environment, which enables terrorist networks to breed and become robust. The mechanisms of globalization need to be exploited to thwart the globalization of terrorism. In the short term, the United States must continue to rely on capable military forces that can sustain punishing air strikes against terrorists and those who harbor them with an even greater capacity for special operations on the ground. This requires not only improved stealthy, long-range power projection capabilities but also agile, highly trained, and lethal ground forces, backed up with greater intelligence, including human intelligence supported by individuals with language skills and cultural training. The use of military force continues to be important as one means of responding to terrorist violence against the West, and there is no question that it effectively preempts and disrupts some international terrorist activity, especially in the short term. Over time, however, the more effective instruments of policy are likely to remain the nonmilitary ones. Indeed the United States needs to expand and deepen its nonmilitary instruments of power such as intelligence, public diplomacy, cooperation with allies, international legal instruments, and economic assistance and sanctions.246

Cronin even invokes the classical realist, George Kennan, as a source for her prescriptions when she explains, “George Kennan, in his 1947 description of containment,

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put forth the same fundamental argument, albeit against an extremely different enemy.\(^{247}\)

These prescriptions for both grand strategy and specific tactical maneuvers in the fight against terrorism are grounded in realist principles. External actors, such as international organizations, cannot be relied upon to effectively respond to transnational terrorism, particularly because transnational terrorism is in large part a response to individual states and their coalitions of power. Yet by involving themselves in a struggle for power against dominant states, transnational terrorist organizations place themselves squarely within the framework of a realist articulation of international security. Because these organizations are fundamentally engaged in a struggle for power against dominant structures, states must deal with them with the same nuanced precision that it must employ to handle other states. Because power is ultimately multifaceted, efforts to preserve a state's power in spite of transnational terrorism must successfully deal with the often conflicting demands of the military, economic, social, and political components to power. Force projection, air strikes, and huge standing armies are no longer a reliable indicator of strength. Today, a state must defend itself by balancing all the components of power in order to maximize its overall standing. This difficult process is only exacerbated by the fact that a misstep in calculation often leads to global perception of unwarranted and unproductive power projection, an event that Richard Betts argues is likely to turn back progress. In other words, while the United States must use American power in all its forms to protect American lives and interests, it is that very power which is also one of

\(^{247}\) Cronin, “Behind the Curve,” 56.
the latent triggers of transnational terrorism against the U.S. This does not mean, however, that a state should forgo its standing and acquiesce to the political demands of these organizations. Instead, this additional complication is yet one more reminder of the absolute critical need to tread carefully in this prolonged engagement with transnational terrorism.

248 Betts, 387.
CONCLUSION

For readers of this thesis who share a worldview similar to that which guides the realist authors I have profiled here, many of the arguments and rebuttals against realism will likely seem valid. For those who subscribe to different ideologies, there is not much I can write to change their minds. It is perhaps the only honest, albeit anticlimactic, way to conclude this thesis – the recognition that at the end of the day, I have probably not changed anyone’s minds at all. A restatement of my purpose for this thesis then must be made. I am not searching for an epiphany that might suddenly make realism more attractive to those who find its basic premises unappealing. I am, however, arguing that a return to the basic fundamentals of realism be established if this school of thought has any chance of surviving in international relations theory. There is far too much brilliance and nuance in the work of many of the earlier works of realism and far too much potential in the explanatory powers of its distilled principles to reject the field wholesale. But if realism is to continue being useful as a theory of international relations, it must first begin not only by returning to its core but more importantly offering valid policy advice that can adequately address the myriad of challenges in international politics today.

