

Neoclassical realism in European politics



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Neoclassical realism in European politics

Bringing power back in

Edited by

Asle Toje and Barbara Kunz

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Asle Toje and Barbara Kunz

Introduction: neoclassical realism in Europe

Asle Toje and Barbara Kunz

Realism has in recent years become a source of inspiration for scholars and policy-makers alike. The main reason for this can be summed up in a single word: multipolarity. As the unipolar international system gives way to a less hierarchical structure, students of international security have come to consider the dynamics of a multipolar international system. In a rapidly changing international system, realist assumptions have, arguably, displayed more explanatory and predictive rigour than their rivals. It would seem that the institutional frameworks and normative firewalls that scholars only ten years ago claimed would supersede the nation-state and win the globe for postmodern communal norms and values were – if not very nearly, then very actually – wrong.

Realism is making a comeback – in Europe, we hasten to add, as it never actually abdicated in America. The study of realism has in recent years become a central vantage point for observers of international relations. Officials of the European Union (EU) regularly cite security policy as central to the role and purpose of contemporary European integration. In the words of Javier Solana, the then EU foreign-policy chief, the European project was initially intended to secure peace in Europe. Today, in contrast, it is about building peace in the rest of the world.¹ As one senior EU official wryly put it: as Europe gets more deeply involved in foreign and security policy cooperation, it becomes increasingly evident that international relations are ruled by a bleaker, more limited reality than are domestic affairs.²

Policy-makers often take a sceptical view of international relations theory, frequently with good reason. The term ‘theory’ is all too often used as a byword for statements of fact, hypotheses or intuition. Moreover, the thought patterns that do merit elevation to the level of ‘principle’ seem haphazard and uncertain when compared with their equivalents in the hard sciences. International systems, like other systems, are characterized above all by the nature of the units of which

they are composed and the motive forces that animate them. Those units are by no means uniform, and so theories of international politics can never have the authority of a physics theory, or its explanatory or predictive power. The important question is whether they can be stated in ways that make us better understand international politics, whether they further understanding of the international system or whether they are tautological dead ends.

Morton A. Kaplan noted that the whole point of theory is that 'we cannot reason without generalisation. And where the subject matter is complex, the webs of reasoning take the form of theory.'³ Understanding requires theory, theory requires abstraction, and abstraction requires the simplification and ordering of reality. Theory is a response to complexity. We need theories to make sense of the flood of information that characterizes modernity. Herein lies an inescapable link between the abstract world of theory and the tangible world of policy. Most practitioners employ theory implicitly – most often in a belief that generalizations follow from the straightforward presentation of facts.

So theory matters – but why did this particular book need to be written? It is a fair question. There are many, arguably too many, books which deal with various aspects of international relations theory. Although neoclassical realism has certainly been touched upon by many of the more recent works, all of them have tackled the question from an American vantage point (i.e., from a position informed by the grand debate between 'neorealism and its critics', with its attention trained on the challenges facing a superpower exiting a phase of unipolarity). Connecting neoclassical realism to the dormant European realist tradition and applying this to the foreign-policy questions on European minds can both add to the richness of the neoclassical realist tradition and help to reinvigorate realism as a European school of thought.

Classical realism, neorealism and neoclassical realism

Realism is the most established theory of international relations. Its lineage goes back centuries as an approach to making sense of international politics on a theoretical and practical level. Though the term may have appeared only recently in the tradition's history, its core tenets can be traced back to Greek antiquity and the works of Plato, Aristotle and Thucydides. Realism, strictly speaking, is not a theory but rather a set of assumptions which formulate a vantage point from which to make sense of international affairs.

At the most basic level, realism is essentially two things: both a philosophical and a practical endeavour. Though the two frequently meet, not least in the writings of men such as Metternich and Machiavelli, the

difference between realism in theory and in practice is the difference between watching a recording of a game knowing the final score – and being on court. Often, though, the realist focus on the descriptive rather than the normative has been perceived as immoral, captured in the title of Robert Gilpin's essay 'No One Loves a Political Realist'.⁴ This has arguably been more so in Europe than in other parts of the globe, where the predominance of constructivism in recent decades – with its focus on 'speech acts' – has led many to see realist analysis as tantamount to legitimizing, even encouraging, *realpolitik*.

Realists share a pessimistic view of human nature and the prospects for lasting change in people's hearts. The structure of international politics is defined by anarchy and the absence of the sort of prohibitive power which made Thomas Hobbes call for a leviathan state. The state, in turn, is the centrepiece of realist analysis. A state's foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power. Realists refute the Gramscian notion, so flattering to academicians, that it is the intellectual superstructure which dominates the material capabilities. It follows from this that realists are sceptical towards schemes of supranational governance and recognize that ethics and morality are products of power and material interests, not the other way around.

This is not the place to survey realist thought. Explanations have been sought on three levels, captured in Kenneth Waltz's work *Man, the State and War* (1959), according to which the first focus is on the nature of decision-makers, the second on the disposition of states and the last on the incentives provided in the system. Neorealism takes a systemic approach, where the international system acts as a constraint on state behaviour, so that only states whose outcomes fall within an expected range thrive and, ultimately, survive. This system is not dissimilar to an economic model in which companies set prices and quantity based on the incentives of the market. For neorealists, states are compelled to select those foreign policies that are the most appropriate responses to systemic circumstances. Domestic politics is not seen to play any significant role in determining foreign policy, given the great dangers that come with ignoring systemic imperatives in a system determined by anarchy.

Over time, some basic shortfalls in the explanatory powers of neorealist theory have come to light. The most obvious is that the international system is not as easy to read as neorealists sometimes assume. Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Thompson note how threats and opportunities in the politics among nations are often contradictory and open to interpretation.⁵ Because of domestic circumstances, states sometimes have trouble mobilizing the domestic resources necessary to respond in accordance with the demands of the international system. Jack Snyder has examined how policy elites sometimes find it impossible to break

out of a domestic consensus that runs against what the international system requires.⁶ And Robert Jervis, among others, has noted that states do not always behave in accordance with the incentives of the system, or perhaps more accurately states do not always respond to systemic stimuli in a fashion that neorealists would deem 'correct'. Jervis also sees a second challenge, in that state leaders do not always respond rationally to the incentives of the system, even if they have understood systemic stimuli correctly. This can be the result of a host of reasons, spanning from the eccentricities of a particular leader to historical experiences that trigger certain behavioural patterns.⁷

For the past ten to fifteen years, neoclassical realism has been the hope and promise for all those who have awaited the cross-pollination of insights from structural realism and classical realism. The hope is to depart from the neorealist account's single-minded focus on the systemic variable, while avoiding the uncontrolled proliferation of explanatory variables that can ensue when taking in 'first image' factors and 'second image' factors that shape international relations. As Alexander Reichwein discusses in chapter 3, neoclassical realists see the foreign and security policies of states as primarily a response to the opportunities and constraints of the international system, but how they choose to respond is conditioned by domestic factors. However, deeper digging into works published under the neoclassical realist label and attempts to summarize these writings reveal that there is, as yet, no unified neoclassical realist school.⁸ The battle over definitions is still raging – for the most part in the United States. The present book is conceived as a contribution to these debates, from the right bank of the Atlantic. This has been the main reason to engage in this project of collecting a sample of fresh realist perspectives and, towards this end, to call upon a field of predominantly young, predominantly European scholars.

Barbara Kunz and Ilai Z. Saltzman in chapter 6 highlight the influence of domestic political constraints and leadership perceptions on the foreign and security behaviour of states. Adherents to neoclassical realism concur with neorealist theory insofar as the scope and ambition of a state's foreign and security policy are driven first and foremost by its position in the international system and specifically by its relative capabilities. However, and here comes the important part, neoclassical realists argue that the impact of developments in the relative capabilities of states on their foreign and security behaviour is indirect and complex, because systemic pressure is translated through intervening variables at the domestic political level, such as strategic culture, leader perceptions, state–society relations and the nature of the domestic political systems. While a state's position in the international system defines the boundaries of the range of possible policies, domestic constraints also play an important role, in the shape of ideational factors, historical experience

and so on.⁹ Neoclassical realism thus posits that constraints and opportunities provided by the international environment are filtered through intervening unit-level variables to shape external state behaviour. This is why they are neoclassical.¹⁰

Neoclassical realists return to and elaborate on the classical realist insights about the state and power as well as the complex interplay of state–society relations.¹¹ The guiding proposition in neoclassical realism is that developments in the distribution of relative capabilities among states determine broad parameters for foreign policy behaviour, but domestic political concerns or constraints either inhibit or facilitate certain behaviours as responses to these developments in the distribution of relative capabilities.¹² The first generation of neoclassical realist studies featured different attempts to specify which sub-systemic factors are important and how systemic pressures on state behaviour are influenced by characteristics of the domestic political system, characteristics of state–society relations and competing domestic interpretations of national history.¹³

In other words, neoclassical realism has three parts to it: the independent variable (i.e., the actor's position in the international system), the intervening variable (i.e., the domestic-level 'transmission belt' through which structural pressures are filtered) and the dependent variable (i.e., the foreign policy outcome). By contrast, the 'transmission belt' of structural realists goes directly from the system to policy behaviour. This hinges on a rationality assumption, which 'enables the theorists to predict that leaders will respond to the incentives and constraints imposed by their environments'.¹⁴ But it is not that simple. World history shows that some powers punch above their weight and others fail to grasp the position that seems to be theirs for the taking. The many volumes written on the 'paradoxes of power' are testimony to the often erratic link between capabilities and behaviour.

This leads, at best, to under-specification and, at worst, to inaccurate explanations and predictions. There seem to be strong logical and historical reasons for questioning the explanatory and predictive power of theories which move directly from international structures to state behaviour. The neoclassical realists' maxim is that one must open the 'black box' at the unit level in order to trace how structural pressures are transformed into foreign policy behaviour.

Realism: still an American science?

As noted initially, the ambitions of this book are twofold, one fraternal and one methodological. One goal is to show that the realist tradition is alive and well in Europe, by presenting a sample of European scholars working under the realist paradigm – including Russia. Tatiana Romanova and

Elena Pavlova provide just that in chapter 12, 'Towards neoclassical realist thinking in Russia?' Methodologically, analysts wanting to understand any particular case need to do justice to the full complexity of the causal chain linking relative material power and foreign policy outputs. The conclusion to be drawn for neoclassical realist research design is that it will heavily rely on in-depth case studies and process-tracing.¹⁵ The researcher engaging in such an endeavour must possess deep knowledge of the object of study, including relevant language skills and a thorough understanding of the political system and its history.

Introducing neoclassical realism to a European academic audience poses a particular challenge. For Europeans, the American discourse of 'bringing intervening variables back in' sounds curious. The dominant paradigm of constructivism has, if anything, too singular a focus on intervening variables. In Europe, it is thus the systemic variable which needs to be brought 'back in' and connected with European realist thought on intervening variables. If this were to be achieved, one might rightly speak of a distinctly European realism.

Questions that need to be analysed from a realist angle are plentiful. Consider, for instance, the dramatic changes in polarity – from multipolarity to bipolarity to unipolarity – the world underwent between 1945 and 1991. In the post-war period, in all powers, those making foreign policy faced the daunting task of assessing and responding to new and unfamiliar threats and possibilities. No school other than realism offers the analytical tools required in these situations. Despite this, few would argue that the resulting strategy shifts could have been predicted solely from an analysis of relative power distributions or the dynamics of domestic politics at the time. In other words, structural realism seems to lack explanatory power under the described circumstances.¹⁶ At the time of writing, it seems unipolarity was in fact a transient phase and that we are now observing the contours of a new multipolarity. Explaining this transition is one of the major tasks awaiting neoclassical realists.

Closer to home and at the regional rather than the global level, the European sub-system offers ample material to study. During the 1990s, the EU emerged as indispensable player in regional politics. In policy area after policy area, the Union asserted itself, including in fields within which sceptics had argued nation-states would never willingly part with their sovereignty. As a result, the EU presently displays all the characteristics of a giant, except for the outward trappings of power. Some of our colleagues embraced this process, influenced by the dogma of things international being inherently 'progressive' and things national 'reactionary'. Libraries are replete with studies boldly mixing the normative and the empirical, hope and analysis, regarding Europe's supposed supra-national future. For that reason, we call for enhanced realist scholarship on European affairs – not out of contempt for moral arguments but

instead led by the conviction that scholars cannot do the real world justice without considering variables such as power or interests. As Europeans, we are naturally interested in those aspects of international politics which concern us. One significant convergence therefore is on the general role of neoclassical realism in Europe and Europe's place in the world. This issue is raised in all chapters, not least in Jean-Yves Haine's contribution on the EU's difficulties in becoming a power on the international scene (chapter 10).

Despite a certain Eurocentrism in our empirical choices, however, our theoretical objective is not regionally limited. On the contrary, our ambition is what the ambition of theorizing has always been: discovering insight into causal relations, helping to understand the past and allowing predictions of the future. We start from Kurt Lewin's dictum that there is nothing as practical as a good theory. Theories can be put to a variety of uses and different lines of enquiry require different theories. We need one theory for understanding and predicting concrete events in international affairs and a different one to rise from the turmoil of specific events and up to the calm peaks of abstraction, looking down on the tide of history. Social science takes place within the two poles of total, parsimonious abstraction and the study of all phenomena as *sui generis*, singular, isolated events. The relevance of theory decreases from 100 to 0 per cent as we move from the first pole to the second.

The mid-point between these poles concerns what Morton Kaplan called the 'engineering' applications of theory, where more variables are needed and theory becomes more embedded in the specific historical setting. In this process, a theory loses its analytical function, namely to elucidate the interrelations among isolated variables by abstracting them from reality. Somewhere during the journey between these poles, theory gets lost. *Sui generis* case studies cannot be the answer if we are to promote a tradition of social science. At the same time, there is something profoundly unsatisfying about constructing theories which are not applied to a specific level. The first pole is therefore no solution either. We consequently aim at Kaplan's median.

Within the context of debating neoclassical realism, the above discussion boils down to positioning oneself on the field of tension between the requirements of parsimony, on the one hand, and the insight that a comprehensive theory of foreign policy is impossible, on the other. While neoclassical realism's openness vis-à-vis domestic variables allows for a much more nuanced account of international affairs, the risk obviously is in incorporating *every conceivable* variable. This dilemma makes establishing a classical realist theory of foreign policy a real challenge, and it remains to be seen whether neoclassical realism is up to it.

Neoclassical realism once set out as an attempt to reassert classical realism, building on the core insights from Kenneth Waltz's structural

realism and the subsequent debates between neorealists and their critics. Neoclassical realism, in other words, initially strove to find a middle ground between the parsimony of neorealism and the 'practical wisdom' of earlier realists such as Hans J. Morgenthau, Raymond Aron and E. H. Carr. In the characterization of neoclassical realism posited by Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, however, not much of that initial endeavour remains. The underlying causal logic they attribute to classical realism – that is, 'power distributions or distribution of interests (revisionist vs. status quo)'¹⁷ – no longer plays a prominent part in the subsequent chapters of their book, although the dependent variable is considered to be the same in both strands of realism. What is remarkable in that context is the ever clearer trend of neoclassical realism towards *neo-neorealism* rather than towards a genuine renaissance of classical realism. One may indeed question whether the mere incorporation of second-order domestic factors justifies the label '*neoclassical*' – or whether there is much more to classical realism that many neoclassical realists assiduously choose to ignore. In light of neoclassical realism's ambition to find a middle ground, the question which therefore arises concerns the exact 'dosage' of neorealist and classical realism in neoclassical realism.

This draws into a nascent, intra-paradigmatic debate which is duly noted by Jennifer Sterling-Folker,¹⁸ who distinguishes between two distinct camps within neoclassical realism: one which characterizes neoclassical realism as a discipline in pursuit of scientific paradigms; and the other driven by philosophical traditions. Contemporary American neoclassical realists have favoured approaching the world through a discernibly scientific epistemology, prompting thereby a preference for parsimony and generalizable frameworks. As a consequence, the path chosen by most contemporary American neoclassical realists is back towards neorealism. Among the many advantages inherent in that move, the greatest probably is that it allows the question of state motives and objectives to be dodged. For instance, while Randall Schweller brings the revisionist state back in¹⁹ – thereby stressing the possibility of variation in state motives – neoclassical realists have in general been remarkably silent when it comes to determining what states actually want.

More explicitly than implicitly, much of the current neoclassical realist scholarship buys into neorealist assumptions on systemic determinants of state behaviour while adding domestic constraints and leadership perceptions, reducing thereby the possibility of states' free will to a minimum. Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro therefore devote considerable effort to distinguishing neoclassical realism from neorealism and classical realism, that endeavour indeed being one of the declared objectives of their 2009 volume.²⁰ In their view, what sets neoclassical realism apart from realism is a differentiated view of the units operating

within the international system and the assumption that the 'implications of anarchy are variable and sometimes opaque to decision-makers'. Moreover, neoclassical realists define their dependent variable as 'foreign policies of states' as opposed to 'international political outcomes', thus making 'no pretense about explaining broad patterns of systemic or recurring outcomes'.²¹ In sum, neoclassical realism thus takes neorealism, adds a limited number of (yet to be agreed) sub-systemic variables and thereby explains foreign policy as opposed to systemic occurrences.

In sum, the American approach privileges neorealism at the expense of classical realism. In the United States, neoclassical realism is essentially a research programme aimed at explaining how states filter systemic factors through domestic structures, thus explaining foreign policy output on the basis of both systemic and domestic variables. Neoclassical realism, as it stands, is thus some sort of 'neorealism + domestic variables'. It is an attempt to respond to the shortfalls of structural realism by (re)incorporating variables located within the famous 'black box'. Domestic factors are yet clearly relegated to second-order status, as they play the role of intervening variables in the so-called missing link between power resources and foreign policy output. However, constellations of systemic factors are seen as decisive in explaining the processes of filtering and responding to systemic pressures.²² In other words, structure determines behaviour, at the systemic and domestic levels, as Gideon Rose has argued in the essay considered by many to be the 'birth certificate' of neoclassical realism:

Instead of assuming that states seek security, neoclassical realists assume that states respond to the uncertainties of international anarchy by seeking to control and shape their external environment. Regardless of the myriad ways that states may define their interests, this school argues, they are likely to want more rather than less external influence, and pursue such influence to the extent that they are able to do so.²³

More than ten years later, it may be concluded that few neoclassical realists have taken this attempt at defining state objectives seriously. Lobell *et al.* clearly state in their book that they do not intend to examine 'variation in the interests of states'.²⁴ Although this does not necessarily hold true for the entire neoclassical realist research agenda, state interests are strangely absent from much of the scholarship carried out under the neoclassical realist label. As argued above, however, what states actually want should be of central importance in understanding and explaining foreign policy and it is with regard to this crucial question that a return to classical realist thinking may offer valuable insights. Moreover, in judging the adequacy of state responses to threats, analysts implicitly bring state objectives back in through the back door – not least

Schweller, with his objective of explaining deviations from neorealist assumptions such as 'underbalancing.'

For classical realists, states can want many things. For this reason, the classical realist catalogue of possible state objectives is long and full of variations. Yet all these objectives may – not must – manifest themselves in many ways. Consequently, for Aron, the conduct of diplomacy has more than just one conceivable objective – unlike, for instance, entrepreneurship or sports. Rather, as Dario Battistella discusses in chapter 7, Aron argues that international relations is unable to develop into a universal theory precisely because of this absence of an unambiguous objective.²⁵ Aron's efforts to deal with this challenge in a manner that combines levels of analysis with an eye to the organic (as opposed to mechanic) workings of power make him one obvious godfather of European neoclassical realism.

A distinctly European realism?

The present volume thus seeks to explore the European dimension to neoclassical realism. Torbjørn L. Knutsen in chapter 2 illustrates that there clearly is a case to be made. The hope with this book is to spark a scholarly debate that, in time, might lead to the re-emergence of a distinctly European realist school which draws on the roots of the historical, European realist tradition, while benefiting from insights of American neorealism. This would clearly be most effective if it were to be fused with rational elements in the liberal-constructivist paradigm, as suggested by Felix Berenskoetter and Adam Quinn, in chapter 11. Whereas the main dividing lines among international relations scholars in the United States have essentially run between liberals and realists, culminating in the neo-neo debate, European scholarship in international politics is widely carried out under the liberal banner, but with remarkable diversity, from critical theory to the English school, the Copenhagen school and social constructivism. For that reason, the starting point for reasserting the realist tradition differs on either side of the Atlantic.

As this book illustrates, a distinctly European realism has the potential to add renewed impetus to its American counterpart, based on the long-standing heritage of European social science. To be certain, parsimony has never been the objective of continental scholars. Herein perhaps lies its weakness, but certainly also its strength. This strength has gradually been lost as political realism – often abused or misunderstood in its recommendations – has been embraced as the official doctrine of American policy-makers, which more than anything has discredited realism in Europe. It is thus important to point out the richness of the realist tradition and to introduce the specific agenda of a neoclassical realism.

As Nicholas Kitchen argues in chapter 5, American ontological approaches and methodological preferences give neoclassical realist literature a decidedly scientific rationalism, grounded in material factors. In Europe, however, the English school and constructivist approaches have emphasized the non-material aspects of international relations, factors that were taken seriously by classical realist authors but which became a victim to the attempt to 'scientize' the discipline. By emphasizing the reintegration of non-material aspects of classical realist thought within neoclassical realist theory, European scholars have the opportunity to establish a distinct and worthwhile approach, not least with regard to the power of ideas, the topic of Kitchen's chapter.

Neoclassical realism's openness towards scholars who buy into the assertion that power is central while rejecting neorealist approaches to international politics is also evident in Patrick Holden's chapter 9, on EU policies on sub-Saharan Africa: Holden illustrates how theories of international political economy are compatible and gainful as tools of analysis within the neoclassical realist framework. Catherine Gegout approaches the same subject matter from a different angle in chapter 8. She finds that idealism is often a veil that covers the national interests of European states when intervening militarily in Africa.

We believe that this tradition should find fertile soil in Europe, where an often marginalized continental (and British) realist tradition contains a number of scholars who can be said to be 'neoclassical realists ahead of their time' – and for whom many of the neoclassical innovations were so self-evident it did not occur to them to invent a new label for their reasoning. That domestic factors matter was beyond doubt for all the founding fathers of political realism. The hope is also to inspire an *ad fontes, ad rem* surge back to the libraries to rediscover thinkers such as Heinrich von Treitschke, Rudolf Kjellén and Otto von Bismarck, as well as the aforementioned Raymond Aron. Moreover, European authors better established in an Anglo-Saxon discipline, such as Hans J. Morgenthau, John Herz, George Liska and E. H. Carr, deserve to be re-read and re-interpreted. It may, furthermore, be worth noting that European scholars generally have better access to early realist writing not published in English. For instance, Max Weber – who played a very relevant role in many realists' thinking – has become accessible to Anglo-Saxon readers only through translations deemed problematic by some.²⁶

In short, the chapters of this volume illustrate the applicability of neoclassical realism in empirical case studies related to key questions in European foreign and security policies. By viewing European integration from a realist vantage point, the work challenges established orthodoxy, which emphasizes the *sui generis* nature of the EU and can be understood only by targeted theoretical constructs under the broad heading of integration theory. Through detailed case studies, the book illustrates

that power and influence remain new and fruitful variables through which to understand the foreign policies of individual states, the EU as a whole and US policies towards Europe. The study illustrates the continued relevance of the most established international relations theory and demonstrates that this perspective is not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary to the dominant liberal theories (in the United States) and social constructivism (in Europe).