Michael Williams declares that “the task of international political theory worthy of [the Realist tradition] is to confront these difficult ethical and practical questions, to enquire into the multiple and shifting structures of power and possibility in contemporary world politics, and to engage with limits in the dual sense of fostering limits upon the worst excesses and challenging limits which make these limits possible.”\textsuperscript{249} For

\textsuperscript{249} Michael C. Williams, \textit{The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 210.
American foreign policy, that means conducting the Global War on Terror in a manner befitting and proportional to the challenge. Stephen Walt condenses the adjustments that must be made to American foreign policy in our new fight against transnational terrorism: 1) rely more on multilateral institutions “not because they are powerful restraints on state behavior (they are not), but because they diffuse responsibility for international intervention and thus reduce the risk of an anti-American backlash;” use American wealthy and power “in ways that serve the interests of others as well as its own;” and reduce our forward military presence. Though the U.S. has engaged in military interventions in the past, largely in pursuit of American interests in key regions, the continued use of American military engagement in foreign conflicts should be predicated on whether or not such actions would benefit American interests more than hurt them. Such an analysis must take into account not only the value of military victories but also international backlash, the domestic costs of deploying American troops, and long term unintended consequences. These propositions, from a realist point of view, are fitting responses to the challenges of terrorism because they demonstrate an understanding of the international system as it stands today. Anarchy is still the prevailing feature of international relations, states continue to be the central actors on the international stage,

250 Walt, “Beyond Bin Laden,” 76.
251 Walt, “Beyond Bin Laden,” 76.
255 Devji, 11. Devji suggests that terrorist activity against the United States is very much an “accidental” effect of American engagement overseas, not because the terrorists are accidentally targeting the U.S. but because obviously the U.S. never meant to trigger such violent reactions to its foreign policies.
and power relationships between states have evolved dramatically since the amount of fortifications a king has on his castle determined his kingdom’s strength.

But Walt’s prescriptions apply to a larger strategy for American foreign policy as well. We must reduce our forward military presence not because we are indicating a lessening of our military prowess but that we must now also emphasize our diplomatic prowess as well. Despite many a theorist’s, including many realists, warnings about the rise of China, the best way to protect American power and interests is not to challenge Chinese military development alone but rather to subtly challenge China’s growing international clout with our own and develop our economy to maintain our competitive edge. Fear mongering into an arms race assures that we will probably come out ahead in one area of our aggregate power but it will cost us dearly in other areas, costs we simply cannot afford. Power relationships have become more complex with an international system that includes transnational terrorism as sources of global instability. The United States, if it is to maintain its status in the international arena, must “grow up and take the business of being a great power seriously.” It must adapt its policies to reflect the nuances of the challenges it faces. The fundamental realist premises of anarchy, state-centric analyses, and power are critical to reshaping those policies.

One way for American foreign policy to mature is to recognize the importance of coercive diplomacy and utilize it more efficiently in our foreign polity toolkit. Coercive diplomacy led to the December 2003 decision by Libya to finally abandon all.

256 Walt, “Beyond bin Laden,” 78.
its WMD programs and all international inspections.\textsuperscript{258} The war in Iraq has proven that even if the United States had adequately prepared for a long-term commitment to occupying and rebuilding the country, the American public simply does not have the stomach to accept the cost, both in financial terms and in the numbers of American lives lost, to engage in protracted engagements overseas. Despite having the best military in the world, our military power simply does not have the ability to conduct and win large-scale occupational wars or even engage in prolonged state-building exercises alone. While there are still times that call for offensive military action - as evidenced by the internationally-supported, American-led invasion of Afghanistan - the costs of such action in terms of the other components of American power necessitate a very careful and calculated approach to such offensive action.

For most realists, the true danger to American national interests was not Saddam Hussein but rather the threat of international terrorism. The true cost of the American invasion of Iraq, then, is the distraction away from the GWOT that the war in Iraq has caused. Rather than throw the full weight of American concentration and effort into eliminating al Qaeda and its Taliban support from Afghanistan and the neighboring regions in Pakistan, the United States has squandered away the strength of its armed forces as well as full international support following September 11\textsuperscript{th}. Troop morale is low, the disasters of Abu Graib have decisively turned formerly sympathetic foreign opinion against the U.S., the fiscal costs of the war have nearly bankrupted the Treasury, and the flagrant exercise of American power in invading and occupying a sovereign state has weakened our military readiness, global standing, and overall national capabilities to

adequately execute the GWOT. Far from advancing American interests, most realists argue that the war in Iraq has actually reduced aggregate American power and even worse, left the United States much less better equipped to execute the GWOT, the major real threat to American national security and interests.