As Walter Carlsnaes pointed out, neorealism never became as dominant in Europe as in the United States.²⁷ He notes that the structuralist-systemic perspective never achieved total hegemony even in North America, and in Europe it has failed to achieve the same grip on scholarly imaginations. Carlsnaes emphasizes the European roots of realism:

We also find a second major tradition [in foreign policy analysis], and one which has left a much stronger and seemingly indelible imprint on the subsequent development in the field. I here have in mind the introduction into American thinking of a powerful European influence, and one that stands in marked contrast to the indigenous strands of the liberal Wilsonian project. Realism is its name, and Hans Morgenthau was for decades its undisputed high priest.²⁸

The chase for ever more domestic variables apparent in recent neoclassical realist contributions rightly raises eyebrows, however. If everything is to be considered an intervening variable, the most obvious risk is that neoclassical realism will, in the quest for explanatory power, lose universality. Or, as Rose warned already in 1998, '[i]f neoclassical realists continue to incorporate unit-level intervening variables into their basic power-oriented argument, ironically, they might find themselves bumping into chastened *Innenpolitik*ers coming from the other direction'.²⁹ The danger evidently is that the research programme will eventually confirm the conclusions of Aron and his classical realist colleagues that a theory of international politics is beyond the scope of social science.

Thus, one of the key questions concerns what neoclassical realism should primarily be. Is it an enhanced version of neorealism, based upon the assumption that structure matters – at both domestic and systemic levels? Or is it an attempt to turn back the clock, taking a stance in favour of classical realism within the context of the 'even clearer bifurcation within realism' which has occurred since the publication in 1979 of Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*, 'particularly in response to the strong stand against all forms of reductionist approaches – typified by most theories of foreign policy – which lies at the core of [Waltz's] structuralist reformulation of realism'?³⁰ Merging the two, despite their

shared points of departure, may not be feasible. Unsurprisingly, this volume is unable to offer a definite answer, yet we believe that raising the question has value in itself. Most importantly, however, we do not believe that a theory of foreign policy is conceivable without an understanding of state objectives.

An outline of the book

The chapters in this book deploy a broad range of theoretical frameworks under the umbrella of neoclassical realism. The sense that traditional theoretical frameworks can be grafted onto new actors such as the EU only with some difficulty has already given rise to various neologisms in the literature. Some chapters make use of theoretical constructs drawn from outside the classical realist canon. A corollary of the wide variety of potential approaches is the diversity that characterizes the theoretical ambition of the different contributions. In this respect, the chapters are reflections of the diversity of positions that exist in neoclassical realism more generally. Some apply neoclassical realism in a way Robert K. Merton described as ‘middle range theory’,³¹ while others focus on the all-encompassing aspects of the research agenda. What Robert Cox termed ‘problem-solving theory’ is central to some of the chapters concerned with explaining a specific set of puzzles, identified as a result of a set of assumptions about the nature of EU-level foreign policy.³² A number of other chapters are dedicated to exploring the basic assumptions upon which much existing theoretical work is taking place.³³

Such distinctions notwithstanding, however, it is possible to identify four core concerns that, to a greater or lesser degree, characterize the approaches adopted here. First, debates about neoclassical realism have been fundamentally concerned with the notion of power, whether this be the power of individual member states (in terms of their ability to shape EU policy outcomes) or the power that is conferred on actors (and ‘classical realist’ or ‘neorealist’ discussions of power go hand in hand with analyses of Europe’s putative international role).

Second, it is virtually impossible to study neoclassical realism without having something to say about the nature and role of theory and its impact on policy. A number of the chapters take up the thorny issue of the interplay between political realism and political practice. Is neoclassical realism in this respect a descriptive mode for explaining international relations, or is it instead a normative guide to policy behaviour? Whether a theory is a scholarly tool or a political one is a question that the EU’s foreign policy raises; after all, the rationale for the actor to take on a foreign policy and security role is that it can influence events. Again, neoclassical realism offers new vantage points from which

to view institutions, not least with respect to institutional dynamics, potential and limits.

Third, and closely related to the preceding issues, debates about neo-classical realism are intimately concerned with questions related to the relative roles of structures and agents. Neorealist approaches see the structure of the international system as the driving force behind changes in the European security landscape. Writers in the classical tradition view national interest as a constraint on member states, locking them into path-dependent and potentially inefficient processes. Neoclassical realist scholars, on the other hand, stress the interconnectedness of structure and agency.

Fourth, other chapters take up the theme of intervening variables, exploring the kinds of agents that shape security in Europe and beyond. Who are they exactly and what are their subjective motivations? Are they politicians, national officials and bureaucrats, or think-tanks and non-governmental organizations? The intervening domestic-level variables which 'channel, mediate, and (re)direct' structural pressures represent the main – and most controversial – innovation of neoclassical realism. It allows for the exploration of the 'internal processes' by which states 'arrive at policies and decide on actions' in response to external constraints and opportunities.³⁴

We hope this book will represent a useful summing up of where we stand today in our research on neoclassical realism in Europe as applied to matters European, a topic of great importance to scholars and practitioners alike. If, in answering some questions, the book also raises some new ones, this can only be welcomed; in fact, such is the very nature of political science.

Notes

- 1 J. Solana, 'The Lisbon Treaty: Giving the EU More Coherence and Weight on the International Stage', *Fakt*, 10 December 2007.
- 2 A. Toje, *The European Union as a Small Power: After the Post Cold War* (London: Macmillan, 2011), p. 248.
- 3 M. A. Kaplan, 'Problems of Theory Building and Theory Confirmation in International Politics', *World Politics*, 14:1 (1961), p. 6.
- 4 R. G. Gilpin, 'No One Loves a Political Realist', *Security Studies*, 5:3 (2006), pp. 3–28.
- 5 H. J. Morgenthau and K. W. Thompson, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, sixth edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985).
- 6 J. Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 305–23.
- 7 R. Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 217–71.

- 8 S. E. Lobell, N. M. Ripsman and J. W. Taliaferro (eds), *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- 9 B. Devlen and O. Ozdamar, 'Neoclassical Realism and Foreign Policy Crises', in A. Freyberg-Inan, E. Harrison and P. James (eds), *Rethinking Realism in International Relations: Between Tradition and Innovation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), pp. 136–63.
- 10 G. Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy', *World Politics*, 51:1 (1998), p. 146.
- 11 J. W. Taliaferro, 'State-Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State', *Security Studies*, 15:3 (2006), p. 470.
- 12 Neoclassical realists maintain the causal primacy of structural variables. Structural variables thus set the parameters for how states define their interests, but not for how states will respond
- 13 For examples of neoclassical realist studies, see: S. G. Brooks and W. C. Wohlforth, 'Reshaping the World Order', *Foreign Affairs*, 88:2 (2009), p. 49; A. L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); H. Mouritzen and A. Wivel, *The Geopolitics of Euro-Atlantic Integration: Europe and the Nation State* (London: Routledge, 2004).
- 14 R. O. Keohane, 'Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond', in R. O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 167. It is worth noting that Kenneth Waltz has explicitly argued, however, that structural realism is not built on an underlying rationalist assumption, as states behaving contrary to what structural constraints would anticipate (e.g., according to balance-of-power logic) would be 'socialized' by the system, thereby forcing them to adjust their pathological behaviours. For a discussion of Waltz's lack of a rationality assumption, see 'Conversations in International Relations: Interview with J. J. Mearsheimer (Part I)', *International Relations*, 20:1 (2006), p. 112.
- 15 Walt, for example, has advocated an epistemological approach known as 'detailed narrative history', arguing that 'valid empirical tests require a sophisticated understanding of the historical record'. See S. M. Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. viii.
- 16 For two recent neoclassical realist examinations of US grand strategy and strategic adjustment over the past century see: C. Layne, *Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); and C. Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
- 17 Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, 'Introduction: Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy', in *Neoclassical Realism*, p. 20.
- 18 J. Sterling-Folker, 'Realist Theorizing as Tradition: Forward Is as Forward Does', in Freyberg-Inan, James and Harrison, *Rethinking Realism in International Relations*, pp. 191–218.
- 19 R. Schweller, 'Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In', *International Security*, 19:1 (1994), pp. 72–107.
- 20 Cf. Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, 'Introduction', p. 5.
- 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 20–1.

- 22 Cf. Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, 'Conclusion: The State of Neoclassical Realism', in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*.
- 23 Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism', p. 152.
- 24 Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, p. 11, fn. 84.
- 25 R. Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1984), p. 29.
- 26 For a discussion of English translations of Weber, see the entry in R. Swedberg, *The Max Weber Dictionary: Keywords and Central Concepts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 277–9. See also B. Kunz, 'Hans J. Morgenthau's Political Realism, Max Weber, and the Concept of Power', *Max Weber Studies*, 10:2 (2010), pp. 198–208.
- 27 W. Carlsnaes, 'Foreign Policy', in W. Carlsnaes, T. Risse and B. Simmons (eds), *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage, 2002), p. 332.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 333.
- 29 Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism', p. 170.
- 30 Carlsnaes, 'Foreign Policy', p. 334.
- 31 R. K. Merton, *On Theoretical Sociology: Five Essays, Old and New* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 76.
- 32 R. Cox, with T. J. Sinclair, *Approaches to World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- 33 S. M. Walt, 'International Relations: One World, Many Theories', *Foreign Policy*, 110 (1998), p. 29.
- 34 R. Schweller, 'Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing', *International Security*, 29:2 (2004), p. 164.

Realism – a distinctively European academic tradition

Torbjørn L. Knutsen

Roots

Neoclassical realism represents an attempt to recapture the classic tradition of realism. What is meant by realism is this context? What kind of 'tradition' is the realist tradition? And what does 'classic' mean? These are the questions that guide the historical overview in this chapter.

To begin with the last question, note that it invites a definition of 'classic' and not 'classical'. It is often claimed that realism has such a long lineage that it reaches all the way back to the classical texts of ancient Greece. This is, however, a tenuous claim. For although Plato, Aristotle and other classical authors may have hinted at questions concerning war and peace, there are few hints concerning diplomatic conduct and even fewer concerning interstate power relations. There is, however, one major exception to the rule: the Greek historian Thucydides. He discusses not only states and interstate relations but also their power relations. Thus, he explains that 'the real cause' of the disastrous Peloponnesian War was 'the growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Sparta'.¹ He does not merely suggest that peace is best preserved when power relations among states are balanced. His analysis also stresses two additional elements: the importance of the internal character of the inter-relating states; and the perceptions that statesmen have of such relations.

These features – the focus on the state, the description of interstate relations in balance-of-power terms and the attention to internal factors like state structures and statesmen's perceptions – are all core concerns of traditional realism. And since Thucydides' book *The Peloponnesian War* is a fine and famous example of it, it has become an exemplar of lasting worth, a 'classic', of this particular tradition.

Thucydides may have been the first realist. But did he initiate the tradition of realist politics? The question may well be asked, because there is no direct connection from the classical age in which he wrote to the age

of modern realism. The link to ancient Greece, then, is not a continuous tradition. The lineage is broken by a sizable gap – from about 550 BC to about 1500 AD. Between Thucydides and the modern realists lies a gap of over 2,000 years, during which macro-political discussions were more concerned with imperial rule and with God than with balance of power and the perceptions of statesmen. This problem is, however, easily solved if we date the realist tradition not from when Thucydides wrote his book, but from the time it was rediscovered, studied and emulated by other scholars. We may, in other words, consider Thucydides a Renaissance writer rather than a classical one. The beginning of the tradition of realist politics can then be dated to the 1420s, when *The Peloponnesian War* was rediscovered – or, perhaps even better, to 1485, when the book was translated from Greek into Latin, for it was the Latin translation of Thucydides that exerted a massive influence on those Renaissance writers whom we tend to associate with the first and foundational arguments of realism.

Neoclassical realism, then, seeks to recapture this state-centred, power-focused and multi-level tradition of international analysis that emerged around the time of the Italian Renaissance.

The state of nature

After its rediscovery in the fifteenth century, *The Peloponnesian War* had an immediate influence on Renaissance authors like Niccolò Machiavelli, Francesco Guicciardini and others. They all modelled their analyses of Italy's inter-city affairs on Thucydides' classic text.

Renaissance analyses, in turn, influenced subsequent discussions across Europe. The influence grew as religious quarrels washed across the continent and found a climax during the Thirty Years War (1618–48). One of the most influential approaches to come from this unruly age was that taken by Thomas Hobbes. His arguments were directly influenced by *The Peloponnesian War*. Hobbes translated Thucydides' book from Latin into English during the 1620s. By the time he had completed his task, he had picked up a point or two about the nature of interstate relations, the most consequential of which was the notion that sovereign actors – who all want the same thing but who have no superior authority to provide them with rules – find themselves in a state of nature.

Hobbes, in turn, exerted a great influence on Baruch de Spinoza, one of the most important of Europe's political thinkers – and one of the most underestimated contributors to the tradition of academic realism. Spinoza accepted Hobbes' basic image that the relationships between sovereign actors can be described as a state of nature. However, he criticized Hobbes' simplistic portrayal of relations between sovereign monarchs and replaced it with a vision of relations between states. He

refined the claim that people are rational and that rationality is a driving force in the establishment of political community.

Spinoza discussed the process of state-building in greater detail than did Hobbes. He refined the role of reason by claiming that it is, like so many other good things, unequally distributed. Some states are lucky enough to have sensible and forward-looking rulers; others are not. Further, reason is not only an individual endowment, Spinoza averred; it also receives a collective expression in the law of the land. The law, not the individual ruler, represents reason. And the law is encased in a sovereign state. When several such states confront one another, their interrelations can be understood as a state of nature.

Whereas Hobbes' state of nature is composed of sovereign individuals, Spinoza's is composed of sovereign states. The difference is substantial. First, individuals in the state of nature have to divide their attention among many tasks to stay alive. They may be overcome 'by sleep, by disease or mental illness, and, in the end, by old age'.² A state, by contrast, is a huge collective, marked by a social division of labour whereby some people are farmers or fishermen, others smiths and still others are soldiers. In a state, people who are tired, hungry and infirm are replaced by those who are young and eager. States, then, are timeless organisms, perpetually active. And in this they are different from people.

Second, whereas Hobbes' individual men are equal, Spinoza's states are not. Spinoza's world is populated by states that differ in size, endowments and laws, and in the internal ways that they divide tasks, rights and duties among their inhabitants. Spinoza's state of nature, in short, consists of sovereign states that differ in nature and capabilities. And although the interaction of these states technically produces a state of nature, it is not a Hobbesian state of nature, marked by chaos and war. Rather, it is a condition with clear elements of order. This order is partly based on reason as expressed in law and partly on differences in state power. Spinoza's state of nature is ordered according to principles of power and rank. This insight, that the behaviour of states is conditioned by the interstate distribution of power, is an important aspect of realist analysis that neoclassical realism seeks to recapture.

The balance of power

Spinoza, then, developed a much fuller realist approach than Hobbes ever did. He viewed states, not monarchs, as primary political actors. He described states in terms of their capabilities. His arguments invoked discussions of war and peace and diplomatic relations that included statesmen's differing perceptions. However, Spinoza was deficient in one respect: he did not have a clear notion of the balance of power.

Like most philosophers of his age, Spinoza simply assumed the balance of power. Authors who wrote a century later did the same. David Hume, for example, who wrote a much-celebrated essay on the balance of power among states, never really probed his claim deeply; he did not investigate the mechanisms by which this balance pertains. Hume simply wrote that balance is part and parcel of politics. It was for him a mode of behaviour that comes naturally to statesmen when they act in the world – much as a fencer naturally responds to a thrust with a parry.

Hume and his contemporaries observed the balance of power but they did little to explore the actual balancing mechanisms. Their attention was trained on other questions. Theirs was the Age of Enlightenment and attention was turned towards reason-based projects of perpetual peace. One of the first of these was the vast and sprawling project of Abbé St-Pierre. One of the most famous was the complex construct of Immanuel Kant. One of the most immediately consequential was the free-trade vision of Jeremy Bentham. There were many other such projects as well. Few of them probed the balancing mechanisms of the international system; they simply assumed that they existed.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was an exception. Few Enlightenment authors probed the balance-of-power mechanisms more deeply than he. Rousseau even placed the principle in a historical context: he argued that it was an outcome of the Thirty Years War and the break-up of the Holy Roman Empire. The Scottish historian William Robertson begged to differ. Robertson's *History of the Reign of Charles V* (1769) included a detailed and highly influential account of the origins and the workings of Europe's macro-political balance. He argued that the balance-of-power system emerged during the Italian Wars (1494–1516) and that it was a product of Renaissance 'political science'. The Italians discovered a method of preventing any single ruler 'from rising to such a degree of power as was inconsistent with the general liberty'. They established a macro-political practice that grew 'to be fashionable and universal' and which 'linked the powers of Europe' closely together, explained Robertson.

Robertson's book was immediately popular, widely read and admired. Its view on the origins and nature of Europe's balance-of-power system was influential for the remainder of the eighteenth century and far into the nineteenth. Gibbon and Voltaire were among the authors who claimed they were affected by it. Neoclassical realism pays great attention to the balance of power. It does not treat it like a mechanical phenomenon but like a historical one. Neoclassical realism does not assume that an interstate balance exists like some natural law; rather, it treats it, like Robertson, as the outcome of perception, deliberation, discussion and diplomatic interaction. The balance of power, in other words, is manufactured. It is a product of statesmen's perceptions and diplomatic interrelations.

The advent of academic international relations

As long as there have been states, there have been statesmen who have perceived each other's actions and engaged in discussions about intentions and in diplomatic relations. Most of the time such discussions were confined to a narrow circle of soldiers and statesmen. Political philosophers sometimes added their voice to the deliberations but, on the whole, scholars and scribes did not enter into these debates without invitation. This began to change with the political revolutions in the United States and France and the Industrial Revolution in England. These events paved the way for more systematic and scholarly studies of social affairs.

The modern social sciences emerged during the nineteenth century. Western institutions of higher learning were filled with new academic disciplines like economics, sociology, political science, public administration and geography. It is easy to assume that international relations (IR) emerged hand in hand with these new fields. But this was hardly the case. Napoleon established his *grandes écoles* and their curriculum included subjects like law and public administration. His military academies discussed themes concerning war and peace. The study of war was dominated by tactics. Discussions of peace were incidental. Diplomatic history was part of the curriculum but it was touched on only lightly.

The emergence of the social sciences did not exert much direct influence on IR as a new scholarly field. Rather, it seems that greater influence was exerted by older and more established disciplines, such as history and law. Developments in the study of history played a formative part in this. The work of German historian Leopold von Ranke is a case in point; his concept of 'the great powers' (*die großen Mächte*) had a particularly important conditioning effect. The concept emerged from Ranke's effort to simplify an account of the evolution of Europe's political system. Ranke simply disregarded the smaller states. By removing them from his analysis, he achieved a much simplified image of Europe's macro-political system. He could present interstate relations as an outcome of the interaction of the great powers. The great powers mattered the most, he argued. They were the formative agents of European history. They held the balance of Europe. Their interrelations delivered the premises for Europe's state system. They established the general rules of state conduct – and they did this according to their own interests.³

Ranke was preoccupied with the past; he wanted to explain how the earlier interaction of the great powers of Europe had driven the evolution of Europe's international system. Other historians were more interested in present relations. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, when innovations in industry, communications and weapons systems brought rapid changes to trade and diplomacy, many historians were fascinated by the recent past and even by current affairs. British historians like John

Seeley and Edward Freeman made the case for 'contemporary history' as an object worthy of study. The step from contemporary history to IR was a short one. Advocates of contemporary history thus helped define IR as a subject worth studying in its own right. They helped conceptualize the interstate system and establish IR as an autonomous domain. Statesmen and scholars had long discussed states and their interrelations – violent wars and peaceful relations alike. Yet, during the course of the nineteenth century, such discussions were based on a new imagery and evolved a new level of conceptual abstraction. Not only did historians begin to view contemporary state relations as a system and a subject in its own right, they also formulated notions of regularities and patterns that characterized such relations.

Heinrich von Treitschke, Ranke's successor at the University of Berlin, expressed this new imagery in his course on 'Politics'. Treitschke repeated his course several times. It was extraordinarily popular. It always began with an analysis of the nature and the functions of the state. It continued with the social foundations and a history of the evolution of the state and of its many constitutional varieties. And it ended with discussions of the nature of interstate relations. There are two main approaches to the study of interstate relations, Treitschke averred. On the one hand is the approach of the liberal ideologists – 'the moralistic doctrine of the Liberal theorists', who regard the state 'as a good little boy, who should be washed and brushed, and sent to school'.⁴ On the other hand is the scholarly and naturalistic approach, which holds that the state is based on a monopoly of violence, wielded in order to protect and further the welfare of humanity. This was the view of the great continental theorists like Machiavelli. It was also the view of Treitschke himself – and of the many German civil servants who attended his influential lectures.

It may seem odd that German historians, who had lived so long without a unified state, should wax so eloquently about it, probe so deeply into its nature and contribute so importantly to the analysis of its interactions. Whatever the reason, the mystery is repeated in the case of German legal scholars. They had long observed that the law that existed within states was very different from the law that existed among states. Domestic law was subject to a sovereign power that could both make and enforce it. International law was hardly worthy of the term 'law', for there existed no body that could make it and none that could enforce it. So where did the norms and rules of international law come from? And why did states tend to obey them?

These questions had received three general answers by the middle of the nineteenth century. First, there was the traditional answer, which was anchored in theology: namely, that the norms and rules came from God and were the product of reason, which God had given to people. This answer, based on arguments that may be traced all the way back to

church fathers like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, had produced a rich tradition of natural law.

Second, there was the secular answer, that rules were an expression of power. Might was, essentially, right. Norms and rules were designed by the strong to further their own interests. This answer was based on arguments that could be traced back to philosophers like Machiavelli and Hobbes.

But there was also a third answer: that international law was the outcome of negotiation, political compromise and self-conscious choice. Reason was an element of this process of human interaction, but so was power. Treitschke leaned towards this argument. But it is less associated with historians than with legal philosophers like Georg Friedrich Martens and Johann Ludwig Klüber.

Martens and Klüber wrote thick books, in which they discussed hundreds of complicated cases – Martens' authoritative collection of treaties, *Recueil de traités*, had reached sixteen volumes by 1842. Yet the basic idea was simple: states could be viewed as actors in a state of nature – self-sufficient, independent and free – who established common rules of conduct through rational deliberation. Klüber agreed, presenting an image of sovereign states endowed with reason and rights: on the one hand, the 'absolute' rights of self-preservation, independence and equality; on the other, the 'relative' rights that diplomats had agreed on among themselves through processes of negotiation.

Martens and Klüber represented variations on a contractarian theme. According to them, the norms and rules that governed the interaction of European states were products of social intercourse guided by reason, rights and self-regard. Carl Kaltenborn von Stachau was not convinced. He agreed that Europe was divided among sovereign states in ceaseless interaction, but he doubted that the states were endowed with as much reason as Martens claimed or with as many rights as Klüber assumed. Kaltenborn argued instead that the states of Europe had interacted through a long common history and, as a consequence, produced a unique historical and cultural community. Kaltenborn viewed the European state system as the organic outcome of a long historical evolution. His argument dovetailed nicely with the attitude of the new breed of social scientists that emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century. They emphasized the territorial nature of states and argued that the economy, the polity and the culture of each nation are forged through ceaseless interaction and formed under specific geographical circumstances.

This idea is evident in the second edition of Martens' *Précis de droit des gens moderne de l'Europe*, which was issued in 1864. It included a new preface by Charles Vergé, who enthusiastically described recent developments that had brought the states of Europe closer together. New

technology of communication and transport disseminated goods, people and ideas with unprecedented efficiency. Economic relations had come to be based on a division of labour, making states increasingly interdependent. Trade had been liberated through new agreements, the removal of customs and duties, new systems of finances, and treaties that regulated navigation on international waterways. New international associations and conferences sped up international cooperation in a variety of professional fields. Humanitarian and charitable societies were active everywhere. Vergé described 'signs of a new period': a development from independence towards cooperation and solidarity, from a system of states towards a society of states.

Two impulses drove Vergé's argument. The first was technological. The development of new means of production (but also new means of destruction), new forms of industry and new modes of transport and communication affected societies – and the relations between them. The second driving force was academic. The social sciences – sociology, political economy and political science – were either rejuvenated or emerged as new disciplines during the second half of the nineteenth century and affected traditional disciplines like law, history and geography. They affected lawyers like Vergé, assisted in the birth of new approaches to law and helped transfer international law from departments of philosophy to schools of law. The French historian Jules Michelet explained in his *History of France* (1833–67) how the emergence of French society had been affected by climate and geography. Britain's James Bryce, lawyer, political scientist and diplomat, argued in the 1890s that the age of discovery was ending and that geography had to make itself a social science if it was to survive.