There is, however, one stalwart realist champion of the war in Iraq. Condoleeza Rice, describing a “new American realism” that she argues fits squarely within a tradition of a “uniquely American realism,” explains that democracy promotion is in fact a pillar of realist thought – an argument that stands in stark contradiction to many other prominent realists.259 The importance of such an article, and the debate amongst these realists on the question of what constitutes the national interest, cannot be emphasized enough. While it is arguable that key members of the Bush administration, including the President himself, envisioned a morality-backed approach to their democratization project in Iraq,260 Rice’s article does explain how the war in Iraq might actually fit within a larger realist paradigm. While most will certainly see her article as a front to justify a failed policy as an administration struggles to solidify a positive legacy, her article is particularly important for the debate it will ignite. With their broad sweeping generalizations of power, the realists simply do not have a cogent and precise prescription for how exactly to measure national interest. With Rice’s article, it becomes all the more clear what can happen if these questions are not adequately addressed.

260 Bob Woodward’s books on the Bush administration’s decisions and actions following September 11th are some of the best on how the United States went to war in both Afghanistan and Iraq. While Rice clearly has formulated a cogent explanation of how Iraq fits within a realist paradigm, Woodward’s books clearly indicate that for most of the key administration officials, democracy promotion was part and parcel of Bush’s “vision” to spread democracy for moral reasons. See Bob Woodward, Bush at War (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002) and Plan of Attack (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004).
Such a treatment cannot be made, however, purely within the confines of academic treatises. Morgenthau wrote that "...the kind of interest determining political action in a particular period of history depends upon the political and cultural context within which foreign policy is formulated." Thus, Rice's formulation must be seen as a singularly ill-timed attempt to defend a rather poorly calculated and even more poorly executed policy. Even more damaging, her placement of democracy promotion within a realist paradigm falls into the moral dictates of the Cold War, a time when the government structure of another state was all the U.S. would recognize. With the span of Soviet influence no longer a threat to American interests, blindly promoting new democracies seems seriously out of touch with the realities of international security today. India is a major competitor with China for regional Asian hegemony and thus also poses a challenge to American hegemony in the region. The status of India's government clearly has done little to determine whether or not it would ever pose a challenge to the United States. Major European states fall into a similar category - France and Germany, while still ostensibly key American allies, have done little to support key American policies. On the other hand, Pakistan and China have become major American allies in the Global War on Terror, with Pakistan raging, however unsuccessfully, its own battles against hardened extremists in its frontier regions and China battling internal "terrorists" in its Western regions dominated by the Uyghur minority.

We have forgotten how to take careful and calculated approaches to foreign policy not because realism has led our leaders astray but because we have strayed too far from some of the basic principles of realism and have failed to fully integrate the realities.

261 Morgenthau, 11.
of contemporary international security with the theoretical basics of realism. Instead, too much of our assessment of our national strength involves the belief that military power must dominate or economic might must take precedence or that we are even in the same positional relationship with other states as we were 19 years ago when the Berlin wall fell. Our vulnerability on September 11th should have alerted us to some of the realities of international relations today but we fell instead into another pattern of dogged democracy promotion at a cost we could not or are not willing to (more likely a combination of the two) afford. The United States failed to listen to the sage warnings of one of its most venerable historians, diplomats, and realists, George Kennan, when he warned against hasty actions against Iraq. Perhaps the basic principles of an international relations theory that has served the country quite well for decades might finally change the unfortunate path we are on now.
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