British geographer Halford J. Mackinder added that the world was becoming one huge system and that to study it required a new social science. German geographer Friedrich Ratzel sought to establish such a science. He argued that the basic unit of the new field should be the territorial state – which he conceived of as a territorially based organism. These organisms compete and adapt, Ratzel continued – echoing the imagery of German polyhistor Alexander Humboldt and British natural scientist Charles Darwin. Ratzel's Swedish student Rudolf Kjellén pursued the notion of the states as an adaptive organism. In the early years of the twentieth century, he evolved his own theories of state-building and interstate relations and subsumed them under the label 'geopolitics'.

Theirs was an effort to transcend historical investigations. Their ambition was to produce axioms, develop arguments and establish general explanations for the behaviour of states. They tried, through abstract reasoning and systematic observation, to pose the most important research questions, to identify the most promising factors of explanation and to develop simple theories for the behaviour of states.

The advocates of geopolitics paved way for a more systematic and theory-informed version of realist scholarship. Their general approach – if not their exact choice of variables – is echoed by neoclassical realism.

Classical realism and beyond

The academic discipline of IR emerged during the course of World War I. Its emergence was entangled in the diplomacy of war and the planning for a lasting post-war order. The drive towards the new discipline was fuelled by a wartime need to understand the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 and by the desire to establish a lasting peace when war finally ended.

The institutionalization of IR was stimulated in particular by preparations for the Paris Peace Conference. This Conference was attended by hundreds of experts – lawyers and social scientists – who were brought to Paris as advisors to the diplomats. They associated among themselves and many of them agreed on the need to improve the scholarship on war and peace. While the diplomats redrew the map of Europe and established the League of Nations, their expert advisors founded institutions of research and education devoted to questions on the causes of war and the preconditions for peace.

Most of these institutions were established in the English-speaking world, but there were institutions devoted to the study of IR in other places, too – the Geneva Graduate Institute of International Studies being a prestigious case in point. Yet the most prolific early burst of institutionalization took place in the United States and in Britain. The early curriculum reflected the liberal ideals of these commercial ocean states – and expressed the same commitment to freedom and democracy that these states had expressed at the Paris Conference. In the wake of World War I, then, IR scholarship was nurtured by Anglo-American traditions of history and international law that Treitschke a generation earlier had mocked as ‘the moralistic doctrine of the Liberal theorists’.⁵

On the continent, however, there still existed a tradition of realist politics. It was expressed in the power-based arguments of the geopolitical theorists (like Karl Haushofer) and anti-liberal legal theorists (like Carl Schmitt). As the inter-war era progressed and dark clouds of conflict emerged on the international horizon, realist arguments appeared in the Anglo-American states as well. It is, however, telling that these realist analyses were first made outside of the academic IR circle – by statesmen like Winston Churchill and diplomats like George F. Kennan.

In Britain, the tradition of realist politics was already apparent in Churchill’s large work on World War I. In the United States, the Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr formulated consequential realist arguments around 1930. Then, as totalitarian movements consolidated

their hold on countries like Germany and Italy, the influence of realism was boosted by political refugees who fled the continent and settled in the English-speaking world. Several continental intellectuals, many of them of Jewish extraction, fled the Nazi regime in the 1930s and were employed by the young institutions of IR that had been established in Britain and America a generation earlier. Among the refugees who settled in Britain was the lawyer Georg Schwarzenberger. He worked for many years for the London Institute of World Affairs and taught at University College London. His influential *Power Politics* (1941) was a classic expression of realism for a generation of British IR students.

Among the refugees who came to the United States were Hans Herman (John) Herz and Arnold Wolfers. Herz taught two generations of American students at Princeton, as well as at Howard and City College in New York. Wolfers taught at Yale for many years. Few, however, had greater impact than Hans J. Morgenthau, who was hired by the University of Chicago. His *Politics Among Nations* first appeared in 1948 and was the classic account of the realist approach for a generation or more of IR students after World War II.

Some family resemblances of classical realism

Scholars like Herz, Wolfers and Morgenthau contributed importantly to the establishment of an American tradition of realism which emerged in the wake of World War II. They were, however, rooted in Europe's classic tradition of realism. This tradition is not a theory; it is a family of theories. Its contributors are diverse. Their views differ on many issues. Yet their arguments display a handful of family resemblances. The most obvious of these is a sustained focus on the state.

Introductory IR texts often claim that realists portray states as rational and unitary. This may be true for the US realist tradition that evolved during the 1950s and 1960s; it is, however, less true for Europe's classical realism. Spinoza, for example – one of the most overlooked of all the contributors to the tradition – argued that some states are ruled by reason, whereas others are not. The latter tend to present a challenge to international order and stability. For Spinoza, then, the lack of reason in some states may, in fact, constitute a major source of quarrel, conflict and strife in the international community. Morgenthau entertains a similar notion in his early works.

It is hard to see that Spinoza entertained a unitary view of the state. Rather, he had a divided view. He drew a distinction between two kinds of political logic (just as Machiavelli had done nearly two centuries earlier): on the one hand, there is politics within the state, which ought to be based on law and traditional virtues; on the other, there is politics

among states, which must be based on power and guided by a different set of virtues and a distinct *raison d'état*. Morgenthau is far from clear on this issue. In *Politics Among Nations* he agrees with Spinoza that statesmen cannot base their foreign policies on the same values that guide them at home; they ought to obey different principles in domestic and foreign affairs. In some discussions, however, Morgenthau clearly assumes that states are unitary actors – for example when he explores balance-of-power mechanisms.

For Spinoza, human beings are not so much rational beings as social beings driven by an instinctive will to live (*conatus*). And states are not unitary actors but collectives, constituted by humans who, driven by *conatus*, have clustered to protect themselves and defend their kin. Morgenthau exhibits precisely the same logic. He, too, portrays states as human collectivities. He even agrees that such collectivities vary over time – in antiquity humans organized in clans or tribes; in the Renaissance, in city states; in modern times, the most successful groups were territorial states and, later, nation-states. In this light, 'states' appear as a convenient shorthand to indicate large human groups.

If such states vary over time, they most certainly vary across space. Some states are open trading states, while others are landlocked and closed. Some are oriented to the status quo; others are revolutionary – their leaders working to change the rules of the international game. Whatever their nature, they are all sovereign, self-absorbed, power-seeking and self-protective. And as a result, the system of states is a system of self-help.

Can the self-absorbed nature of states be tamed or harnessed? Can the anarchic system they constitute be subject to some kind of control? Morgenthau thought not. The ultimate principle of control was a diplomacy-based balance of power. French philosopher Alexandre Kojève cultivated another view. In a 1945 letter to the French government, he argued that, in the nuclear age, it is imperative that Europe's great powers reduce the anarchic properties of the state system.⁶ His analytical vantage point was state-based and realist, but his argument also relied on domestic processes and structures. The great powers of Europe must become internally more alike before they can hope to cooperate consequentially, he argued. European states, then, must first alter their domestic political culture by embracing the same set of universal norms and values, and they must reform their internal structures by anchoring these universal values in domestic law. Then, as the states of Europe grow more similar – and their statesmen evolve a more unified and universal outlook on world events – the possibility opens up of launching a project of European integration. Such a project will, in turn, harness the sovereignty of the individual state and limit the anarchic qualities of Europe's great-power system, argued Kojève.⁷

It is tempting to see his argument behind the analysis that Raymond Aron wrote some twenty years later. His *Paix et guerre entre les nations* (1962) opens with the claim that, after World War II, the prevention of a nuclear war was, for all parties, a goal as evident as the defence of purely national interests was before it. The rest of this magisterial book expresses the fear that this goal, which is so evident to him, may not be equally evident to other observers of world affairs. Aron thus indicates, first, that states do not make decisions in international affairs – individuals do – and, second, that all individuals do not obey the same kind of reason.

Recapturing classical realism

Realist theory is state-centred. This is the first family resemblance of classical realism. States are the basic actors in the international system; they differ not only in size and capability, but in internal organization as well.

A second family resemblance is the focus on state capabilities and the ways in which states convert capabilities into power in order to reach their goals or secure their interests.

A third resemblance follows: an appreciation that states coexist and compete with each other under conditions of uncertainty. The reasons for this uncertainty may differ for different authors – for some it is caused by resource scarcity, for others by forces of change (technological innovation being a perennial favourite). For all, however, there is a notion that states are egotistical actors, that each state seeks to focus on its own concerns and to further its own interests. But there is also a notion that domestic structures shape these interests and that individual decision-makers – statesmen and politicians – define them, monitor those of other states, divine the motives of others, define their own goals and mobilize domestic resources to fulfil those goals.

The geopoliticians provided an extra dimension to this argument, for in their view the nation-state did not only struggle with other states but struggled with nature as well – states had constantly to adapt to conditions provided by geography and climate as well as to respond to challenges posed by other states. This is a view that has returned in recent years with the rising concerns over the environment and natural resources.

These family resemblances have been resurrected in recent years and have returned to the mainstream of IR analysis. This return is undoubtedly connected to the world's changing correlation of forces. Neoclassical realism has emerged as a consequence of the end of the Cold War and the advent of multipolarity (in much the same way as neo-realism in its day emerged as an outcome of the breakdown of détente and the onset of a more competitive phase in the superpower rivalry).

However, the advent of neoclassical realism was also driven by an intellectual dissatisfaction with neorealism, especially its inability to explain systemic change. Neorealism had its heyday in the final, competitive phase of the superpower rivalry. However, once the Soviet Union unravelled and the Cold War ended, it was stymied. It could provide no satisfactory explanation for the Soviet collapse; to do that it was necessary to go beyond systemic analysis and examine domestic factors in the Soviet Union itself. It could not explain why the United States then launched a policy that sought to preserve and expand US influence in Europe and Asia; to do that, it was necessary to investigate the complex policy choices made by the Bush and the Clinton administrations. The changes also evinced the importance of decision-makers – of individual statesmen like George H. W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev, James Baker and Eduard Shevardnadze.

Neorealism lost some of its relevance in the 1990s when post-Cold War debates emerged about US predominance and the nature of the new international system. The discussion of the United States as an empire, an imperialist, a hegemon or an advocate of the democratic peace took place outside the neorealist ambit. Then, as rapidly growing states emerged, various regions of the world ushered in visions of a new multipolar world, and the precepts of classical realism re-entered the scholarly discussion.

Neoclassical realism, then, emerged in the 1990s as an events-based approach and also as a reaction to neorealism: it represents a distancing from the American concept of reason and, more particularly, a US tendency to interpret reason as rational choice. But neoclassical realism is a reaction that reaches back to Europe's own tradition of classic realism to design its many-levelled perspective.

Notes

- 1 Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (c. 402 BC) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 49.
- 2 Benedict de Spinoza, 'A Political Treatise' (1677), in *A Theologico-Political Treatise and A Political Treatise* (New York: Dover, 1951), p. 306.
- 3 Leopold von Ranke, 'Die großen Mächte' (1832), in *Savonarola; die Großen Mächte: Politisches Gespräch* (Berlin: Volksverband der Bücherfreunde, 1925), pp. 156–97.
- 4 Heinrich von Treitschke, *Politics* (1916) (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), pp. 294–5.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 Alexandre Kojève, 'Outline of a Doctrine of French Policy' (1945). See *Policy Review*, 126 (August 2004), pp. 3–40.
- 7 Alexandre Kojève, *Esquisse d'une phénoménologie du droit* (1943) (Paris: Gallimard, 1981).

The tradition of neoclassical realism

*Alexander Reichwein*¹

After a lapse in interest and popularity, realist approaches to international politics have begun to spark interest again, even in Europe. This is a noteworthy development within the discipline of international relations (IR), because, as far as theoretical approaches are concerned, the discourses in, for instance, the Scandinavian countries, Britain and Germany regarding democratic peace, European integration, international law, securitization and the power of norms, or regarding the 'practice turn' and pragmatism in IR have revolved around a neo-institutional, liberal and constructivist centre of gravity.² After the end of the Cold War, realism was seen as intellectually flawed, no longer adequate to deal with complex phenomena in international politics, and even morally bankrupt, leading to realism losing its traditional place as the counter-position in European IR discourse.³ But, despite the critique of realism, realist approaches contribute to contemporary debates in IR, in particular about the 'faces of power' in a globalized world, about the prospects and perils of the Western foreign policy of democracy promotion (leading to democratic interventionism and war), and about US grand strategy vis-à-vis rising powers.⁴ Moreover, there is a new interest in the origins of realist thought, in particular Hans J. Morgenthau's thinking.⁵

However, any attempt which seeks to reintroduce realism on the IR theory market must emphasize that there is no definitive or single theory of realism. Rather, 'realism' is a term with multiple meanings. It is a school of thought in IR which shapes theorizing about international politics in different ways. In other words, there are many different (both competing and complementary) realist theories. On the one hand, the multitude of sub-schools within realism share a set of basic assumptions embedded within them. The realist tradition has been constructed around its main proposition, namely that politics is a struggle for power among states. Thus, regardless of the differences between them, Morgenthau's classical realism, Kenneth N. Waltz's defensive neorealism, John Mearsheimer's

offensive structural realism, or Stephen Walt's balance-of-threat theory all share a common foundation. Yet they neither share a common and consistent theoretical framework nor agree about international politics.⁶

Neoclassical realism is an emerging approach within the realist tradition, in particular in America, with states' foreign policies as its dependent variable.⁷ It is a framework (or model, or template) of foreign-policy analysis rather than a theory, characterized by a specific conception of the international system in which states are embedded, a specific understanding of the role of state leaders' and elites' perception, and a specific model of the state, its institutions and state–society relations in connection with foreign policy. In order to understand the development of neoclassical realism, it is necessary to reconsider Morgenthau's classical state-centred European realism, Waltz's systemic neorealism and theoretical insights from liberal constructivism, and to integrate these approaches into one single framework of analysis.

The aim of this chapter is to present an overview of realist foreign-policy theories and to elaborate first and foremost what neoclassical realism is about, and whether it is a further development of classical realism and of Waltz's neorealism, or a new approach within the realist school of thought. It has widely been argued that simplistic, purely power-oriented theories of foreign policy⁸ inspired by neorealism and claiming the 'value' of parsimony are too parsimonious to explain the foreign-policy behaviour of states, because they focus only on the systemic level. Therefore, neorealist theories are in need of examination. Against this background, it is argued that neoclassical realism is an enhanced approach which overcomes the limitations of neorealist theories and helps realist foreign-policy analysts to deal with puzzling phenomena, such as underexpansion and underbalancing of even powerful states, which neorealist theories cannot explain. In other words, neoclassical realism can be understood as a response to the perceived shortcomings of neorealist theories of foreign policy.

Theories of foreign policy

Theories of foreign policy take as their dependent variable the external behaviour of individual states. These theories seek to explain what a particular state tries to achieve in the international scene, why and when the state tries to achieve it, and how the state does so. For that purpose, theories of foreign policy take both the internal and the external (systemic) factors characterizing or surrounding a state as independent variables. These variables are seen to drive and shape the foreign policy of a state. In the European literature on foreign-policy analysis, liberal and neorealist approaches are strictly separated from each other. Liberalism

thus appears much more distinct from realism than in US discourse.⁹ Whereas many liberal theories, often with a constructivist input,¹⁰ stress the decisive influence of internal dynamics and domestic or cognitive factors on foreign policy at the unit level, neorealist theories, in contrast, underline the pivotal influence of systemic factors. It is exactly this separation, and the limitations coming along with it, that neoclassical realism claims to overcome. Neoclassical realists draw upon insights from both liberal *'Innenpolitik'* theories and neorealist foreign-policy theories. Overall, however, neoclassical realism is best understood as an examination and a further development of neorealist theories.

Neoclassical realism: a challenge to liberal and neorealist theories of foreign policy

In a twofold manner, neoclassical realism claims to challenge liberal theories of foreign policy, which attribute secondary importance to systemic factors shaping a state's foreign policy, as well as neorealist theories of foreign policy, which are sightless for domestic and cognitive factors driving a state's foreign policy. First of all, neoclassical realism poses a challenge to both liberal and neorealist theories by integrating these perspectives into one single framework of analysis. Neoclassical realists take the foreign-policy perspective that liberal approaches in IR, which focus on the state and its internal dynamics, have put forth, and combine it with the perspective on international politics of the neorealist camp asserted, among others, by Waltz. Thus, neoclassical realism claims to overcome the separation of liberal and neorealist foreign-policy perspectives.

Secondly, in doing so, neoclassical realism also claims to overcome the limitations of liberal and neorealist approaches to foreign policy. According to neoclassical realists, these limitations are the result of the fundamental assumption both approaches hold in terms of either the unit or the systemic level being the decisive, or even deterministic, single cause of a state's foreign policy. This assumption is embedded within their analyses from the start. Liberal theorists postulate that domestic actors and institutional arrangements within the state have a fundamental impact on a state's foreign policy. In other words, they assume that foreign policy has its sources in domestic politics, and domestic as well as cognitive factors are seen to be the decisive cause of a state's external behaviour. This is why foreign-policy analysis should start at the unit level. Consequently, liberal theorists focus on domestic actors (political, economic and societal elites, political parties, social groups and private actors all representing the state and its institutions) when analysing the foreign policy of a state. These actors are assumed to be able to introduce

their interests and institutionally embedded influence, but also ideas, values and beliefs as well as perceptions into the decision-making process, and thereby shape state preferences. Liberal peace theorists focus on democratic attributes and values, and political culture as a consequence of history when analysing the foreign policies of Western liberal states, which behave mostly peacefully among each other, but which are more and more war-prone vis-à-vis non-democracies. To sum up, liberal theorists share the assumption that foreign policy of a state is best understood as the product of a state's internal dynamics and the influence of key domestic actors, and institutions. Therefore, foreign-policy theorists must peer deep inside the black box that is the state.¹¹

From a neoclassical realist perspective, there are many problems with liberal theories. Most profoundly, solely domestic explanations for foreign policy at the unit level hide important external factors at the level of the international system.¹² Liberal theorists underestimate the effects of systemic factors on a state and its behaviour. Thus, liberal theories leave neoclassical realists with a gaping lacuna as they fail to recognize the international system as an explanatory factor. More importantly for neoclassical realists, the lack of attention paid to the distribution of power among states and systemic constraints prevents liberal theorists from providing an analysis which truly grasps how and why it is that states with similar domestic systems and actor constellations/configurations often act differently in the international sphere, and why dissimilar states often act alike.

Neoclassical realists claim first and foremost to challenge neorealist theories of foreign policy. But how far do they? Waltz himself is sceptical about his neorealism as a foreign-policy theory. What he claims is to explain the general patterns and outcomes of state interactions within the international system, namely the recurrence of 'balances of power'. This is why he labels his perspective a 'systemic theory'. He argues that foreign policy is driven by both internal and external factors and, in contrast to the international system, therefore does not constitute an autonomous realm to be explained. This is why Waltz labels theories of foreign policy focusing solely on the unit level 'reductionistic'.¹³ Nevertheless, there exist different theories of foreign policy derived from Waltz's theory.¹⁴ Each perspective shares the understanding that the foreign policy of a state is best understood as the product of systemic stimuli. What does this mean? Neorealist theorists share the assumption that constraints and pressures from the international system (such as external threats and shifts in power distribution among states), as well as incentives and opportunities to maximize security, welfare and power (by regional co-operation in international institutions¹⁵), are strong enough to make all states, or at least similarly situated ones, behave alike. States behave alike regardless of their internal characteristics or domestic politics. Neorealist

theorists differ, however, over whether states are likely to pursue a rather defensive balance-of-power or a balance-of-threat strategy, or strive for regional hegemony through an offensive strategy of expansion as a response to systemic stimuli.¹⁶

From a neoclassical realist perspective, the main problem with neo-realist theories is that pure systemic explanations for foreign policy hide important factors at the unit level. First of all, neorealists, who consider cognitive and domestic factors to be unimportant, are not aware of the fact that state leaders' perceptions of power distribution and threats within the international environment as well as states' internal dynamics and domestic actors are playing a significant role in foreign policy. Secondly, Waltz, Mearsheimer and Walt assume that states have an unlimited ability to extract and mobilize those domestic resources and support which are necessary for balance-of-power/threat strategies or to pursue regional hegemony; they do not therefore consider the fact that many states may differ in their ability to mobilize resources and support for power politics. Neoclassical realists, in contrast, focus on resource mobilization. Neoclassical realists point out that as well as the structure of the international system, perceptions and states' internal configurations, and complex power relations and competition among key domestic actors offer explanations as to why states in similar structural positions often are not functionally alike and do not behave in the same way, as neorealists assume.

By incorporating the systemic and the unit level, neoclassical realists claim to explain why states at times choose to pursue strategies which are not guided by balancing power/threats or attaining hegemony. As Waltz, who distinguishes between the individual, the state and the international system as the three levels of analysis, admits:

The third image describes the framework of world politics, but without the first and second images there can be no knowledge of the forces that determine policy; the first and second images describe the forces in world politics, but without the third image it is impossible to assess their importance or predict their results.¹⁷

It is precisely here where neoclassical realism steps in and widens the realist analytical scope. Neoclassical realists incorporate both the internal and the external determinants of state behaviour into their multi-level framework, albeit the anarchical international system and the distribution of power among states are ultimately seen to be crucial (but not sole) factors which set broad parameters for a state's external behaviour. This is why neoclassical realists are still 'realists'. Nevertheless, neoclassical realism is a realist type of multi-level game focusing on the interplay of systemic and unit-level variables in shaping a state's foreign policy.¹⁸ Neoclassical realists accentuate systemic factors as well as cognitive and

domestic factors as a common set of intervening variables translating systemic constraints into foreign policy. In other words, neoclassical realists such as Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro examine the central role of the state. They seek to explain why, how and under what conditions its internal configuration intervenes between state leaders' perceptions of systemic pressures, threats or opportunities thrown up by the international system and the actual foreign policy those leaders are likely to pursue as a response to these pressures.¹⁹ In other words, neoclassical realism offers a transmission belt between systemic stimuli, on the one hand, and the actual foreign policy a state pursues, on the other.

In bringing perceptions and the state back in, neoclassical realists are able to address the following questions:

- 1 How does a state, specifically the decision-making elite who act on its behalf, assess and perceive international threats and opportunities? And who decides how to respond to systemic constraints?
- 2 To what extent, and under what conditions, can key domestic actors actually bargain with state leaders and influence foreign and security policy? Who are the relevant actors within the state, and which actors have the greatest influence on policy?
- 3 How do states go about extracting and mobilizing resources from society, working through domestic institutions, and maintaining the support of key stakeholders and the public necessary to implement their chosen foreign policies? How much power do domestic actors have to obstruct the state when it seeks to mobilize power resources and support?
- 4 What are the degree of state autonomy from society, and the level of elite and societal actor consensus concerning foreign policy?

To sum up: What are the circumstances under which domestic constraints will likely have a major influence on a state's foreign policy? These are important questions on the neoclassical realist research agenda that cannot be addressed by neorealist theories of foreign policy. In addressing these questions, neoclassical realism fills a gap in the neorealist foreign-policy literature in which the 'black box' state, as both a political entity and an analytical concept, is underdeveloped. Neoclassical realists, in contrast, open the black box and develop a well articulated and theoretically informed concept of the state.

Finally, neoclassical realists challenge neorealist theories because they address the issues of how and under what circumstances cognitive and domestic factors will impede states from pursuing neorealist types of behaviour. Neoclassical realists distinguish between different states and their various foreign-policy strategies and goals. They can explain why some states pursue a defensive balance-of-power/threat strategy, while others strive for expansion and regional hegemony, and still others

behave in contradiction to neorealist propositions by pursuing instead various strategies of underexpansion and underbalancing that are puzzling in a neorealist world.

Neoclassical realists' primary focus is on providing an explanation for the various foreign policies of individual states. Hence, neoclassical realism is not a general theory for which advocates claim universal explanatory power, as neorealist theorists do. Neoclassical realism rather claims to provide analysts with the tools necessary to understand the complex sources and dynamics of foreign policy by means of a theoretically informed framework and by means of empirically detailed case studies. Methodologically speaking, the aim of neoclassical realism is to trace precisely the ways systemic, cognitive and domestic factors, which are clearly linked, or integrated, in a causal chain, shape the formation of foreign policy of a state. Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* is the neo-classical archetype. The root cause of the war is realized to be the growth of Athens' power in the international system, whereby the misperception of that power in Sparta, which becomes obvious in the debates within the Spartan government, effectively leads to a self-destructive foreign policy of the Greek city-states.²⁰

There are three aspects of their analyses that neoclassical realists insist are crucial: area expertise in specific regions of the world; the knowledge of a state and its bureaucracy and institutions; and the claim to develop a theoretically informed concept of the state. Taken together, all three form a precondition for a comprehensive understanding of a state's external environment and internal configuration. Thus, neoclassical realists offer empirically detailed and theoretically informed analyses of the foreign policy of individual states, in particular the grand strategies of great powers across time and space.²¹ But even within the neoclassical realist camp there is no consensus over whether neoclassical realism is in fact representing a single framework of foreign-policy analysis. Gideon Rose has introduced neoclassical realism as a coherent realist school of foreign policy which posits a single explanatory variable and a common set of intervening variables which generates testable hypotheses about state behaviour. Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, in contrast, argue that there is no single neoclassical realist theory of foreign policy, but rather a conglomeration of approaches which have been developed since the mid-1990s.²² However, a neoclassical realist framework of analysis can be identified. This framework is presented in detail in the following section.

A multi-level framework for analysis

Developing the neoclassical realist framework of foreign-policy analysis poses some questions about the relationship between European classical

realism, neorealism and structural realism, and neoclassical realism. How far are neoclassical realists inspired by European classical realists such as E.H. Carr and H. J. Morgenthau? Is neoclassical realism simply a clumsy attempt to supplement neorealism with unit-level variables added to widen the analytical scope by explaining away anomalies for neorealist theories? Or is it a subtle refinement of Waltz's neorealist balance-of-power theory by bringing perception and the state back in, as Randall Schweller claims but who, at the same time, stresses the importance of the international system and its constraints.²³ By incorporating unit-level variables does neoclassical realism violate the logic of neorealism? Is explanatory power achieved at the expense of parsimony? Is neoclassical realism a degenerative research programme, as Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, or John Vasquez argue, because its proponents widen the hard core which is by and large synonymous with Waltz's approach?²⁴

The role of the statesman

First of all, neoclassical realists draw upon practical insights on foreign policy and the role of the statesman in defining the 'national interest' of a state based on assessments of the developments in their environment, and the complexity of statecraft found in classical realism.²⁵ It can be argued that the roots of neoclassical realism can be traced back to the European tradition of classical state-centred realism.²⁶ This is why theorists arguing in this manner today are labelled neoclassical realists. Nevertheless, and surprisingly, only a few neoclassical realists refer explicitly to Aron, Carr or Morgenthau. Most neglect the role of European classical realism in order to develop their framework, even though they highlight the role of the state and claim to present a theoretically informed concept of the state. However, working out the origins of neoclassical realism and starting foreign-policy analysis at the unit level are two important aspects by which European neoclassical realists could shape a 'European' approach of neoclassical realism.²⁷

To present only a few aspects here – those which are important for the neoclassical realist agenda – classical realists consider the statesman to be the key decision-maker in foreign policy. In a chapter entitled 'Six Principles of Political Realism', Morgenthau offers his ideas about the principles of statesmanship and the role of the moral, rational and prudent statesman. He created an inductive theory of foreign policy drawn from the experience of European (and in particular of German) history from the sixteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Also, in his later book *A New Foreign Policy for the United States*, Morgenthau observes that 'foreign policy is less related to objective reality than to the impression of the policy-makers' many qualities they convey'.²⁸

Neoclassical realists try to reinvigorate the idea of the role and influence of individuals in foreign policy, believing that they 'sit at the intersection of domestic and international political systems'.²⁹ Furthermore, classical realists are primarily concerned with the statesman's ability to mobilize and use national power in international politics and the problems that state leaders encounter in conducting foreign policy. These issues led Morgenthau to focus on power distribution among states in the international sphere as well as the character of a state and its relations to domestic society. To sum up, Morgenthau primarily reflects about the statesman, state–society relations and elements of national power and its mobilization.³⁰ He offers a foreign-policy theory but says little about the constraints of the international system. Neoclassical realists today share this concern for the statesman, statecraft and state–society relations. But, first and foremost, they take the systemic constraints into account in their model of analysis. Accordingly, the systemic level is where foreign-policy analysis begins. It is precisely here where Waltz's neorealist theory comes into play.

The systemic level

Neoclassical realists draw upon the theoretical insights of Waltz's neorealism. Neoclassical realists emphasize the priority of the international system as an autonomous realm as well as its defining attributes of anarchy, relative power distribution among states, and potential threats and pervasive uncertainty. They posit the distribution of power among states measured by the number of great powers within the system as the independent variable. But what role does the international system, and systemic constraints, play in the neoclassical realist framework?

Neoclassical realists start their analyses of foreign policy from the fundamental neorealist assumption that international politics is a struggle among states for material power, which assure them a better and safer position within the international system. In other words, according to neorealists as well as according to structural realists, anarchy and power distribution are seen as the crucial ordering principles in international politics. Like most neorealists, neoclassical realists also define power primarily in terms of economic and military capabilities and resources.³¹ Furthermore, all states are assumed to be unitary, rational, self-interested actors and to behave functionally alike, namely to strive for security (as defensive neorealists presume) or power (as offensive structural realists presume) in response to the security dilemma presented by international anarchy; they may use various strategies of self-help to secure their continued existence.³² Finally, neoclassical realists argue that the general scope of action and direction and the basic ambitions of a state's

foreign policy are shaped and driven first and foremost by its position in the system in which it is embedded. Secondly, a state's foreign policy is shaped and driven by its relative material power.³³ To sum up, neo-classical realists bring forward the argument that the foreign policy of a state is driven primarily (but not solely) by systemic factors creating constraints as well as incentives and limiting the menu of foreign-policy choices for all states.

William Wohlforth and Fareed Zakaria, for example, favour the first-order systemic argument that the foreign policy of a state is shaped and driven by the international environment in which it is embedded. For these American neoclassical realists, state behaviour is an adaptation to external constraints and pressures conditioned by the availability of relative material power capabilities which define a state's position within the system, and conditioned by changes in power distribution among states. They predict that an increase in the power of a state will lead to a corresponding expansion in the ambitions and scope of its foreign policy, and that declining powers are forced to scale back their international commitments and aspirations.³⁴ In a similar vein, Aaron Friedberg examines Britain's decline in economic and military strength around the turn of the twentieth century, and Melvyn Leffler examines the increasing economic and military power of the United States after World War II. Both American neoclassical theorists point out that shifts in relative power (distributions) among states, coming along with the rise and fall of a powerful state, led in turn to a shift in the foreign policy of these states.³⁵

Fundamentally, this is also the story Waltz and Mearsheimer tell, yet with some differences. Defensive neorealists assume that anarchy is benign, and that states do not pose a threat to each other but seek instead stability and security, which are plentiful rather than scarce in the international system. The system itself is characterized by a distribution of power among satisfied states that seek to maintain a given order to assure their own position within that order. Even if there are rare threats in the system (e.g. dissatisfied, revisionist states which try to change the given order), states strive to respond to them through balance-of-power strategies. Balance-of-power behaviour is the testable hypothesis derived from Waltz's core assumptions about the international system and its structure. According to his understanding, foreign policy actually is the predictable activity of (more or less) rational and cautious states reacting properly to clear systemic pressures by adaptive behaviour. But it should be pointed out that Waltz is not entirely consistent on the rationality assumption. Sometimes he says that he does not conceptualize states as purely rational actors pursuing always a balance-of-power strategy, and he concedes that he cannot predict exactly how a state will behave: 'States' actions are not determined by structure. Rather ... structures

shape and shove.³⁶ In other words, according to Waltz, the international system merely provides a framework within which states act. And states that are socialized within the system and that are familiar with the systemic pressures are likely to pursue balance-of-power strategies. But the system does not force states to do so. Rather, states should seek balance as a response to systemic pressures because otherwise they will be punished.³⁷ Put differently, even though Waltz was inspired by micro-economic theories about markets and their laws, his theory relies on some kind of thin rationalism.

Offensive structural realists assume that anarchy is Hobbesian by nature and is therefore potentially a catalyst for war. They put forward the argument that security is scarce and that states fear each other and thus try to achieve security by maximizing their relative power. In contrast to Waltz, Mearsheimer wholeheartedly embraces the rationality assumption.³⁸ According to Mearsheimer, strength ensures safety and, therefore, the ultimate aim of a state is to gain a position of dominant power over others, because having dominant power is the best means to ensure one's survival. He concludes that it must be a powerful state's goal to attain regional hegemony through strategies of expansion as a precondition to achieve maximum security. In other words, the international system provides strong incentives for all states to maximize their relative power as the best route to security and to thus survive in the anarchic environment. According to Mearsheimer, powerful states are willing to upset the given order and to cause change as a response to threats posed by their hegemonic rivals, or as an opportunity to maximize relative power in times of military supremacy. Likewise, dissatisfied, revisionist states are particularly willing to alter the given order dominated by a hegemon, to achieve a better position. That states will seek regional hegemony is the testable hypothesis derived from Mearsheimer's core assumptions. According to his understanding, foreign policy is the predictable activity of rational states which are willing to take risks and which strive for more advantageous positions and greater security and power within a given order by pursuing various strategies to achieve a hegemonic position.³⁹

In contrast to both Waltz and Mearsheimer, and in contrast to most other American and European theorists within the neorealist camp, neo-classical realists deny the clear causal link structural realists postulate between systemic constraints and the adaptive behaviour of states. In other words, they directly call into question the rationality proposition that states will always respond to pressures in a rational and therefore predictable way. To the contrary, neoclassical realists posit that the impact of systemic factors on a state's foreign policy is not as deterministic and clear as neorealists suggest. Systemic factors are rather seen as parameters which define the freedom of action or limitations a state has when it acts. The scope of action and restrictions in behaviour are

circumscribed by concrete political, economic and cultural conditions the state is faced with at a particular moment in time. Systemic determinants are simply 'unchangeable factors' which automatically trigger states to act in specific ways, which, in turn, lead to recurrent and predictable patterns of international outcomes. In other words, neoclassical realists argue that the international system and its constraints do not affect states in the deterministic way neorealists and structural realists presume. Systemic imperatives do not dictate or determine exactly how each state will respond to pressures. The system is, rather, seen as providing a framework and latitude for states, and systemic factors are seen to shape the general patterns and direction of a state's foreign policy. But, according to neoclassical realists, these systemic factors are not strong, precise or clearly identifiable enough to predict exactly how states will behave. Accordingly, neoclassical realists do not claim to be able to predict behaviour. The foreign policy of a state is, rather, seen to be context dependent. Systemic stimuli, neoclassical realists conclude, must be perceived and translated by domestic actors at the unit level in a specific context of time, place and circumstances.

The second point of criticism of neorealist theories of foreign policy is the assumption of existing objective systemic constraints and material power capabilities as things which can be measured. Neorealists presume that decision-makers are able to assess the distribution of power among states within the international system and to anticipate other states' likely behaviour accurately through rational calculations, and to formulate accordingly an adaptive foreign policy.⁴⁰ As Wohlforth points out, power is rather ambiguous and elusive, and is especially difficult to measure or assess.⁴¹ Even if there are some identifiable objective systemic pressures and distributions in power capabilities, which neoclassical realists do not deny, foreign policy is made by political leaders and elites within a state. Moreover, these state leaders and elites either apprehend power capabilities and the given structural realities in the international system, or they do not. Hence, according to Friedberg and Leffler,⁴² it is their assessment and perception of power distribution among states, of threats and incentives, and of other states' intentions that matter, not simply relative quantities of physical resources or forces in being, as Mearsheimer suggests. In other words, to understand the driving forces of foreign policy, realists cannot merely consider the systemic level; power capabilities and their distribution are not the whole story. Rather, realists must also pay more explicit attention to cognitive and domestic factors at the unit level. Hence, neoclassical realists remind realists of the need to take both state leaders' perceptions and the state's internal dynamics into account as intervening variables between systemic pressures and the actual foreign-policy behaviour of a state responding to these pressures.

The role of perception

Neoclassical realists, in general, aim to get more explanatory power without sacrificing the central insights about systemic constraints found in Waltz's neorealism. But they deny both the assumption of rationality embraced wholeheartedly by Mearsheimer and partly by Waltz, and the assumption that power can be measured exactly. Hence, the cognitive factor of perception is the first aspect by which it can be argued that neoclassical realism is a further development of neorealist theories of foreign policy.⁴³

The difficulties state leaders encounter in assessing shifts in the distribution of power and states' intentions are key issues in the neoclassical realist literature. The neoclassical core argument is that the distribution of power among states and systemic stimuli are a matter of perception of those who make foreign policy in a particular state regarding its situation and power capabilities, the environment in which it is embedded and the threats with which it is confronted. Neoclassical realists argue that foreign policy does not solely depend on objective, given, material factors, but also on how key political decision-makers subjectively perceive the distribution of power and the international environment in which a state is embedded.⁴⁴

According to neoclassical realists, state leaders and elites must assess power shifts and identify the status quo or revisionist intentions of other states. And they must perceive threats in the international system in a concrete situation, and respond to these stimuli adequately without putting their own state's survival at stake. Moreover, neoclassical realists also argue that the rise or fall of a great power is not merely caused by shifts in relative power among states or changes within the international system. The rise or decline of a great power is also caused by state leaders' (mis)perceptions of power shifts and other systemic factors, such as new threats, or (mis)perceptions of opportunities to establish a new international order. Thomas Christensen points out that state leaders have often misread both the distribution of capabilities and the situation in which the state is situated, and so act in ways contrary to what Waltz and Mearsheimer suggest.⁴⁵ In short, perception is the first intervening variable in the neoclassical theoretical framework between systemic pressures and the actual foreign-policy behaviour of a state responding to these pressures.

The 'black box' and the state

Bringing the state back in is the second point by which it can be argued that neoclassical realism is a further development of neorealist theories of

foreign policy. Neoclassical realists, like neorealists and structural realists, identify 'the state' as the most important actor in international politics.⁴⁶ But in contrast to the latter, the former open up the 'black box' state. Neoclassical realists develop a theoretically informed concept of the state and theorize about its state–society relations as classical realists such as Morgenthau did. To incorporate the unit-level variable into the analytical framework, neoclassical realists stress the importance of knowing how state institutions and state–society relations work. Besides the origins of neoclassical realism, this begs the questions, what actually is the neo-classical realist conception of the state and how do internal dynamics, domestic politics and domestic actors affect the said state's foreign policy?

First of all, neoclassical realists present a top-down conception of the state in connection with foreign policy. Systemic factors ultimately set the parameters shaping and driving the external behaviour of states. Yet states may be epitomized by a national security executive – comprised of the head of government, the ministers and officials in different political, economic and military institutions as well as the bureaucracy – that is charged with making foreign policy. The executive is seen to be best equipped and prepared to assess power and to perceive systemic constraints. And it is seen to be best equipped to deduce and define the national interest of the state guiding its foreign policy, because it has access to privileged information offered by the intelligence services about international developments. Within the executive, the statesman is seen as the most important actor.

Secondly, neoclassical realists share a specific understanding of state–society relations. On the one hand, the state executive is relatively autonomous from society; here, neoclassical realism builds upon the distinction between state and society made by Max Weber (by whom Morgenthau and his understanding of the nation-state were highly influenced⁴⁷). On the other hand, however, neoclassical realists do not see the state as completely autonomous from society and domestic actors, in contrast to neorealists, who assume that states have an unlimited ability to extract and mobilize resources necessary for power politics. The degree of state autonomy vis-à-vis society varies over time and across different states. In many political contexts, the state executive is compelled to bargain with domestic actors in order to extract and mobilize the political, military, economic and cultural resources and public support necessary to implement foreign-policy decisions. The relevant domestic actors are the foreign-policy, economic and societal elites making decisions within the executive, legislature, political parties, economic and/or public interest groups, and private actors.⁴⁸ In particular, in Western liberal democracies, state institutions and domestic actors are seen to be the key actors in the decision-making process, even in foreign policy. Neoclassical realists are aware of this.

Finally, in contrast to Mearsheimer and also Waltz, who basically assume the rationality assumption, neoclassical realists recognize that many states do not function as unitary actors, and that this has important consequences for their foreign-policy behaviour. Agreement or disagreement within the state facilitate or inhibit a state's ability to mobilize the resources necessary to respond to systemic pressures. It is the purpose of the executive, elites and key domestic actors within society to agree about the nature of the threats and opportunities offered by the international system in which the state is embedded and to agree about the interests a state has. In other words, foreign policy is a matter of consensus or fragmentation within the state, particularly within government and society. State leaders and elites making foreign policy are restricted by state institutions, the bureaucracy and key domestic actors, or they are supported by them. State leaders must mobilize resources as well as support from institutions and society, maintaining thereby support for their foreign-policy strategies from key domestic actors in politics, the economy and other fields in order to implement their decisions, in particular decisions about how to balance a rising power, about military interventions abroad, and about expansionism and waging a war. Neoclassical realists, who argue that the modern territorial state simply proved to be more effective than any other polity in mobilizing internal resources, draw conclusions from a state leader's ability to mobilize political, military, economic and cultural resources. That is, neoclassical realists focus on 'state power'. Zakaria defines 'state power' as the ability of the government to extract these resources in the form of national power for its purpose and the ability of decision-makers to achieve their ends. Christensen defines 'national power' as 'the ability of state leaders to mobilize their nation's human and material resources behind security initiatives'.⁴⁹ As mentioned above, neoclassical realists are inspired by Morgenthau, who explores the 'quality of government' as a resource of national and state power.

To summarize, neoclassical realists view foreign policy as a product of state–society coordination. Hence, the state is conceptualized as the second intervening variable in the neoclassical theoretical framework, between state leaders' perceptions of systemic pressures and the actual foreign-policy behaviour of a state to meet and respond to these pressures.⁵⁰

Explaining underexpansion and underbalancing

Focusing on perception and state–society relations, and tracing the foreign policy of a state back to its internal dynamics and domestic actors, enables neoclassical realists to explain those state behaviours which

deviate from those anticipated by neorealists' systemic assumptions. Schweller distinguishes different types of such behaviour: expansionist strategies and preventive war, but also various forms of underexpansion and underbalancing (e.g. bandwagoning, binding, engagement, buck-passing, appeasement and mixed strategies).⁵¹ The breadth of behaviour is the third and most important contribution by which it can be argued that neoclassical realism is a further development of neorealist theories of foreign policy with the aim of getting more explanatory power.

Underexpansion refers to a behaviour of states which is not in line with the 'valid and universal' law of expansion and hegemony-seeking that offensive structural realists such as Mearsheimer claim to perceive and formulate. From a realist perspective, it is a puzzle. Despite the fact that underexpansion is an often observable pattern of behaviour, even among the most powerful states, and thus runs directly contrary to the core prediction of many realist foreign-policy theories, it has received scant attention in the realist camp. Little has been written on the subject so far, although Zakaria deals with various forms of underexpansion as an irrational strategy leading to the rise and fall of states, power shifts within the international system, and war (suboptimal foreign policies).⁵² As Zakaria reminds us, throughout history strong nations have expanded beyond their borders, establishing military or trading outposts, exerting influence on other nations and sometimes pushing out their own borders by subjugating neighbouring people. The United States pushed to the Pacific and ultimately took control of extensive overseas territories in the eighteenth century. For about a quarter century after the Civil War, however, the United States exhibited little interest in expansion and that peaceful interlude seems anomalous to Zakaria, who finds it a highly unusual gap between power and interests. How is that gap to be dealt with? How can underexpansion be explained from a neoclassical realist perspective?

Zakaria tweaks classical realism, which assumes that states expand whenever they can, to create what he calls 'state-centred realism'. Against this theoretical background, he posits that rich nations do not necessarily expand but do so only when their central governments have sufficient strength to extract from society the resources required for expansion. From 1865 to 1889, Zakaria argues, the US government had little strength. The executive branch, where foreign-policy initiative normally resides, played second fiddle to Congress. And the state and local governments took responsibility for many more functions and took in much more revenue than the national government. In those circumstances, the United States declined to act on numerous opportunities for foreign expansion. In other words, the relatively weak government was a hindrance to those who wanted to spread American power globally. By the 1890s, the national executive branch had begun to exert itself

more forcefully vis-à-vis Congress. That enhanced power gave rise to greater international expansiveness. As Zakaria elaborates, between 1889 and 1908, of thirty-two cases considered as opportunities for expansion, twenty-five resulted in expansion. Obviously, Zakaria concludes, the ability of a central government to appropriate the requisite resources is a precondition for external expansion.

Underbalancing refers to an observable behaviour of even powerful states which is also not in line with the 'valid and universal' law of power balancing that defensive neorealists such as Waltz claim to perceive and formulate. Schweller deals with various forms of underbalancing as an irrational strategy that leads to the rise and fall of states, power shifts and imbalances within the international system, and war (suboptimal foreign policies).⁵³ As Schweller reminds us, none of the great continental powers consistently balanced against Napoleonic France, which achieved hegemony over Europe. None of the middle-sized powers balanced against rising Nazi Germany. Similarly, none of the middle-sized and greater states balanced against the United States and the Soviet Union to try to overcome the post-war bipolarity, and no rival has yet emerged to balance against the United States as the sole superpower in the post-Cold War era. Instead, states tended to underestimate threats, and they bandwagoned, appeased or adopted ineffective measures in response to a growing threat.

How can underbalancing be explained from a neoclassical realist perspective? According to Schweller, consensus among state leaders, elites and domestic actors about threats in the international system, the national interests of a state in political and economic issues and strategies to respond to threats are the crucial factors in the foreign policy of a state. Another important factor is consensus among these actors about the role of a state's identity in connection with an ideologically driven foreign policy.⁵⁴ Against these *ex ante* assumptions, Schweller offers the following two hypotheses:

- 1 The more coherent the process of making foreign policy is within a state, and the more coherent state–society relations are, the more likely will be a balancing behaviour of this strong state; given coherence, decision-makers are able to mobilize the resources and public support necessary for balance-of-power strategies.
- 2 Conversely, fragmented, weak states are both unwilling and unable to balance against potential threats. State leaders and elites do not agree on the perceived threat, or on interests and strategies, and they do not share preferences. Therefore, they are unable to mobilize the required resources from a divided society, which itself does not agree on the state's foreign-policy goals, because of the competing or contradicting interests of domestic actors.

In other words, the strength or weakness of a state and its institutions (defined as 'state power') – independent of material capabilities – may help explain why states with comparable capabilities and resources in a similar structural position, but with different state structures, act differently. To sum up: coherent, strong states pursue a balance of power, whereas fragmented, weak states pursue strategies of underbalancing.

As the above discussion demonstrates, neoclassical realists widen the analytical scope by bringing perception and the state back in. In doing so, they claim they derive more explanatory power, because they deal with power balancing as well as with the puzzle of state behaviours which differ from those anticipated by structural realists' and neorealists' assumptions. Two types of such behaviour are underexpansion and underbalancing, both being a consequence of misperception and/or weak or fragmented state structures. Neoclassical realists remind realist theorists to take state structures, domestic actors and the internal dynamics of the decision-making process into account in the analysis of foreign policy.

Concluding remarks

The aim of this chapter has been to elaborate what neoclassical realism is about (in particular what is the 'neo' and what is the 'classical' in neoclassical realism) and whether it is a further development of Morgenthau's classical realism and of Waltz's neorealism, or a new approach within the realist school of thought. Some scholars understand neoclassical realism as simply a supplement to Waltz's neorealist balance-of-power theory, with unit-level variables added to widen the analytical scope by explaining away anomalies for neorealist theories at the expense of parsimony, whereas other scholars understand neoclassical realism as a subtle refinement of Waltz's theory.⁵⁵ I argue that neoclassical realism is a new framework of realist foreign-policy analysis, albeit fusing and integrating elements of both the European classical realist and Waltz's 'American' neorealist school of thought in IR, and supplemented by constructivist elements. In other words, neoclassical realism is the most competent strand of realism in terms of its ability to bridge the methodological and analytical gap between state-centred classical realism and neorealism. Neoclassical realism is best understood as a logical and necessary part of advancing too simplistic and parsimonious neorealist theories of foreign policy, ones which focus solely on the systemic level of analysis. And I argue that it is indeed an enhanced approach within the realist school of thought, because neoclassical realists overcome the separation of liberal '*Innenpolitik*' and neorealist foreign-policy theories. It is also an enhanced approach because it likewise overcomes the limitations of neorealist foreign-policy theories without sacrificing Waltz's insightful

core assumptions about the international system and its constraints. And it is an enhanced approach because it helps realist foreign-policy analysts deal with different types of foreign-policy behaviour.

The starting point of neoclassical realist analysis is the assumption that the distribution of power among states in the international system and the position a state has in that system are what matters most. Yet neoclassical realists go beyond this valid neorealist assumption. As classical realists such as Morgenthau once did, they open up the 'black box' state, previously assumed to be closed, in order to draw two intervening variables at the unit level into the equation, which may drive and shape the foreign policy of a state in directions other than those predicted by neorealist and structural realist theorists. These two variables are both in fact a set of factors:

- 1 cognitive factors, such as state leaders' perceptions of the international power distribution, a state's intentions and threats in the international environment in which a state is embedded;
- 2 domestic factors, in particular state structures and institutions, and domestic actors such as state leaders and elites, who are the representatives of interests and/or ideologies and/or strategic culture, and who formulate and implement foreign-policy decisions within specific contexts, and other internal dynamics in the decision-making process.

Moreover, the degree of freedom of action and the ability state leaders have relative to their society to mobilize resources necessary for foreign policy play a significant role. In other words, state leaders are assumed to be constrained in their decisions by systemic as well as by cognitive and domestic factors.

It is worth mentioning again that neoclassical realism is no coherent framework. There are debates within the neoclassical camp about whether the systemic or the domestic level is more important. Some authors, like Randall Schweller, view the role of society and domestic actors as episodic and rare, and look instead to the systemic factors which shape a state's foreign policy. Others, like Colin Dueck and Jason Davidson, contend that domestic actors regularly affect the style and form of a state's foreign policy. Still others, like Steven Lobell, Mark Brawley and Benjamin Fordham, view internal dynamics within the state and the role of domestic actors as increasingly pervasive and powerful in shaping foreign policy. Finally, Norrin Ripsman, Jeffrey Taliaferro and Jennifer Sterling-Folker construct approaches positing the conditions under which domestic actors and societal forces will affect foreign-policy choices and implementation.

Integrating and linking the systemic and the unit levels is the constitutive aspect of neoclassical realism, which is worth highlighting. Neoclassical realists point out how exactly the systemic, the cognitive

and the domestic levels come together in the foreign policy of a state. The multi-level framework of analysis is the key value coming out of the neoclassical realist agenda. By means of this framework, neoclassical realists are able to challenge the neorealist core assumption that all states are functionally alike. Quite to the contrary, neoclassical realists distinguish between states and their different foreign-policy strategies and goals. They can explain why some states pursue a balance-of-power strategy, seeking to preserve the status quo within the international system, while others strive for regional hegemony, to alter the given order, while still other powerful states do not respond to external stimuli and pursue instead strategies which are against all neorealist propositions. In other words, neoclassical realism can explain deviance in the behaviour of states. According to Fareed Zakaria, underexpansion is caused by weak governments. And according to Schweller, underbalancing is caused by misperception of a state's situation and/or threats and the disagreement between core decision-makers about goals, interests and strategies. In any case, these actors are unable to mobilize the societal resources necessary to implement strategies of regional expansion or balance-of-power policy.

However, there are at least three aspects which need further research. First of all, neoclassical realist analysis requires detailed knowledge about the 'international environment' in which the state is embedded, and about 'the state', the 'national interest' of a state and 'state power'. But what sources of such information can state leaders access? How can material (military and economic) and non-material power (ideas, prestige, status), and the distribution of power be defined? Neoclassical realists themselves insist that knowledge of a state and its institutions are two crucial aspects of their analyses, both of which are seen to be a necessary precondition for a comprehensive understanding of a state's internal configuration. Therefore, detailed research and theorizing at the unit level is needed with respect to:

- 1 what the state is and which institutions and decision-makers are relevant;
- 2 what is in the national interest of the state in concrete historical, economic and political contexts;
- 3 how strong state power is and the nature of the national power of a state.

Thus, questions about which actors within the state decide, about state-society relations or about the level of state autonomy from society should be addressed by neoclassical realists in greater detail. Neoclassical realists feature prominently the concept of a 'foreign security policy executive' that is in charge of making foreign-policy decisions. However, this group (interestingly, different authors seem to have different terms for this group) is conceived of as a unified decision-maker, which means

that the 'black box' state that was initially opened on the national level is now reintroduced on the executive level. Turning to other foreign-policy analysis approaches, the governmental politics model might be able to account for the dynamics that emerge inside this black box. Another area of research in this context which is underdeveloped so far involves variation in the interests of states. While neorealists assume that all states have comparable security interests, namely to survive in an anarchical environment, neoclassical realists differentiate between states on the basis of differing intentions and motivations, be they to preserve the status quo or revisionist, be they focused on maximizing power or security.⁵⁶

A second issue needing further research relates to perceptions. It is one thing to say that perceptions matter, yet still another to grasp them analytically. With respect to the latter, operational code about how perception works in the process of making foreign policy might be of help. In this context, more attention should be paid to how cultural and ideological factors affect foreign-policy actors, how these perceive their own and others' capabilities and intentions, and how such perceptions about 'we' and 'they' are translated into foreign policy.⁵⁷ In other words, what is the neoclassical realist understanding of history? What do states learn from the past in order to formulate foreign-policy goals today? How do ideas and ideology as further intervening variables translate systemic factors into foreign policy?⁵⁸ These questions deserve closer attention, especially after the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001. The crucial point here is to leave behind a Western bias in IR that focuses on the transatlantic relationship, and to bring in third-world perspectives on culture and ideas.⁵⁹ To sum up, detailed research is needed on how the various domestic and cognitive variables at the unit level do *exactly* fit together in the foreign-policy and security-policy decision-making process.⁶⁰

Thirdly, more research is needed into the role of the economic factors shaping state leaders' and elite interests, and the conduct of foreign-trade policy in the past as well as in times of economic competition between the United States, the European Union and Japan, as well as Brazil, Russia, India and China (the BRIC states), as new rising economic powers altering the international trade system.⁶¹

There are at least two pitfalls within the neoclassical agenda to be mentioned here.⁶² First of all, neoclassical realists play a multi-level game within a broad framework. They locate causal properties at both the systemic and the unit level, and unit-level factors such as perception and state structures help them to explain states' external behaviour. Neoclassical realists derive testable hypotheses such as expansion and underexpansion, and balancing as well as underbalancing, in relation to state leaders' perceptions and state structures. They test these hypotheses against empirical evidence. Because neoclassical realists

incorporate systemic, cognitive and domestic variables into one single analytical framework and link them to each other, they can always claim explanatory power. From this perspective, foreign policy is the result of systemic, or cognitive, or domestic factors, or the result of all three factors coming together. As Waltz would argue, however, neoclassical realism as a foreign-policy theory fails to focus on a specific autonomous realm and is thus 'reductionist' by nature. A Waltzian critic might argue that there is no way to avoid the 'reductionist trap' as long as unit-level factors have causal import. Another Waltzian critique might be that neoclassical realism lacks theoretical parsimony, because it eschews a mono-causal focus on either domestic or systemic variables, instead favouring multi-causal explanations on the basis of many different intervening variables. Within the realist camp, parsimony is always balanced against explanatory power. Lakatosian-inspired authors such as Vasquez could bring forward the argument that neoclassical realism is not falsifiable and thus, in a stronger Lakatosian sense, it is no 'theory'. How can neoclassical realists deal with this critique?

Secondly, by incorporating unit-level variables, neoclassical realism risks losing the 'realist content', as Legro and Moravcsik argue in 'Is Anybody Still a Realist?' These authors fault 'degenerative' neoclassical realists in general for their alleged repudiation of the core assumptions of realism, and Waltz's balance-of-power theory in particular. By positing an intervening role for state leaders and elite perceptions of systemic constraints, neoclassical realists allegedly violate the neorealist assumptions that states act rationally in pursuit of their objective goals. How can neoclassical realists deal with this? One argument they could advance against such a critique is that assumptions about rationality are not essential to realism. As mentioned above, Waltz, for instance, rejects the assumption that states always act rationally.

To sum up, neoclassical realists should be aware of the fact that many IR scholars who still think narrowly in terms of paradigms, that they should strictly be separated from each other, accuse neoclassical realists of 'eclecticism' at the expense of parsimony and 'real' explanatory power. Anyway, against the background of the criticisms of neoclassical realism, the debate about the progressiveness or degeneration of realism, and the debate about whether neoclassical realism is old wine in new skins or an new and enhanced approach within the realist camp, militate in favour of reflexivity.⁶³ These debates are helpful and should be continued in order to bring realist explanations of international politics in general, and foreign-policy analysis in particular, back into the pluralistic European IR discourse.

Notes

- 1 I am grateful to the participants of the conference 'Realism and Foreign Policy Theory', held at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) in Copenhagen, Denmark, 12–13 November 2009, the anonymous reviewer of Manchester University Press, and Heather Taylor and Anders Wivel for their helpful comments.
- 2 A. Geis, L. Brock and H. Müller (eds), *Democratic Wars: Looking at the Dark Side of Democratic Peace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006); B. Buzan, J. de Wilde and O. Wæver (eds), *Security: A New Framework of Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998); C. Kantner, 'Collective Identity as Shared Ethical Self-Understanding: The Case of the Emerging European Identity', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9:4 (2006), pp. 501–23; F. Gadinger and C. Büger, 'Reassembling and Dissenting: International Relations Practice from a Science Studies Perspective', *International Studies Perspectives*, 8:1 (2007), pp. 90–110; G. Schlag and A. Heck, 'Securitizing Images: The Female Body and the War in Afghanistan', *European Journal of International Relations* (forthcoming); G. Hellmann and B. Herborn, 'Fishing in the Mild West: Democratic Peace and Militarized Interstate Disputes in the Transatlantic Community', *Review of International Studies*, 34:3 (2008), pp. 481–506; M. Albert, L. Brock and K. D. Wolf (eds), *Civilizing World Politics: Society and Community Beyond the State* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000); N. Deitelhoff, 'The Discursive Process of Legalization: Charting Islands of Persuasion in the ICC Case', *International Organization*, 63:1 (2009), pp. 33–65; P. Liste, 'Articulating the Nexus of Politics and Law: War in Iraq and the Practice Within Two Legal Systems', *International Political Sociology*, 2:1 (2008), pp. 38–55; U. Roos and U. Franke, 'Actor, Structure, Process: Transcending the State Personhood Debate by Means of a Pragmatist Ontological Model for International Relations Theory', *Review of International Studies*, 10:4 (2010), pp. 1057–77; T. Christiansen, K.-E. Jørgensen and A. Wiener (eds), *The Social Construction of Europe* (London: Sage, 2001); T. Risse, S. Ropp and K. Sikkink (eds), *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
- 3 For critiques of realism, see A. J. Tickner, 'Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation', in R. Grant and K. Newland (eds), *Gender and International Relations* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1991), pp. 27–40; J. Legro and A. Moravcsik, 'Is Anybody Still a Realist?', *International Security*, 24:2 (1999), pp. 5–55; R. Kaufman, 'Morgenthau's Unrealistic Realism', *Yale Journal of International Affairs*, 1:2 (2006), pp. 24–38; S. Guzzini, *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold* (London: Routledge, 1998); S. Guzzini, 'The Enduring Dilemmas of Realism in International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations*, 10:4 (2004), pp. 533–68; U. Franke and B. Herborn, 'Tragedians as Technocrats? Realist Policy Interventions and the Problem of Reflexivity in International Theory', paper presented at the 48th Annual Conference of the International Studies Association (ISA), Chicago, USA, 28 February–3 March 2007.

- 4 A. Lieven and J. Hulsman, *Ethical Realism: A Vision for America's Role in the World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006); C. Layne, 'The Influence of Theory on Grand Strategy: The United States and a Rising China', in A. Freyberg-Inan, E. Harrison and P. James (eds), *Rethinking Realism in International Relations: Between Tradition and Innovation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), pp. 103–35; F. Berenskoetter and M. J. Williams (eds), *Power in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2007); J. Monten, 'The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in U.S. Strategy', *International Security*, 29:4 (2005), pp. 112–56; J. Mearsheimer and S. M. Walt, 'An Unnecessary War', *Foreign Policy*, 134 (2003), pp. 50–9; M. N. Barnett and R. Duvall, *Power in Global Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); R. Gilpin, 'War Is Too Important To Be Left To Ideological Amateurs', *International Relations*, 19:1 (2005), pp. 5–18.
- 5 C. Frei, *Hans Morgenthau: An Intellectual Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2001); D. Bell (ed.), *Political Thought and International Relations: Variations on a Realist Theme* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); M. W. Cox, *E. H. Carr: A Critical Appraisal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); M. C. Williams (ed.), *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); O. Jütersonke, *Morgenthau, International Law, and Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); R. N. Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics: Ethics, Interests, and Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); W. E. Scheuerman, *Morgenthau: Realism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).
- 6 For the differences between classical realism and neorealism, see: A. Tellis, 'Reconstructing Political Realism: The Long March Toward Scientific Theory', in B. Frankel (ed.), *Realism: Restatements and Renewal* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), pp. 3–104; K. N. Waltz, 'Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory', in R. Rothstein (ed.), *The Evolution of Theory in International Relations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), pp. 31–8. For an overview of the variety of realism, see: B. Frankel (ed.), *Realism: Restatements and Renewal* (London: Frank Cass, 1996); B. Frankel (ed.), *The Roots of Realism* (London: Frank Cass, 1996); K. N. Waltz, *Realism and International Politics* (London: Routledge, 2008); R. Gilpin, 'The Richness of the Realist Tradition', in R. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press), pp. 301–21; S. G. Brooks, 'Duelling Realisms', *International Organization*, 51:3 (1997), pp. 445–77. For the debate over whether realism is a foreign policy theory or not, see C. Elman, 'Horses for Courses: Why Not Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy?', *Security Studies*, 6:1 (1996), pp. 7–53; K. N. Waltz, 'International Politics Is Not Foreign Policy', *Security Studies*, 6:1 (1996), pp. 54–6.
- 7 S. E. Lobell, N. M. Ripsman and J. W. Taliaferro (eds), *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). The label 'neoclassical realism' was introduced by Gideon Rose in 'Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy', *World Politics*, 51:1 (1998), pp. 144–72.
- 8 For an overview of neorealist foreign policy theories, see: A. Wivel, 'Explaining Why State X Made a Certain Move Last Tuesday: The Promise and Limitations of Realist Foreign Policy Analysis', *Journal of International*

- Relations and Development*, 8:4 (2005), pp. 355–80; R. Baumann, V. Rittberger and W. Wagner, 'Neorealist Foreign Policy Theory', in V. Rittberger (ed.), *German Foreign Policy Since Unification: An Analysis of Foreign Policy Continuity and Change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 37–67; Brooks, 'Duelling Realisms'; W. C. Wohlforth, 'Realism and Foreign Policy', in S. Smith, A. Hadfield and T. Dunne (eds), *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 31–48.
- 9 Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik postulate a strict distinction between the great paradigms in IR (realism, liberalism, institutionalism and constructivism) and in doing so manage to define them well. This distinction has been most clearly articulated by Moravcsik, 'Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics', *International Organization*, 51:4 (1997), pp. 513–53 (see also Legro and Moravcsik, 'Is Anybody Still a Realist?'). However, following (not sharing) an emerging IR scholarly consensus, the present chapter treats liberalism as distinct from realism as well as from neoliberal institutionalism. The signature argument of liberal theories is that international relations are best explained on the basis of domestic political arrangements, whereas neoliberal theories emphasize the causes and effects of institutional arrangements at the international level. For an overview of the literature on foreign-policy analysis, see: O. R. Holsti, 'Theories of International Relations and Foreign Policy: Realism and Its Challengers', in C. W. Kegley (ed.), *Controversies in International Relations Theory: Realism and the Neoliberal Challenge* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 35–65; Smith, Hadfield and Dunne (eds), *Foreign Policy*.
 - 10 T. Risse-Kappen, 'Democratic Peace – Warlike Democracies? A Social Constructivist Interpretation of the Liberal Argument', *European Journal of International Relations*, 1:4 (1995), pp. 491–517.
 - 11 For a clear illustration of liberal theorizing about foreign policy, see: Moravcsik, 'Taking Preferences Seriously'; H. Müller and T. Risse-Kappen, 'From the Outside In and From the Inside Out: International Relations, Domestic Politics, and Foreign Policy', in D. Skidmore and V. M. Hudson (eds), *The Limits of State Autonomy: Societal Groups and Foreign Policy Formulation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 24–48; M. W. Doyle, 'Liberalism and Foreign Policy', in Smith, Hadfield and Dunne (eds), *Foreign Policy*, pp. 49–70. For the research programme Democratic Peace and Democratic Wars, see: C. Daase, 'Democratic Peace – Democratic War: Three Reasons Why Democracies Are War-Prone', in Geis, Brock and Müller (eds), *Democratic Wars*, pp. 74–89; H. Müller, 'The Antinomy of Democratic Peace', *International Politics*, 41:4 (2004), pp. 494–520.
 - 12 For a critique of liberal approaches to foreign policy from a neoclassical realist perspective, see: F. Zakaria, 'Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay', *International Security*, 17:1 (1992), pp. 177–98; J. Sterling-Folker, 'Realist Environment, Liberal Process, and Domestic-Level Variables', *International Studies Quarterly*, 41:1 (1997), pp. 1–25.
 - 13 See K. N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 48–9, 58–9, 71–2, 121–3, and 'International Politics Is Not Foreign Policy'. Waltz concludes with some general assumptions about the motivations, preferences and goals of states. But he does not claim to explain nor

- does he manage to predict state behaviour in detail. See also H. Mouritzen, 'Kenneth Waltz: A Critical Rationalist Between International Politics and Foreign Policy', in I. B. Neumann and O. Waever (eds), *The Future of International Relations* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 66–89.
- 14 For a very felicitous use of Waltz's balance-of-power theory as a foreign policy theory, see D. Peters, *Constrained Balancing: The EU's Security Policy* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
 - 15 J. M. Grieco, 'State Interests and Institutional Rule Trajectories: A Neo-realist Interpretation of the Maastricht Treaty and European Economic and Monetary Union', *Security Studies*, 5:3 (1996), pp. 261–305. For the argument of regionalization as a rational behaviour of EU member states under the systemic pressure of globalization, see: A. Wivel, 'The Power Politics of Peace: Exploring the Link Between Globalization and European Integration from a Realist Perspective', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 39:1 (2005), pp. 5–25; J. Grieco, 'Realism and Regionalism: American Power and German and Japanese Institutional Strategies During and After the Cold War', in E. B. Kapstein and M. Mastanduno (eds), *Unipolar Politics. Realism and State Strategies After the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 319–53. For a critique of these arguments, see J. Mearsheimer, 'The False Promise of International Institutions', *International Security*, 19:3 (1999), pp. 5–49.
 - 16 See J. Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War', *International Security*, 15:1 (1990), pp. 5–56; J. Mearsheimer, 'Anarchy and the Struggle for Power', in *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), pp. 29–54; K. N. Waltz, 'Anarchic Orders and Balances of Power', in *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 102–28; K. N. Waltz, 'The Emerging Structure of International Politics', *International Security*, 18:2 (1993), pp. 44–79; K. N. Waltz, 'Structural Realism After the Cold War', *International Security*, 25:1 (2000), pp. 5–41; S. M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). For Waltz's balance-of-power approach, see also R. Little, *The Balance of Power in International Relations: Metaphors, Myths, and Models* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), pp. 167–212; S. G. Brooks and W. C. Wohlforth, 'Realism, Balance-of-Power Theory, and the Counterbalancing Constraint', in *World of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 22–59. For the distinction between a defensive and an offensive neorealism, see: J. W. Taliaferro, 'Security Seeking Under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited', *International Security*, 25:3 (2000/1), pp. 128–61; P. James, 'Elaborating on Offensive Realism', in Freyberg-Inan, Harrison and James (eds), *Rethinking Realism in International Relations*, pp. 45–62; S. Van Evera, 'Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War', *International Security*, 22:4 (1998), pp. 5–43. For an overview, see A. Wivel, 'Balancing Against Threats or Bandwagoning With Power? Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship After the Cold War', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 21:3 (2008), pp. 289–305.
 - 17 K. N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 238.
 - 18 For a two-level game, see R. D. Putnam, 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two Level Games', *International Organization*, 42:3 (1988), pp. 427–61.

- 19 Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro (eds), *Neoclassical Realism*.
- 20 Lebow, 'Thucydides and War', in *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, pp. 65–114.
- 21 For US grand strategy in the twentieth century, see A. Barth, *American Military Commitments in Europe: Power, Perceptions, and Neoclassical Realism* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2005); C. Layne, *Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); C. Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); F. Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); J. McAllister, *No Exit: America and the German Problem, 1943–1954* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); J. Sterling-Folker, *Theories of International Cooperation and the Primacy of Anarchy: Explaining US International Monetary Policy-Making After Bretton Woods* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002); M. Brawley, 'USA: Responding to Rising Powers with a Grand Strategy or "Muddling Through"?', in D. Flemes (ed.), *Regional Leadership in the Global System: Ideas, Interests and Strategies of Regional Powers* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 293–312; M. P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); S. M. Lynn-Jones, 'Realism and America's Rise: A Review Essay', *International Security*, 23:2 (1998), pp. 157–82; S. E. Lobell, *The Challenge of Hegemony: Grand Strategy, Trade, and Domestic Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); T. J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); V. D. Cha, 'Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia: The United States, Japan, and Korea', *International Studies Quarterly*, 44:2 (2000), pp. 261–91. Neoclassical realists also examine Britain's and France's inter-war and pre-war grand strategy vis-à-vis rising Germany, and the rise of Nazi Germany in the 1930s. See: A. L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); J. L. Snyder, *Myth of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambitions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); K. Narizny, 'The Political Economy of Alignment: Great Britain's Commitment to Europe, 1905–1939', *International Security*, 27:4 (2003), pp. 184–219; M. Brawley, 'Neoclassical Realism and Strategic Calculations: Explaining Divergent British, French, and Soviet Strategies Towards Germany Between the World Wars (1919–1939)', in Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro (eds), *Neoclassical Realism*, pp. 75–98; R. L. Schweller, 'Hitler's Tripolar Strategy for World Conquest', in J. L. Snyder and R. Jervis (eds), *Coping with Complexity in the International System* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 207–42; R. L. Schweller, 'Tripolarity and the Second World War', *International Studies Quarterly*, 37:1 (1993), pp. 73–103; R. L. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); R. L. Schweller, 'Great-Power Case Studies: Interwar France and Britain, and France, 1877–1913', in *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 69–84. Finally, neoclassical realists examine the end of the Cold War and the contemporary rise of new powers such as China. See: S. G. Brooks

- and W. C. Wohlforth, 'Power, Globalization, and the End of the Cold War: Re-Evaluating a Landmark Case for Ideas', *International Security*, 25:3 (2000/1), pp. 5–53; W. C. Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); C. Sorensen, *The Contingent Rise of China: The Development in Chinese Post-Cold War Security Policy*, PhD dissertation (Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, 2008); R. L. Schweller, 'Managing the Rise of Great Powers: History and Theory', in A. Johnston and R. Ross (eds), *Engaging China: Managing a Rising Power* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 1–32.
- 22 Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro (eds), *Neoclassical Realism*, p. 8.
- 23 R. L. Schweller, 'New Realist Research on Alliances: Refining Not Refuting Waltz's Balancing Proposition', in J. Vasquez and C. Elman (eds), *Realism and the Balancing of Power: The New Debate* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2003), pp. 74–9.
- 24 Legro and Moravcsik, 'Is Anybody Still a Realist?'; J. Vasquez, 'The Realist Paradigm and Degenerative Versus Progressive Research Programs', *American Political Science Review*, 91:4 (1997), pp. 899–912.
- 25 H. J. Morgenthau, 'Six Principles of Political Realism', in *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, fifth revised edition (New York: Knopf, 1978, reprinted with a new introduction by Kenneth W. Thompson and David W. Clinton, New York: Random House, 2006), pp. 4–15. *Politics Among Nations* was first published in 1948; the 'Six Principles' were added to the second edition, in 1954. See J. Cristol, 'Morgenthau vs. Morgenthau? The "Six Principles of Political Realism" in Context', *American Foreign Policy Interests*, 31:4 (2009), pp. 238–44.
- 26 Rather, I argue that there is a constitutive 'German moment' in classical realism. For the thesis that Morgenthau's realist thinking occurred in the inter-war period, that is, in the 1920s and 1930s (a period Carr has labelled 'The Twenty Years' Crisis'), in Germany, where the young international lawyer was socialized intellectually and politically, see A. Reichwein, *Rethinking Morgenthau in the German Context*, International Relations Online Working Paper Series No. 2011/4 (<http://www.uni-stuttgart.de/soz/ib/forschung/IRWorkingPapers>).
- 27 For the role of classical realist Raymond Aron and the extent to which he continues to inspire today's neoclassical realists, see Dario Battistella in this volume (chapter 7).
- 28 On 'Six Principles of Political Realism' see note 25. See also H. J. Morgenthau, *A New Foreign Policy for the United States* (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 156. For the role of statesmen in international politics, see D. L. Byman and K. M. Pollack, 'Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In', *International Security*, 25:4 (2001), pp. 107–46.
- 29 S. E. Lobell, 'Threat Assessment, the State, and Foreign Policy', in Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro (eds), *Neoclassical Realism*, p. 56.
- 30 See H. J. Morgenthau, 'A Realist Theory of International Politics' and 'National Power', in *Politics Among Nations*, pp. 3–15 and 107–70.
- 31 W. Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance*, p. 4. See Brian C. Schmidt and Thomas Juneau on power as resource-based and relational in this volume (chapter 4).
- 32 For the realist 'hard core' assumptions, see Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 29–54; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*,

- pp. 102–28; R. L. Schweller, 'Realism and the Present Great Power System: Growth and Positional Conflict Over Scarce Resources', in E. Kapstein and M. Mastanduno (eds), *Unipolar Politics: Realism and State Strategies After the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 28–68.
- 33 In recent debates, IR scholars agree that there are different faces of power. See Barnett and Duvall, *Power in Global Governance*. For the neorealist understanding and definition of power capabilities and resources, see B. C. Schmidt, 'Realist Conceptions of Power', in Berenskoetter and Williams (eds), *Power in World Politics*, pp. 43–63. For the classical realist understanding of power, see Morgenthau, 'Elements of National Power', in *Politics Among Nations*, pp. 117–55. For Mearsheimer's material understanding of power, which stresses the role of military capabilities, see the chapters 'Wealth and Power' and 'The Primacy of Land Power', in his *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 55–82 and pp. 83–137.
- 34 See: Zakaria, 'Realism and Domestic Politics'; and W. C. Wohlforth, 'Realism and the End of the Cold War', *International Security*, 19:3 (1994/5), pp. 91–129.
- 35 See Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*; Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*.
- 36 K. N. Waltz, 'Evaluating Theories', *American Political Science Review*, 91:4 (1997), pp. 913–17, p. 915.
- 37 Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 118. According to Resende-Santos, 'Neorealism does not rely on a definition of rationality equivalent to that found in neoclassical economics: optimizing behavior guided by perfect foresight, knowledge, and wisdom. In this sense, the state would have a known choice set, be able to forecast perfectly the results of alternatives, and thus maximize choices. This is an efficiency, or optimization, view of states and state behavior. Structurally-induced uncertainty in the international system means that we cannot speak about rationality as optimizing/maximizing behavior in any meaningful sense. The units cannot know in advance the results of their actions in a system composed of atomistically competitive and anarchically arranged units. In other words, states emulate or choose among only those institutions and practices that exist, not some hypothetically optimal choice set. Neorealism, in this sense, defines rationality simply as cost-sensitivity.' See J. Resende-Santos, *Neorealism, States, and the Modern Mass Army* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- 38 See J. Mearsheimer, 'Reckless States and Realism', *International Relations*, 23:2 (2009), pp. 241–56. Mearsheimer works out how far Waltz's rejection of the rational actor assumption creates three problems for his theory of international politics.
- 39 See J. Mearsheimer, 'Strategies for Survival' and 'The Causes of Great Power War', in *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 137–68 and pp. 334–59.
- 40 Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 133–5.
- 41 Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance*, pp. 1–17, 293–307. See also: Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*, p. 13; R. L. Schweller and W. C. Wohlforth, 'Power Test: Evaluating Realism in Response to the End of the Cold War', *Security Studies*, 9:3 (2000), pp. 60–107.
- 42 See Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*; Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*.
- 43 For the role of perception in IR, see: D. M. Edelstein, *Choosing Friends and Enemies: Perceptions of Intentions in International Relations* (Chicago:

- Chicago University Press, 2000); and R. Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).
- 44 For the neoclassical realist understanding of perception, see: T. J. Christensen, 'Perceptions and Alliances in Europe, 1865–1940', *International Organization*, 51:1 (1997), pp. 65–98; and S. E. Lobell, 'Threat Assessment, the State, and Foreign Policy: A Neoclassical Realist Model', in Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro (eds), *Neoclassical Realism*, pp. 42–74. See also Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*; Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances*; Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*; Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*; Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance*.
- 45 See Christensen, 'Perceptions and Alliances in Europe'.
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- 47 See S. Turner, 'Morgenthau as a Weberian', in O. G. Mazur (ed.), *One Hundred Year Commemoration to the Life of Hans Morgenthau* (New York: Sage Foundation, 2004), pp. 84–114; V. Pin-Fat, 'The Metaphysics of the National Interest and the "Mysticism" of the Nation-State: Reading Hans J. Morgenthau', *Review of International Studies*, 31:2 (2005), pp. 217–36.
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Neoclassical realism and power

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Realists are the theorists of power politics; the role of power has been, and continues to be, central to any theory of realism. As a relatively young school of thought within the broader realist tradition, neoclassical realism continues to privilege the concept of power. The fundamental aims of this chapter are to examine the manner in which neoclassical realists conceptualize power and to determine whether they provide us with a new and different way of understanding the role it plays in international politics. This requires us to consider briefly how classical realists, such as Hans Morgenthau, and structural realists, such as Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer, define power. This step is necessary because neoclassical realism is often presented as both building on the earlier insights of classical realism and, at the same time, breaking away from the confines of the parsimonious tenets of structural realism. Having examined how the different strands of realism conceptualize power, we will be in a better position to evaluate the contribution that neoclassical realists have made to understanding this elusive concept.

We begin by outlining the two dominant approaches to power analysis: the elements of national power and relational power approaches. Next we evaluate the manner in which classical and structural realists conceptualize power. We ask three questions about their particular conceptualization of power.

- 1 What is power, and how is it measured?
- 2 What are the dominant patterns of behaviour that arise from the exercise of power?
- 3 At what level of analysis is power exercised?

Finally, we turn to neoclassical realism by examining the innovations that it has attempted to bring to the study of power and foreign policy, and by investigating the neoclassical realist conception of power in terms of our three core questions. We argue that compared with the manner

in which realists generally conceptualize power, neoclassical realists have not offered a fundamentally different way of understanding this key concept. Rather, they have made a number of important and interesting refinements that have contributed to a more nuanced understanding of international politics and foreign policy. Overall, neoclassical realism conceptualizes power in terms of the possession of specific assets or capabilities (or the perception of those capabilities) and as a means to realize specific outcomes. In addition, among its key innovations is the proposition that the dominant pattern of behaviour that arises from the exercise of power is 'influence maximization'.

Power and international politics

Despite its centrality to the theory and practice of international politics, power continues to be an elusive concept.¹ Not only are there sharp differences between diverse approaches such as liberalism, constructivism and critical theory, but the different schools of thought within realism disagree on the best way to define and measure power.² The debate gets even more contentious when scholars attempt to distinguish power from a host of closely related concepts such as influence, force and control. To simplify matters, David Baldwin has identified two dominant approaches to the analysis of power in international relations.³ The first is the 'elements of national power' approach, which is very popular among realists. Proponents of this approach equate power with the possession of specific resources. All of the important resources that a state possesses are typically combined in some fashion to determine its overall aggregate power. The resources that are most often used as an indicator of national power include the level of military expenditure, gross national product, size of the armed forces, size of territory and population. While such tangible material elements are almost always included, some scholars also include intangible elements, such as the quality of political leadership and national morale. Regardless of the particular tangible and intangible power resources that one chooses to identify, those endorsing the elements of national power approach believe they can be measured and combined to provide an indicator of the aggregate power of a state. Stefano Guzzini refers to this as a 'lump concept of power which assumes that all elements of power can be combined into one general indicator'.⁴

One of the difficulties with the elements of national power approach is the issue of power conversion, that is, 'the capacity to convert potential power, as measured by resources, to realized power, as measured by the changed behaviour of others'.⁵ At the end of the day, it is not the mere possession of power resources that matters, but the ability to convert

these into actual influence. This leads to the additional difficulty of determining the degree to which the various components of national power are fungible or interchangeable. Simply because a state possesses some kind of power asset does not necessarily mean that it can be used to obtain a specific benefit or to influence another actor. The possession of nuclear weapons, for example, does not guarantee that they can be used to gain influence in an area such as trade. Because the elements of the national power approach adopts a 'lump concept of power' it assumes power is fungible. However, whether power actually is fungible is difficult to demonstrate, and critics of the approach suggest it is not.

An alternative to seeing power in terms of resources (the elements of the national power approach) is the relational power approach, which was championed by behavioural political scientists such as Robert Dahl during the 1950s and 1960s. According to Dahl, 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do'.⁶ Fundamental to this conception of power is the ability to demonstrate a change in outcomes or behaviour. According to this view, power is a process of interaction whereby a state is able to exercise influence over the actions of another state. A core motivation for developing the relational approach to power was to overcome the fungibility problem associated with the lump concept of power. Rather than power being a 'one size fits all' category, the relational approach disaggregates power into a number of component parts in order to demonstrate how it is exercised in specific issue areas. The dimensions of power typically include 'its scope (the objectives of an attempt to gain influence; influence over which issue), its domain (the target of the influence attempt), its weight (the quantity of resources), and its costs (opportunity costs of forgoing a relation)'.⁷ Since the relational approach equates power with outcomes, the analyst must be able to demonstrate how an actor is able to cause others to do something that they would not otherwise do.

This is one of the main reasons why many realists, including neo-classical realists, reject the relational approach to power. William Wohlforth claims that 'defining power as control (over other actors, outcomes, or the international system as a whole) leads almost inexorably to tautology, and hence is of little use for international political theory'.⁸ For John Mearsheimer the problem of equating power with outcomes is that there are plenty of historical examples in which the side with seemingly more material power did not prevail, because of the influence of non-material factors, such as strategy. In his view, power is a means to realize a specific political outcome, and thus power and outcomes should be clearly distinguishable.⁹ Gideon Rose acknowledges that while many neoclassical realists find merit in the relational approach to power, they nevertheless conclude that it is 'so fraught with theoretical and empirical difficulties as to be practically unusable'.¹⁰

Classical realism

By proclaiming that 'international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power' and that 'whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim', Morgenthau confirmed the intimate connection between realism and power.¹¹ Yet when it comes to providing a definition of power, Morgenthau is ambiguous, in that he appears to endorse both the relational and the elements of national power approaches. On the one hand, he states that 'when we speak of power, we mean man's control over the minds and actions of other men'. Morgenthau defines political power as 'a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised'. This definition clearly places Morgenthau in the relational approach to power camp. By embracing such a conception, Morgenthau commits himself to demonstrating how a political actor is able to induce a change in outcome favourable to the one who is exercising power.

On the other hand, it is equally apparent that Morgenthau defines power in terms of the elements of national power approach. Like other classical realists, Morgenthau equates power with the possession of identifiable and measurable resources. He distinguishes between two types of elements that contribute to the power of a nation: those that are stable and those that are subject to constant change. The stable elements, largely of a quantitative nature, include geography, natural resources, industrial capacity, military preparedness and population. Morgenthau identifies four dynamic factors that have a bearing on national power: national character, national morale, the quality of government and the quality of a nation's diplomacy. He further specifies that 'the conduct of a nation's foreign affairs by its diplomats is for national power in peace what military strategy and tactics by its military leaders are for national power in war'.¹²

For Morgenthau, the primacy of power in politics means that the dominant pattern of behaviour is one of a perpetual and permanent struggle for power, in which the goal of every state is to maximize its own relative power. He views the activity of international politics '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'.¹³ While Morgenthau views the mechanism of the balance of power as a necessary principle of politics, both domestic and international, equilibrium is in fact always precarious, as all actors seek a power advantage over others. This is due both to the inherent limitless aspiration for power and to the uncertainty involved in calculating the relative power of other actors.

Morgenthau identifies three basic patterns of the struggle for power among states: keeping power (status quo), increasing power (imperialism) and demonstrating power (prestige). He places great responsibility

on statesmen to measure accurately the power and intentions of other states so as to differentiate between an imperialist and a status quo foreign policy. While acknowledging the importance of the military instrument, Morgenthau warns against the tendency to focus on a single component of power to the neglect of all the others. He also maintains that one of the most complicated tasks of foreign policy is to evaluate how the individual elements of power contribute to the overall power of one's own nation relative to that of others.

Morgenthau's explanation for the ubiquity of power is rooted in human nature. It is at the level of the individual that the pursuit of power arises. Like Thucydides and Machiavelli, Morgenthau locates the pursuit of power with the basic human drive to dominate others. Classical realists are, in Kenneth Waltz's terminology, 'first image' thinkers who concur that the struggle for power arises 'because men are born seekers of power'.¹⁴ According to Morgenthau, 'man is a political animal by nature' who 'is born to seek power'.¹⁵ The bedrock assumption of people's inherent lust for power is transferred by Morgenthau to describe the behaviour of states. Because of the 'ubiquity of the struggle for power in all social relations on all levels of social organization', he concludes that 'international politics is of necessity power politics'.¹⁶

Structural realism

Structural realists concur that the realm of international politics is a continuous struggle for power, but they do not endorse the classical realist assumption that this is attributable to human nature. Waltz, for example, writes that 'international politics is the realm of power, of struggle, and of accommodation'.¹⁷ Structural realists such as Waltz and Mearsheimer unequivocally embrace the elements of national power approach and equate power with the possession of material resources. Rather than defining power in a relational manner, Waltz equates power with a state's possession of a broad array of capabilities, such as 'size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence'.¹⁸ Power, for Waltz, is nothing more than the sum total of various national attributes. Given the manner in which Waltz defines structure in terms of the distribution of capabilities, he has no choice but to reject the relational, multidimensional notion of power and to endorse the lump concept of power.

Unlike Morgenthau, Waltz does not provide a detailed discussion of state capabilities or indicate precisely how they should be measured. Although Waltz identifies a few items that allegedly determine the rank of a state, he fails to specify the criterion by which to measure them or indicate how they can be combined into an aggregate score. Waltz makes

it seem that any competent student of international politics can differentiate between the capabilities of states and identify the great powers in the international system. Not only is Waltz vague on the issue of how to appraise and rank the power of states, but he also never carefully specifies what he means by capabilities. While he equates resources with capability, the question of 'capability to get whom to do what' is never addressed. In all likelihood, Baldwin is correct that a 'careful reading of Waltz generates a strong suspicion that war-winning ability is the unstated standard by which states are being ranked'.¹⁹ The idea that national power and war fighting ability are roughly commensurable is deeply embedded in the structural realist model.

Power is the key concept of Mearsheimer's version of structural realism, offensive realism, and he claims that it is only by clearly defining power that we can understand the behaviour of great powers. Like Waltz, Mearsheimer endorses the elements of the national power approach and defines power as 'nothing more than specific assets or material resources that are available to a state'.²⁰ Unlike Waltz, however, he attempts to provide a reliable way to measure state power. Mearsheimer begins by distinguishing between two kinds of state power: military power and latent power. The essence of a state's effective power is its military power, based largely on the size and strength of its military forces relative to those of other states. Mearsheimer explains that he defines 'power largely in military terms because offensive realism emphasizes that force is the *ultima ratio* of international politics'.²¹ Yet, in Mearsheimer's view, there is a clear hierarchy of military power, with land power the dominant form. He concludes that the state with the most formidable army is the most powerful. The ability of a state to build a powerful army is a function of its latent power. By latent power, Mearsheimer 'refers to the socio-economic ingredients that go into building military power; it is largely based on a state's wealth and the overall size of its population'.²² He engages in a detailed discussion of latent power and provides a way to measure it.²³ Mearsheimer repeatedly emphasizes the point that latent power is not equivalent to military power. The historical record indicates that states have had different levels of success in translating latent power into military power, making it impossible to equate wealth with military power.

Despite the similarities in their definitions of power, Waltz and Mearsheimer reach very different conclusions about the dominant patterns of behaviour that arise from the exercise of power. These different conclusions have become the basis for two distinct structural realist theories: defensive and offensive realism.²⁴ According to Waltz, power is a means to the end of security. In a significant passage, he writes 'because power is a possibly useful means, sensible statesmen try to have an appropriate amount of it'. He adds, 'in crucial situations, however, the ultimate

concern of states is not for power but for security'.²⁵ In other words, rather than being power maximizers, states are security maximizers. Aggressive and expansionist behaviour, according to Waltz, often proves to be counterproductive because it triggers a counterbalancing coalition. As a result of his belief that states are strongly inclined to balance against aggressive powers, they can be described, in Joseph Grieco's terms, as 'defensive positionalists' and 'will only seek the minimum level of power that is needed to attain and to maintain their security and survival'.²⁶ The logic of the system, according to Waltz and defensive realists, compels states to adopt restrained, status quo behaviour. Offensive realists reach a fundamentally different conclusion and concur with classical realists that states are continually looking for opportunities to increase their power. This does not have anything to do with human nature, but rather is a structurally induced behaviour. According to Mearsheimer, 'apprehensive about the ultimate intentions of other states, and aware that they operate in a self-help system, states quickly understand that the best way to ensure their survival is to be the most powerful state in the system'.²⁷ National security is a function of power; as such, more powerful states are less vulnerable than weaker states.

Nevertheless, both defensive and offensive realists view the exercise of power at the systemic level of analysis. Although power is seemingly a unit-level variable, Waltz argues that it is a structural attribute, in that he is most interested in how capabilities are distributed across the international system. Waltz explains that 'although capabilities are attributes of units, the distribution of capabilities is not'.²⁸ Likewise, Mearsheimer is also interested in explaining how the condition of anarchy and the relative distribution of power affect the security competition of the great powers. He admits that 'his theory pays little attention to individuals or domestic political considerations' and 'tends to treat states like black boxes or billiard balls'.²⁹

Neoclassical realism

Neoclassical realists share the view that international politics can be described as a continuous struggle for power. Unlike structural realists, however, neoclassical realists are primarily interested in explaining the foreign-policy behaviour of specific states, and not in the outcomes of international politics. Advocates of this new strand within the realist paradigm argue that anarchy and the distribution of power alone cannot explain the particular behaviour that a state adopts. While recognizing the importance of the structure of the system, they refuse to 'black-box' the state and argue that a plausible theory of foreign policy must include unit-level attributes. They make a number of modifications to the

parsimonious tenets of structural realism and make some important connections to the insights of classical realism, by incorporating into their explanation of foreign-policy unit-level factors such as the personalities and perceptions of statesmen and state–society relationships. These modifications contribute to distinctive neoclassical realist conceptions of power and to the innovative proposal that the dominant pattern of behaviour that arises from the exercise of power is influence maximization.

In terms of the debate over the elements of national power and the relational power approaches, neoclassical realists mostly endorse the former.³⁰ But they insist that it is not just the distribution of relative material capabilities that explains foreign policy. Unlike structural realism, neoclassical realism does not assume states are ‘like units’, and argues that domestic political processes act as ‘transmission belts’ between external forces and policy outputs.³¹ Thus, in addition to the distribution of material capabilities, neoclassical realists include a variety of domestic variables that help to determine the actual power that a state possesses. They first distinguish between state power and national power, by arguing that a country’s state apparatus cannot be assumed to have automatic access to all of the nation’s material capabilities. In other words, the power that can be brought to bear in the pursuit of foreign-policy goals is a function of what the state can extract from society. Neoclassical realism also recognizes the role of individuals in the conduct of foreign policy and attempts to incorporate factors such as leaders’ perceptions, ideologies and personal idiosyncrasies into their understanding of power.

Neoclassical realists conceptualize power as a means to an outcome, not an end in itself. For them, the dominant pattern of behaviour that arises from the exercise of power – the foreign-policy outcome, or the dependent variable – is ‘influence maximization’. This represents a key innovation, and stands in contrast to the power maximization of offensive realists and the security maximization of defensive realists. According to Fareed Zakaria, this avoids the ‘pitfalls of the vague concept of power’, as well as the confusion surrounding Waltz’s writings on the issue.³²

The systemic distribution of capabilities retains in neoclassical realism some explanatory power, as the independent variable. But while a state’s relative power is held to be an important determinant of foreign policy, ‘the causal logic of [neoclassical realism] places domestic politics as an intervening variable between the distribution of power and foreign policy behaviour’.³³ These intervening variables operate at the level of the individual and the state. As such, the answer to our third question, at what level of analysis power is exercised, is that power is exercised at the systemic, state and individual levels. In the remainder of this chapter, we therefore examine how neoclassical realism defines and measures power, our first question, at all three levels. We then look more carefully at what neoclassical realists describe as influence-maximizing behaviour.

Systemic level

Neoclassical realists share the view of all realists that international politics can be described as a continuous struggle for power. They also concur with structural realists that international anarchy is an important factor contributing to the relentless quest for power and security. As Rose specifies, they believe that 'the scope and ambition of a country's foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material capabilities. That is why they are realist.'³⁴ But unlike structural realists, they argue, similarly to classical realists, that 'anarchy is a permissive condition rather than an independent causal force'.³⁵

Neoclassical realists do not propose innovative conceptualizations of power at the systemic level. It can generally be assumed that they refer to the systemic distribution of material capabilities, much as structural realists usually do. As Rose emphasizes, it is 'old news' that relative power matters.³⁶ The innovative insights they propose with regard to the distribution of power concern its measurement rather than its definition. The international distribution of power, for neoclassical realists, is 'murky and difficult to read'.³⁷ States cannot easily or automatically determine whether security is plentiful (as defensive realism argues) or scarce (as offensive realism posits). As Aaron Friedberg writes:

Power cannot be tested; different elements of power possess different utilities at different times; the relation of perceived power to material resources can be capricious; the mechanics of power are surrounded by uncertainty; states possess different conversion ratios and comparative advantages; the perceived prestige hierarchy and the military distribution may not coincide for prolonged periods; states adopt asymmetrical strategies to maximize their positions and undercut rivals; signals get confused among allies, rivals, and domestic audiences.³⁸

Of all the neoclassical realists, Randall Schweller has made the greatest effort to specify how a state's relative capabilities should be measured. He utilizes data from the Correlates of War (COW) project to measure the capabilities of both great powers and what he refers to as lesser great powers.³⁹ He argues that the measures comprising the COW capability index, in which military (forces in being), industrial (war potential) and demographic (staying power and war-augmenting capability) are the three distinct measures of national power, 'provide a reasonably accurate picture of the power bases held by the major actors with respect to their relative fighting capabilities'.⁴⁰ On this basis, he concludes that the international system at the onset of World War II was tripolar, a configuration which he argues was particularly unstable.

State level

By rejecting structural realism's assumption that states automatically respond to systemic pressures and directly translate them into policy, neoclassical realists posit a 'transmission belt' in the form of intervening unit-level variables. At the state level, a key innovation is to bring the state–society struggle back into the realist equation. States are differentiated on the basis of their ability to extract resources from the societies they rule; 'power' thus refers to those resources that the executive of the state manages to extract from society. This emphasis on state–society relations and their impact on foreign policy is a theme that harks back to the work of many classical realists.

For neoclassical realism, all states are not the same; they feature different domestic structures and relationships with their societies that alter the power they can muster for foreign-policy purposes. As such, power analysis must take into consideration 'the strength and structure of states relative to their societies, because these affect the proportion of national resources that can be allocated to foreign policy'.⁴¹ Zakaria introduces the concepts of national power (the traditional sum total of material resources identified by classical and structural realists) and state strength, which he defines as the ability of the government apparatus to 'extract national power for its ends', as well as the 'capacity and cohesion to carry out its wishes'.⁴² The result of the combination of national power and state strength is state power: 'that portion of national power the government can extract for its purposes'.⁴³ It is the key variable of Zakaria's state-centred version of neoclassical realism: the greater a state's mobilization and extraction capacity, the more powerful it becomes.

Zakaria situates his state-centred realism in the context of the 'return to the state' movement of the 1980s and early 1990s.⁴⁴ He criticizes structural realists' emphasis on parsimony, which he argues has led them to focus on national power instead of state power. This has launched a key theme in 'second wave' neoclassical realist studies (those that followed Rose's 1998 article, which proposed the label 'neoclassical realism'): the importance of resource extraction or mobilization capacity by the state. In the wake of Rose's suggestion that this should be further researched, recent neoclassical realist work has sought to better understand the role of various domestic actors in inhibiting or supporting the state in its mobilization of power in the process of making foreign policy.⁴⁵

The distinction between state and national power and the disaggregation of state and society into their component parts is similar to the disaggregation of power in the relational power approach. Recent neoclassical realist studies have further explored this more specific conceptualization of power. One example is Schweller's theory of underbalancing, whereby states respond, or fail to respond, to systemic threats

and opportunities following decentralized and competitive domestic political processes. Thus 'incoherent, fragmented states are unwilling and unable to balance against potentially dangerous threats because elites view the domestic risks as too high, and they are unable to mobilize the required resources from a divided society'.⁴⁶ Instead of assuming, as structural realism does, that states automatically have the ability to extract maximal resources from their societies, Schweller adds to his causal chain a state–society struggle whereby the state seeks to extract what power it can from society, which will shape its foreign policy. Such a move is consistent with neoclassical realism's general preference for richness and detail, at the expense of parsimony and rigour.

Individual level

Some neoclassical realists have incorporated into the 'lump' concept of power the capabilities of individual leaders, while others have posited that leaders play an important role in the measurement of power, through their perceptions of the systemic distribution of capabilities. An important neoclassical work that locates power at the first level of analysis is Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollack's study of the influence that individual leaders have on their country's foreign policy; in this case, leaders and their idiosyncrasies and ideologies represent the intervening variable.⁴⁷ For Byman and Pollack, 'leaders' represent one element among many that, when lumped together, form the aggregate power of a state. According to them, a variety of personal characteristics such as competence, risk tolerance, delusion or predictability can affect state power, as well as state intentions, goals and strategies.⁴⁸ This leads Byman and Pollack to argue, for example, that the balance of power in Europe around 1800 would have been different with a leader other than Napoleon in France.⁴⁹ As is the case with many other neoclassical realist works, Byman and Pollack's innovation is reminiscent of classical realist insights. Morgenthau, in particular, included 'leadership' as an element of national power.⁵⁰

A particular value-added of their work is not only their discussion of the impacts that leaders can have on their country's foreign policy, but also their effort to better understand the specific circumstances under which this impact will be strong. Byman and Pollack's work is consistent with a common strength of neoclassical realism: its disaggregation of the concept of power and its peering inside the black box of the state. Additional refinements are brought in by attempting to understand the specific conditions under which leaders can have a greater impact, for example when power is concentrated in the hands of the leader, or in times of great change; that is, efforts are made to better define the scope conditions of their theory. Their work also helps us to understand

specific historical events that tend to be regarded as anomalies by more parsimonious structural realist theories of broader scope. Again, this is consistent with neoclassical realism's general objective of sacrificing richness for rigour, and of focusing on more specific aspects on international politics.

A second innovation proposed by neoclassical realism at the individual level of analysis concerns the measurement of the systemic distribution of power. Neoclassical realists accept the structural realist premise that the distribution of power is the most important variable conditioning state behaviour. However, some of them criticize the view held by structural realists such as Waltz, as well as by classical writers such as Rousseau or Hume, that there is an objective or 'real' distribution of power 'out there' that directly influences states, irrespective of the perceptions of statesmen. These neoclassical realists argue that one of the main obstacles to a reliable measurement of power stems from the fact that it is not national power but rather decision-makers' perceptions of power that matter most.

One of the important intervening variables emphasized by neoclassical realists is therefore decision-makers' perceptions of the distribution of power. Rose explains that 'foreign policy choices are made by actual political leaders and elites, and so it is their perceptions of relative power that matter, not simply relative quantities of physical resources or forces in being'.⁵¹ In highlighting the role of perceptions, neoclassical realists have sought to introduce a greater degree of agency into international relations theory. Conceptualizing power in these terms is, however, more dynamic than are conventional measurements. The loss of parsimony, in addition, expands 'the explanatory utility of the distribution of power by accounting for a greater variation in behaviour and outcomes'.⁵² In doing so, neoclassical realists again accept the sacrifice of rigour and parsimony in favour of richness and detail.

Dominant pattern of behaviour: influence maximization

Structural realists posit a direct link between the structure of the system and patterns of state behaviour. This 'transmission belt' is derived from the rationality assumption: leaders 'respond to the incentives and constraints imposed by their environments'.⁵³ As a consequence, shifts in the international distribution of power are expected to lead to corresponding shifts in state behaviour and in international outcomes. For defensive realists, the dominant pattern of state behaviour that results is security-maximization; for offensive realists, it is power maximization.

Proponents of neoclassical realism agree with the classical realist assumptions that capabilities shape intentions and that increased

capabilities lead to an expansion of a state's interests abroad. Zakaria argues, however, that the correlation is not perfect because '[f]oreign policy is made not by the nation as a whole but by its government'.⁵⁴ He labels 'imperial understretch' the fact that the expansion of US interests abroad in the late 1800s lagged by decades behind the increase in the country's national power. Zakaria illustrates this by studying the expansion of the United States' interests abroad in the late nineteenth century as its state power grew in the form of a stronger and more centralized executive that was better able to bypass Congress and the states. His main hypothesis is therefore that nations try to expand their political interests abroad when central decision-makers perceive a relative increase in state power.⁵⁵ As states expand their political interests abroad, they seek to increase their control of the external environment; in other words, neoclassical realists argue that states are 'influence maximizers'.

This obviously begs the question of what is meant by 'influence maximization', and here it could be argued that much work remains to be done to clarify and operationalize the concept.⁵⁶ According to Rose, 'neoclassical realists assume that states respond to the uncertainties of international anarchy by seeking to control and shape their external environment ... as their relative power rises states will seek more influence abroad, and as it falls their action and ambition will be scaled back accordingly'.⁵⁷ Neoclassical realists often quote Robert Gilpin: when a state's power increases, it will try to 'increase its control over its environment ... it will try to expand its economic, political, and territorial control; it will try to change the international system in accordance with its own interests'.⁵⁸ The objective of states is to 'increase their influence over the behaviour of other states [through] the use of threats and coercion, the formation of alliances, and the creation of exclusive spheres of influence'.⁵⁹

Neoclassical realism, therefore, defines power in terms of the possession of specific assets or capabilities. It is not an end in itself, as it is for classical and offensive realism; rather, it is a means to an end or to a specific outcome – influence maximization. Exactly how both power and influence maximization are to be defined, measured and operationalized depends on the specific circumstances of the case under study, and should be determined empirically. This flexibility and eclecticism, as previously mentioned, is at the core of the neoclassical realist research agenda, and is arguably a precondition to its general objective of providing the tools for the building of a theoretically informed narrative of the foreign policy of a given state under specific circumstances.

Despite neoclassical realists' oft-stated preference for the 'power as capabilities' approach and their criticism of the relational approach, there nevertheless are some similarities between 'relational power', as defined by Dahl, and 'influence maximization': the latter relates to the

shaping of outcomes, whereas the former refers to the shaping of the behaviour of other actors. Thus, the problems that Wohlforth and Rose raise regarding the relational approach to power analysis – that it inevitably leads to tautology and that it is laden with theoretical and empirical difficulties – could similarly be raised, though perhaps to a lesser extent, with regard to the concept of influence maximization. This stems from the fact that it is not clear how one would operationalize the concept. Indeed, most neoclassical realist works tend to focus on the middle of the causal chain – the intervening variable – and to stop short of detailing the foreign-policy outcome. That is, many have described the foreign policies or grand strategies of states, but have somewhat neglected their success, or lack thereof, in influencing outcomes.

Christopher Layne's work represents one of the most comprehensive applications of the complete neoclassical realist causal chain, in that all three variables (independent, intervening and dependent) are specified, operationalized and linked to one another. It also sheds some light on what is meant by 'influence maximization', although Layne does not use the term itself. He conceptualizes power in terms of an aggregate of economic and military capabilities, and as a means to realize or shape specific political outcomes: 'those who control power also harbour goals and aspirations, and it is not strange that they should use the one to serve the other'.⁶⁰ In the context of what Layne terms a grand strategy of extra-regional hegemony, the United States has sought, since at least the 1940s, to 'expand its political and territorial control' and 'to create an international political environment' that would allow it to pursue its 'political, economic, and ideological interests'.⁶¹ US grand strategy therefore aims to use the country's preponderant power to expand its economic and political influence throughout the world. The United States has sought to 'create an international political environment that is hospitable to openness' and stability. To foster such an open and stable international environment, the United States has taken on the role of 'hegemonic stabilizer' and has developed a vested interest in the internal stability and economic and political liberalization of other countries, especially in Eurasia. A recurring pattern of US foreign policy has therefore been repeated interventions against regimes that oppose this international environment.⁶²

Conclusion

Neoclassical realism proposes a number of innovations in its conceptualization of power. It defines power in terms of the possession of specific assets, but introduces a distinction between national power and state power, the actual power that can be harnessed by the state apparatus, by

proposing that state–society struggles act as a ‘filter’ between systemic pressures and state behaviour. In terms of the measurement of power, one of its key insights is to argue that what matters is not the underlying, ‘real’ distribution of power, but rather statesmen’s perceptions of the distribution of power. More generally, neoclassical realism refutes the structural realist premise that there is a direct transmission belt between systemic pressures and foreign policy. Admittedly, many such innovations present significant obstacles in terms of their operationalization. Recent studies, however, such as those by Norrin Ripsman, Christopher Layne and Randall Schweller, have begun to shed some light on these mechanisms.

In sum, neoclassical realism conceptualizes power according to the elements of national power approach, and views power as a means to achieve desired outcomes. But it breaks with classical and structural realism in terms of the dominant pattern of behaviour that it argues arises from the exercise of power. Whereas classical and offensive realists argue that states are power maximizers and defensive realists posit that states are security maximizers, neoclassical realists argue that states are influence maximizers. As is the case with realism in general,⁶³ furthermore, there is no consensus within neoclassical realism on what is meant by ‘power’ and how it is exercised in international politics. The diversity in the answers to our three core questions may seem to some critics to be indicative of a degenerative shift within realism.⁶⁴ Indeed, neoclassical realists locate power at all three levels of analysis, use it at every step along the causal chain, operationalize and measure it in different ways, and posit varied impacts on state behaviour. This diversity is, however, also consistent with the eclecticism and flexibility that are at the core of the neoclassical realist research programme. In its assessment of the impact that the struggle for power has on states, neoclassical realism is willing to trade determinacy for greater accuracy in its orientation towards explaining and understanding foreign policy in specific and varied circumstances; a rigid conceptualization of power arguably would hinder this project.

Notes

- 1 See F. Berenskoetter and M. J. Williams (eds), *Power in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2007).
- 2 See B. C. Schmidt, ‘Competing Realist Conceptions of Power’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 33:3 (2005), pp. 523–49.
- 3 D. Baldwin, ‘Power and International Relations’, in W. Carlsnaes, T. Risse and B. A. Simmons (eds), *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage, 2002), pp. 177–91.
- 4 S. Guzzini, ‘The Use and Misuse of Power Analysis in International Theory’,

- in R. Palan (ed.), *Global Political Economy: Contemporary Theories* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 55.
- 5 J. S. Nye Jr, *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*, fourth edition (New York: Longman, 2003), p. 59.
- 6 R. Dahl, 'The Concept of Power', *Behavioral Science*, 2:3 (1957), p. 202
- 7 S. Guzzini, 'Structural Power: The Limits of Neorealist Power Analysis', *International Organization*, 47:3 (1993), p. 453.
- 8 W. C. Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 4.
- 9 J. J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), pp. 57–60.
- 10 G. Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy', *World Politics*, 51:1 (1998), fn. 15.
- 11 H. J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, third edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 25.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 211.
- 14 K. N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).
- 15 H. J. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man Versus Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 168.
- 16 Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 31.
- 17 K. N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 113.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 131.
- 19 Baldwin, 'Power and International Relations', p. 183.
- 20 Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 57.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 67. When analysing the period 1816–1960, Mearsheimer uses a straightforward composite indicator that accords equal weight to a state's iron and steel production and its energy consumption, and for 1960 to the present he uses gross national product (GNP) to measure wealth.
- 24 On the debate between defensive and offensive realism, see J. W. Taliaferro, 'Security Seeking Under Anarchy', *International Security*, 25:3 (2000/1), pp. 128–61.
- 25 K. N. Waltz, 'The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 18:4 (1988), p. 40.
- 26 J. Grieco, 'Realist International Theory and the Study of World Politics', in M. W. Doyle and G. J. Ikenberry (eds), *New Thinking in International Relations Theory* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), p. 167.
- 27 Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 33.
- 28 Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 98.
- 29 Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 1–11.
- 30 See: Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance*, pp. 1–17; Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism', p. 151.
- 31 R. L. Schweller, 'Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing', *International Security*, 29:2 (2004), p. 164.

- 32 F. Zakaria, 'Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay', *International Security*, 17:1 (1992), fn. 43; F. Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 19.
- 33 S. M. Walt, 'The Enduring Relevance of the Realist Tradition', in I. Katznelson and H. V. Milner (eds), *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (New York: Norton, 2002), p. 211.
- 34 Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism', p. 146.
- 35 Walt, 'The Enduring Relevance of the Realist Tradition', p. 211.
- 36 Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism', p. 168.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 152.
- 38 A. L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 306.
- 39 Information about the Correlates of War project can be found at www.correlatesofwar.org.
- 40 R. L. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy for World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 26–7.
- 41 Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism', p. 147.
- 42 Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power*, pp. 38–9.
- 43 Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism', p. 162.
- 44 See: G. A. Almond, 'The Return to the State', *American Political Science Review*, 82:3 (1988), pp. 853–74; P. B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol (eds), *Bringing the State Back In* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
- 45 Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism', p. 169. See: C. Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and chapters by Ripsman and Dueck in S. E. Lobell, N. M. Ripsman and J. W. Taliaferro (eds), *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- 46 R. L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
- 47 D. L. Byman and K. M. Pollack, 'Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesmen Back In', *International Security*, 25:4 (2001), pp. 107–46. While these two authors do not identify themselves as neoclassical realists, others have argued that their work is consistent with a neoclassical realist framework. See Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro (eds), *Neoclassical Realism*, p. 8.
- 48 See hypotheses 2, 5, 6 and 8 in Byman and Pollack, 'Let Us Now Praise Great Men', pp. 134–9.
- 49 Byman and Pollack, 'Let Us Now Praise Great Men', p. 144.
- 50 Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 138.
- 51 Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism', p. 147.
- 52 Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance*, p. 294.
- 53 R. O. Keohane, 'Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond', in R. O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 167.
- 54 Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power*, p. 12.
- 55 This is similar to Thomas Christensen's proposal to take into consideration national political power instead of national power, and to analyse how governments face domestic political hurdles in mobilizing public support

for a novel grand strategy. See T. J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

- 56 Interestingly, in the conclusion to his landmark article Rose proposes a number of future research avenues but largely ignores the need to refine the third element in the neoclassical realist causal chain, the foreign-policy outcome, and focuses mostly on unit-level intervening variables and secondarily on the independent variable, the global distribution of power. Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism', pp. 167–72.
- 57 *Ibid.*, p. 152.
- 58 R. Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 94–5.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- 60 D. Healy, *U.S. Expansionism: The Imperialist Urge in the 1890s* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), p. 255, quoted in Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy From 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), p. 30.
- 61 Gilpin, *War and Change*, p. 95, quoted in Layne, *The Peace of Illusions*, p. 30.
- 62 Layne, *The Peace of Illusions*, pp. 33–4.
- 63 Schmidt, 'Competing Realist Conceptions of Power'.
- 64 J. W. Legro and A. Moravcsik, 'Is Anybody Still a Realist?', *International Security*, 24:2 (1999), pp. 5–55.

Ideas of power and the power of ideas

Nicholas Kitchen

Realism is back in fashion. In the practice of international politics, the liberal interventionism of the post-Cold War moment has given way, post-Iraq, to a more hard-headed way of defining interests and a guarded scepticism of well-meaning world-building. In international relations (IR) theory, too, the ideas of liberalism and to a lesser extent constructivism that emphasized how human agency might shape the world for the better have quietly been replaced by a re-engagement with twentieth-century realist thought. Rereading and reinterpreting the work of realists such as E. H. Carr, Hans J. Morgenthau and even Kenneth Waltz has begun a process of shedding the simplistic caricatures of realism constructed by competing theoretical approaches to reveal the rich insights of this founding school of thinking about IR.

Leading this theoretical re-engagement has been neoclassical realism, which remains a school in search of a theory, a broad grouping of scholars rather than a defined research paradigm. In many cases the 'neo' prefix appears redundant, as many of the so-called 'neoclassical' works mirror rather than supersede the historical richness of the classical realism of the likes of Carr, Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr and Raymond Aron. Neoclassical realist theory is genuinely 'new' with respect to its attempts to move beyond the spare insights of neorealism by reintegrating some of the varied insights of classical realists within a structural theory. Neoclassical realism's task is to identify the appropriate variables that can enhance neorealism with greater explanatory richness and to identify under what conditions those factors may intervene to mediate the imperatives of power in the international system, to show how 'structural impact has to be relayed to state behaviour via domestic politics'.¹

This chapter is neoclassical in this second sense. The vast majority of neoclassical realist theorizing originates in the United States, and the American academy's dominant methodological and ontological approaches shine through the body of neoclassical realist literature in

its scientific rationalism and focus on the impact of material factors. In Europe, however, English school and constructivist approaches have emphasized the non-material aspects of IR, factors that were taken seriously by classical realist authors but which were later relegated in American IR by the attempt to 'scientize' the discipline. By emphasizing the re-integration of non-material aspects of classical realist thought within neoclassical realist theory, European scholars have the opportunity to establish a distinct and worthwhile approach that has been overlooked by American IR.

What follows is not a general theory of IR, but rather an attempt to show how non-material variables eschewed by neorealist analyses can be incorporated into a genuinely neoclassical realist approach. Some may object that doing so simply adds another variable to the already wide-ranging canon of neoclassical realist explanations. Indeed, that the intervening variable in question – political ideas – is one more usually associated with constructivism may similarly spark complaints that neoclassical realism represents something of a theoretical land-grab. However, that classical realists were concerned with the impact (bad) ideas could have on international politics is not in doubt, and that their work was overtly political in nature reflects the underlying belief of even neorealists that political ideas at the domestic level are important in the process of formulating foreign policy.² At the same time, the potential for a synthesis of constructivist and realist approaches has been speculated upon.³ It is therefore suggested here that a focus on the impact of political ideas can simplify the neoclassical approach, by forming a lowest-common denominator that encompasses the range of non-material aspects of individual and institutional behaviour at the domestic level that were admitted by classical realists.

Realists and ideas

Realist works are not in any sense congested with enthusiastic championing of the ability of ideas to shape international politics. Indeed, the original title for E. H. Carr's *The Twenty Years' Crisis* was *Utopia and Reality*, and Carr's project was to demolish the basic liberal notion that international politics could be subjugated to the force of human reason.⁴ Yet, at the same time, the classical realists see realism as a necessary corrective to the dangerous naivety of idealism, not as a replacement for it; indeed, it is because the classical realists saw the impact ideas can have on international politics that they cautioned statesmen to abide by the more stable maxims of power. The realist project is to balance imperatives of power against the demands of ideas and ethics.⁵ Classical realists saw the impact of ideas throughout international politics. Where

Niebuhr saw at least some role for ethics at the level of the state and Machiavelli spoke of the *virtù* of the statesman himself, Morgenthau and Carr saw moral precepts in basic international norms, among domestic populations and as goals of states.

At the individual level, Morgenthau identifies ideas as sources of change: 'when people see things in a new light, they may act in a new way'.⁶ This insight underlies Carr's thinking when he sees a role for ideas at the domestic level – in the use of propaganda and the education of the nation: 'the state which provides the education necessarily determines its content. No state will allow its future citizens to imbibe in its schools teaching subversive of the principles on which it is based.'⁷ Ideas, then, are powerful things, and power over them is one of the greatest assets a state can procure for itself. Indeed, the basic moral ideas that statesmen themselves hold preclude them from even considering certain means and ends, a process which could 'tame' the national interest and moderate self-interest and conflict.⁸ Morgenthau went even further, to contend that, beyond the irreducible minimum of the survival of the state, statesmen would take into account the cultural and moral ideas of their people to pursue goals, which could 'run the whole gamut of objectives any nation has ever pursued or might possibly pursue'.⁹

Carr's analysis that the most influential ideas have been based on professedly universal principles also allows for ideas to operate at the international level, moving across borders as tools or effects of foreign policy, but only successfully when backed in some way by national political power.¹⁰ In addition, Carr identifies a 'general sense of obligation', a norm that operates between states, thus rendering treaties and agreements useful elements of international politics.¹¹ Indeed, conceptions of justice do matter in international politics, and so peaceful change in that arena involves a compromise between utopian ideas of common right and realist adjustments to shifts in the balance of power.¹² Morgenthau concurred, believing the international environment to be composed not just of the distribution of power but also a climate of ideas, which contained certain moral values with enough force to delimit 'the sphere of possible political interests itself'.¹³

Of course, the central argument of realist thought is that ideas should be analytically subverted to power, that the key imperative is the survival of the state and that action should be directed towards the accumulation of power for this end. However, even the most strident classical realists do not regard this as the only logic of realism. Machiavelli is emphatically not a determinist who views power as impelling action; instead, necessity narrows the range of alternatives to which statesmen may apply their wisdom and exercise choice.¹⁴ Niebuhr also admits the possibility that states may 'do justice to wider interests than their own, while they pursue their own'.¹⁵ Although in the international order 'the role of power is

greater and that of morality less', Carr accepts that in some cases ideas of morality can trump concerns of power, to result in 'self-sacrifice' on the part of the state.¹⁶ As J. S. Barkin notes:

The classical realists argued quite explicitly that moral ideals are a necessary part of the practice of international politics and that political realism in the absence of morality, in the absence of a vision of utopia, is both sterile and pointless.¹⁷

Even Kenneth Waltz, whose work is usually only partially read as the overwhelming prioritization of the 'third image', of the international system, recognized the role that ideas at the domestic level play in formulating foreign policy, and noted how internal characteristics are mirrored in the 'national style' of states' external policies.¹⁸ Moreover, his 'third image' argument was motivated by an explicitly political concern to counter the ideas of contemporary realists that democratic states were unable to construct effective foreign policies. In this sense, structural realism represents less a scientific theory of international politics than it does the deliberate planting in a domestic political debate of normative arguments that emphasize the possibility of the coexistence of domestic liberalism with the international system.¹⁹

Classical realists also thought realism 'contains not only a theoretical but also a normative element'.²⁰ Unlike the determinism of structural realism, classical realism should directly engage with the policy-making process. For Morgenthau, that meant realism as a subversive force, one that guards against dangers from within the state, be they contained in moral crusades that are detrimental to the national interest or in the cynicism which can flow from the unprincipled pursuit of power.²¹

Thus, realism presents us with a highly complex and interdependent picture of the relationship between the individual, the state and society; between the national and the international; between the study of international politics and its practice; between power and ideas. Re-engaging with classical realism first and foremost is essential for neoclassical realism. It illuminates the richness present in realist thought before a stripped-out determinist model of structural realism took hold of the methodology of the discipline in the superpower-centric, zero-sum world of the Cold War and distilled out the subtleties of Waltz's project. At the same time, an understanding of that tradition allows neoclassical realists to rebut the charge that neoclassical realism, by allowing for intervening domestic or non-material factors, is not realism at all, and to demonstrate how it actually represents an extension of the structural realist approach.²²

Systematizing ideas: setting out a neoclassical realist theory

The difficulty with classical realism's complex picture is that it does not really form a deductive theory of international politics – it is more a set of philosophical insights about human nature, power and politics. Descriptive richness in many classical realist works therefore comes at the expense of parsimony and clear theoretical structure. For neoclassical realism to truly reflect its 'neo' designation it needs to reduce, arrange and systematize the insights of classical realists, and to specify those intervening variables between systemic drivers and foreign-policy outcomes. If we want neoclassical realism to have any kind of predictive capacity, as opposed to being a 'theory' of IR which merely justifies a multi-causal or historical approach, we need a clear, fixed set of factors to assess.

One approach is to set out the ways in which the machinations of domestic politics affect the ability of the state to respond to the international system. This approach essentially holds ideas constant and predicts state behaviour on the basis of its ability to mobilize its material power in pursuit of the optimal policy, given the systemic pressures in play. Randall Schweller has explained states' tendency to underbalance threats by reference to the degree of elite consensus and cohesion, social fragmentation and regime vulnerability, which together determine the ability of the state to mobilize its resources.²³ Similarly, Fareed Zakaria contends that a lack of 'state power' explains the failure of the United States to rise to great-power status as early as might have been expected.²⁴ In perhaps the most well developed of these resource-extraction models, Jeffrey Taliaferro argues that 'Even when confronted with the same threat, states vary in their ability to mobilize domestic resources for defense', to show how domestic-level variables intervene to limit states' ability to act in line with neorealist predictions.²⁵

An alternative, and complementary, approach is to set out the ways in which what happens at the unit level mediates systemic pressures to determine not to what extent a state is able to respond, but in what way a state will respond. Here the ability of the state to extract resources in pursuit of a given policy is assumed, and the independent variable is the ideas in play within the state. Analysis of the dominant political ideas within a state's foreign-policy elite may therefore show how ideas can intervene between structural imperatives and foreign-policy outcomes to shift states' preferences out of line from neorealist expectations.

Core principles of neoclassical realism

Realism, particularly in its classical form, is less a particular theory of politics than it is a philosophical outlook. As such, it is best understood

as a number of core principles rather than as a specific set of logically related maxims. First, the state is the most appropriate unit of analysis in international relations. Second, the nature of the international system is anarchic. Even though states take the edge off anarchy through institution-building, fundamentally their relations revolve around the competition for scarce resources in the absence of an external arbiter of disputes. Third, power is the essential tool that those states have at their disposal in that process of competition, and the most effective types of power are material capabilities.²⁶

Given its centrality to realist thinking, the status of 'the state' is especially important to realist theory, and to neoclassical realism in particular. The logic of realism moves from egoism and group formation to group competition using the tools of power at their disposal in an environment that is unregulated. Empirically, the groups traditionally most worthy of analysis in the modern era have been nation-states, combining as they do the largest resources of power within given territories, in terms of which survival may be clearly defined. Yet realism has lacked agreement on a coherent, unitary theory of the state. This is less of a problem for structural realism, which tends to view states as like units and structure as determining. That is not to argue that neorealism lacks a theory of the state, simply that it is 'embryonic' or 'minimalistic'; for the purposes described earlier, Waltz's theory of the state is 'highly restrictive and underdeveloped'.²⁷

Neoclassical realism, in contrast, requires a more substantive theory of the state because it is concerned with the processes by which structural information is interpreted and acted upon at the unit level.²⁸ Classical realism emphasized the role of statesmen, and neoclassical realism seeks to break down the processes that intervene within the state itself and which mediate international structure to help define the response of the state. There is not space here to construct a full definition of the state, but neoclassical realists would be wise to look for a definition along the lines of Stephen Krasner's, that the state is 'the central decision-making institutions and roles [that] can be treated as unified actors pursuing aims understood in terms of the national interest'.²⁹ This is the type of definition settled upon by the editors of previously the only dedicated volume on neoclassical realism, which identifies the state with the national-security or foreign-policy executive in a 'top down' conception. Such a definition suits neoclassical realism in that it maintains the state as the key single unit in international politics, in which systemic forces ultimately drive external behaviour, while allowing for intervening domestic-level factors to shape the institutions and individuals within that process.³⁰

Conceptualizing ideas

Much IR theory is overly concerned with epistemology and ontology, to the extent that arguments over the status of the subjects of analysis come to subsume the subjects, and the analysis, themselves. Social scientists should guard against this tendency to philosophize: our subjects of study, fundamentally, are human beings who get on perfectly well with implicit theories of knowledge and existence that make up for in usability what they may lack in logical form. This 'common-sense realism' incorporates a metaphysical pluralism to assert that there are both real things that we can know exist in the world and there are also ideas and concepts, and that we are able to – and do – make the distinction between reality and theory, between the material and the ideational.³¹ Yet while scholars wishing to incorporate factors of different orders – such as ideas and interests – need not therefore submit to critiques of reductionism, for neoclassical realism to represent an advance on its classical progeny it should at least make an effort to engage with the status of its objects of analysis. What follows is therefore an attempt to conceive of political ideas as phenomena that can be integrated into an approach in which they can be weighed and assessed alongside the empirical facts that help form interests.³²

To allow this, it is crucial that ideas and interests be maintained as conceptually distinct phenomena.³³ While we can accept that people hold particular ideas because it is in their interests to do so, and expect that the ideas people hold will tend to reflect their own interests, these are not reasons to logically conflate ideas with interests or to reduce one to the other. Second, ideas should not simply be identified with beliefs, as the most common rationalist definition in the IR literature does.³⁴ The idea–belief conjunction is particularly problematic. In order for something to be an idea, must someone actually believe in it? Do all beliefs have the same status – are scientific theories to be given the same logical credence as religious beliefs? Is my belief in the existence of extra-terrestrial life as powerful as the idea of the universal right to healthcare? While both are certainly mental phenomena, the 'shared belief' characterization neuters ideas. Neoclassical realism conceives of ideas as having force alongside material interests, but by defining ideas as mere beliefs it becomes difficult to see them as (effective) weapons in policy debates.³⁵

A realist account of ideas, then, first requires that interests are those empirically knowable material facts about the world which constitute power relations between states. Alongside them, we may tentatively define ideas as those mental states which conceptualize relations between empirical realities and/or advocate a particular course of action. In this sense, we may subdivide ideas in the context of IR into ideas that tell us how the world works – *scientific ideas* – ideas that articulate aims or

goals – *intentional ideas* – and those that articulate the appropriateness of means – *operational ideas*.

Scientific ideas establish the relations between things in the international environment, such as the ‘stopping power’ of water, or the idea that liberal democracies will not go to war with each other. These ideas establish boundaries of possibility for our normative ideas – they tell us how the world works. It should be noted here that scientific ideas do not include knowledge of the natural sciences; realists regard this knowledge as empirical reality. Rather, they represent the knowledge of the social sciences about the relations and behaviour of people, polities and economies.

Intentional ideas should be understood as normative suggestions that seek to establish goals for foreign policy, for example the idea that ‘the United Kingdom should promote human rights’. These types of ideas reflect the ethical prejudices of their proponents, implicitly ‘the United Kingdom should promote human rights because that is the right thing to do’. This is not the same as saying ‘it is in the United Kingdom’s interests to promote human rights’. The source of motivation is important, since a neoclassical realist perspective does not assume it: while realists would expect intentional ideas to correspond with the national interest they might not be held for that reason. Indeed, although we would expect that intentional ideas that run counter to the national interest would be less likely to gain support within the state, that is not to say that they could not prosper: the separation of ideas and interests makes scepticism that a state might pursue goals that are in opposition to its interests a contingent claim, not a logical one.

Operational ideas are recommendations concerning the means by which a certain end should be pursued. They may be based on ethical judgements, but they more often arise from the holding of a particular causal belief. Ideas about the utility of different forms of power are a good example. A neoclassical realist account might explain the differing approaches of the United States and the European Union towards threats from nuclear proliferation in terms of differing operational ideas as much as differing coercive capabilities.

If we now have at least a sketch of what ideas are, we need to also understand how they work. Why do some ideas make it to the forefront of policy while others founder? What precipitates changes in prevailing ideas? Under what conditions might ideas trump interests?

Domestic processes: ideas within states

While a neoclassical realist approach might usefully require that political ideas are treated as objects with force, that is, as elements of power within

the domestic process, it should be obvious that the relationship between ideas and power is rather different from the relationship between, say, money and power, or military hardware and power. Whereas material capabilities' power is wholly intrinsic and fixed, the power of an idea is both dependent and variable. I suggest three ways in which ideas may intervene at the unit level within states: through the policy-makers who hold them; through the institutions in which they may become embedded; and through the broader culture of the population which the state represents.

Fundamentally, the state is made up of individuals. Individuals construct systems, institutions and bureaucracies; individuals lead and follow; individuals make decisions. On what basis do individual policy-makers decide between competing ideas? The causal effect of ideas on policies has tended to be totally displaced onto the political effects of individuals in IR theory, with the result being that the persuasiveness of ideas is assumed rather than examined, and treated as constant.³⁶ The first, most basic element of ideational success is often overlooked: is it a good idea? Is it coherent? Does it correspond to known realities? Does it mesh with the psychological biases of the individuals at which it is targeted? The second key to success resides in the idea's advocate – his or her intellect, eloquence and position. The power of an idea to persuade individuals therefore resides both in itself and in the power of those who hold it. But although we should not therefore assume that all ideas that make it to the heart of policy are somehow intrinsically good ideas, we equally should not discount the quality of an idea from our analysis, even as we admit that the character of the 'couriers' of ideas is as important, if not more so, than anything inherent to the idea itself.³⁷

Neoclassical realism therefore reaffirms the classical insight that statesmen are important in determining the foreign policies of states. Although power sets the limits and constraints on the national interest, the ideas held by powerful policy-makers are important, and the ideas held by the most powerful individuals within the state are the ones that matter most.

If individuals can hold ideas and realists understand that humans tend to form groups, then we should expect individuals with shared ideas to coalesce into groups and organizations with common practices within states. The formation of these formal and informal groups or 'institutions' reflects the fact that ideas that are embedded in structures are possessed of greater power. Institutional arrangements allow policy experts from outside the foreign-policy executive to exert influence on policy.³⁸ Ideas may also be encased in institutions within formal rules and procedures, allowing for their continued influence over time.³⁹ Furthermore, these formal institutions of the state create structural arrangements that establish the routes by which ideas can gain access to the policy process,

determining the political and administrative ‘viability’ of particular ideas. Institutional structure therefore ensures that policy-makers have access to only a limited set of ideas, whether those are percolated up to them or searched for by them.⁴⁰ In this way, what some refer to as ‘strategic culture’ may provide a guide to a state’s likely reaction to shifts in the structure of the international system.⁴¹

Underpinning the political ideas, individuals and institutions are the ideas contained in the broader cultural context within which the state is located. Ideas that are embedded in social norms, patterns of discourse and collective identities become accepted, ‘instinctual’ parts of the social world and are experienced as part of a natural objective reality.⁴² In this way, cultural variables subconsciously set the limits and terms of debate for both individuals and institutions, and so have ‘a profound effect on the strategic behaviour of states’.⁴³ Mediated through institutions and individuals blinded to potential alternatives, ideas embedded in national culture therefore have the potential to explain ‘why some states act contrary to the structural imperatives of the international system’.⁴⁴

A neoclassical realist model of the making of foreign policy

Realist IR theory, and most social theory for that matter, has three inter-related purposes: first, to provide a consistent structure for the analysis of history; second, to provide tools with which future behaviour may be rendered more or less predictable; and third, to constitute a prescriptive or normative paradigm around which behaviour can be judged. Neoclassical realist theory, which emphasizes the importance of power while admitting the impact on policy-making of domestic ideas, organizes the insights of classical realism for each of these modes of theory.

The bulk of neoclassical realist work to date has been historical in nature. Indeed, the first body of neoclassical realist literature was devoted to explaining why, in particular historical cases, states failed to behave as neorealist theory would expect. These works assessed the contemporary international system; surmised the optimal foreign-policy response in terms of national interest defined as power; and looked inside the state to explain why the response of that state at that time differed from realist expectations. As Gideon Rose notes in the *World Politics* review article in which he coined the term ‘neoclassical realism’, these historical accounts describe how systemic incentives are translated through unit-level variables into foreign policies.⁴⁵

Neoclassical realist analysis is therefore primarily being applied to specific historical cases to explain change in the structure of the international system with reference to how states understood and reacted to their material position.⁴⁶ Of course, each historical explanation is unique,

but the shared structure of explanation allows neoclassical realists to draw out from their historical analyses patterns of generalizable factors at the level of the state which may serve for more accurate prediction than spare neorealism. As noted earlier, neoclassical realists have thus far focused on aspects of state power that influence the ability of states to react to international power dynamics. While there has been some reluctance to engage specifically with ideas, these historical analyses have revealed how non-material variables within states have influenced their response to the international system. For instance, Dominic Johnson has analysed the effect that the human tendency towards overconfidence – a bias he refers to as ‘positive illusions’ – has in causing leaders to overestimate their own capabilities and underestimate the power of others.⁴⁷ Since ideas can influence cognition both individually and institutionally, errors resulting from positive illusions or other biases can be repeatable features of state foreign policy. Indeed, strategic culture, what Jack Snyder defined in the 1970s as ‘a set of semi-permanent elite beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour patterns socialized into a distinctive mode of thought’, has been the focus of much of the neoclassical realist work related to non-material variables.⁴⁸ Christopher Layne argues that the United States’ strategy of extra-regional hegemony has its roots in the ‘open door’ ideology that defines American national interests in terms of ideals as well as power.⁴⁹ Colin Dueck similarly emphasizes how both consciously used ideas and internalized ideological assumptions in US strategic culture have been central to how American policy-makers have adjusted US grand strategy in response to structural shifts in the international system.⁵⁰

How might these types of insights about particular ideas be integrated into a more general neoclassical realist model that might have predictive capacity? When social scientists speak of predictive capacity, they are really looking for two things: for a given situation, they require a clear assessment of those factors they need to interpret, as well as an understanding of how those factors interrelate. Neoclassical realism therefore seeks to provide the ‘function box’ between systemic pressures and foreign policy outcomes, to articulate how a foreign-policy executive turns its knowledge of the external environment into a strategic outcome for the state, that is, a theory of how policy-makers interpret the international system and shape foreign policy in response to it.

Of course, the types of ideas operating within states may vary enormously. Yet the model presented here is intended to be universal, assuming a ‘top-down’ conception of the state in which systemic forces are mediated by the ideas of national security or by the foreign-policy executive that is common to all states.⁵¹ The constraining effect of the international environment ensures that the menu of ideas (or at least the ideas that are likely to be successful with the foreign-policy executive) is restricted to those that fit with prevailing power realities.

The first role of the foreign-policy executive is to establish the nature of these power realities in order to identify and rank threats to the security of the state. This process begins with a traditionally realist assessment of the geopolitical and material context of the state in the international system. While uncertainty or overconfidence may create space for policy-makers' ideational biases,⁵² common-sense realism confirms that features of the international system are truths that can be known, and so neoclassical realism regards the nature of the international system as an independent variable, an established reality.

Nonetheless, the facts of power in the system are not on their own enough to identify threats to the state, which instead require the presence of both capability and intent. In this latter category, assessments are more likely to be profoundly affected by perceptions of other states' strategy, culture, ideology and history.⁵³ In particular, neoclassical realism draws on the understanding of classical realists that identities – what Aron called the nature of states⁵⁴ – are profoundly important in establishing when the presence of power constitutes a threat. At this stage, competing ideas may contest the ranking of those threats in terms of imminence and scale, particularly when policy-makers consider some features of individual states or of the international system itself as simply threatening *per se*, even in the absence of targeted capability or intent.⁵⁵ At the same time, the primacy placed by neoclassical realism on the knowable realities of power and state type determines that the foreign-policy executive will tend towards predictable agreement on the identity of threats to the state.

The second role of policy-makers is to choose how to address threats, that is, to determine the means of strategy. It is at this stage more than at any other that ideas intervening at the unit level may shape foreign-policy outcomes. States have access to a vast range of options in terms of capabilities and diplomacy that they may utilize to address threats, and policy-makers are in the position to choose between those tools of power. As such, different actors within states may hold competing ideas about which means are most effective, have ideological or ethical biases against certain tools of power, or simply be using the selection process to protect bureaucratic turf.

Finally, a tertiary process identifies auxiliary goals and the means to attain them. This process is not common to all states, but is most significant when thinking about the strategies of great powers, since the ideas contained in the strategies of great powers 'are a building block of international life'.⁵⁶ Great powers have enough resources both to guarantee their security and to pursue other goals in international politics. These goals may be expansionist in terms of territory or economic power; they may create interests for a state based on historic or cultural ties; they may involve ethical concerns or political ideas; they may be directed towards 'global' interests. The choice of which auxiliary goals to pursue and with

which resources will always be the result of ideational debate within the state, since systemic imperatives have already been addressed in one form or another.

Foreign policy, according to neoclassical realism, thus emerges through a process of empirical assessment and ideational competition within the foreign-policy executive of the state. While the balance of power in the international system is constraining, there remains considerable autonomy and scope for creativity on the part of policy-makers to shape their state's foreign policy in response to external pressures.⁵⁷ Of course, neither the balance of power in the international system nor the balance of ideas within the foreign-policy executive is fixed. Personnel changes, shifts in broader public mood or new information may alter the ideational make-up of the state. The sources of foreign policy – and, significantly, of strategic change – are to be found both external to the state, as neorealism posits, and internal to the state. Neoclassical realism thus fills the gap in neorealist approaches that are unspecific regarding the causal processes that turn systemic change into unit-level strategic shifts. For neoclassical realists, unless the international environment is especially highly constrained, it is difficult to deduce foreign policy directly from the balance of material capabilities.⁵⁸ Instead, neoclassical realists regard as usual what Waltz regards as rare, that states' 'internal impulses' play a significant part in determining security postures.⁵⁹ It might be argued that the two projects are seeking to do different things, that neorealism seeks to explain continuity and stability in the international system, whereas neoclassical realism seeks to understand change and diversity in foreign policy, and that each is conducting its analysis at a different level. There would certainly be something to this, and Waltz is very clear that his is not a theory of foreign policy.⁶⁰ Yet, if neoclassical realists are right, and the ideas and perceptions of policy-makers within the state 'play an important, indeed, a pivotal, role in the selection of a grand strategy',⁶¹ it makes little sense to assess the structure of the international system without reference to the strategies of the units that constitute that structure. Indeed, without a theory of causation – that is, a theory of the state – the best that neorealism can do is identify patterns of correlation, which themselves demonstrate little.

Conclusion

Neoclassical realism's recognition that ideas play an important role in the formulation of foreign policy allows it to revive in realism the role of normative and critical theorizing. The role of the scholar, Morgenthau believed, was to 'speak truth to power'; political realism was as much a normative project as it was a descriptive theory.⁶² Realists believe

that abiding by the maxims of power is a more stable way to organize international relations, emphasizing the limits that power places on the pursuit of grand schemes. At the same time, neoclassical realism understands that states that are very powerful are the most likely to pursue ideas-based policies, as the international system poses few constraints on a state whose material power significantly defines the international structure. In such cases, the question 'what must we do?' is replaced by 'what shall we do?', and ideological goals become ends in themselves.⁶³ The normative task of realists, then, is to guard against the hubristic pursuit of ideas by great powers, by emphasizing that they may realize those ideas at the expense of stability.

Notes

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 - 40 Yee, 'The Causal Effects of Ideas', p. 92.
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- 62 Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, p. 15.
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6

External and domestic determinants of state behaviour

Barbara Kunz and Ilai Z. Saltzman

Seeing the whole picture requires looking at more than just isolated parts of the phenomena we seek to understand and explain. It is such mundane wisdom that best summarizes the promises of neoclassical realism. It takes systemic *and* state-level elements into consideration, thereby bridging a gap that has divided international relations scholars for decades. Neoclassical realism is able to merge structural realism and foreign-policy analysis modalities into a single explanatory theoretical framework. Consequently, the realist account of international affairs can become more comprehensive and inclusive than it was thus far.¹

This chapter has two major objectives: first, to describe the external (international) and state-level factors that neoclassical realism identifies as the most important in determining state behaviour; and second, to portray how these elements interact and under what conditions some play a more central role than the others. We consequently concur with Brian Rathbun that neoclassical realism, in its attempts to integrate domestic and ideational variables, is a 'logical extension and necessary part of advancing neorealism', while incorporating elements of classical realism.²

External factors

Just like structural realism, neoclassical realism acknowledges the centrality of the distribution of capabilities in the international system. However, unlike most neorealists, neoclassical realists believe that international institutions play a significant role in shaping state behaviour. This section describes how these two 'external' concepts fit into neoclassical realism's research programme.

Consciously or not, policy-makers first evaluate their strategic environment composed of the number of poles in the system and their discrepancy. This constellation can be multipolar, bipolar or unipolar.

These ideal-type modalities are not exhaustive and one may identify a multitude of structures that represent a combination of great-power configurations. Yet, regardless of the system's polarity, its poles still serve as decision-makers' *major* point of reference. Great powers were therefore traditionally at the focus of realism's study of international affairs. Influential classical realists and later on neorealists were mainly interested in understanding and explaining great-power politics and its effect on the probability of war or the prevalence of peace.³

But while classical realists explained international affairs by focusing on human nature and its effect on world politics, neorealism was to become the first sustained attempt to establish a structural approach for the study of international affairs within the realist paradigm. Whereas classical realists such as Hans J. Morgenthau, Henry Kissinger and other notable writers chose a state-centric view, Kenneth Waltz adopted a systemic perspective.⁴ In fact, Waltz sought to discredit classical realism's methodological tradition, which was more philosophical than analytical, and suggested instead a more parsimonious *scientific* approach. As he writes in the opening of his *Theory of International Politics*, one of his main objectives was 'to construct a theory of international politics that remedies the defects of present theories'.⁵

The problem with the works of prominent classical realists, according to Waltz, was that they suggest 'certain things happen because men are stupid or bad'. And these assertions, he argued, can only be 'accepted or rejected according to the mood of the writer'.⁶ In contrast to classical realism, neorealism presumably provides the researcher with a coherent and objective set of assumptions and material-based predictions that can easily be evaluated and tested according to other methods of enquiry in the social sciences. Thus, for Waltz, classical realism was a vague and underspecified 'reductionist' approach that loosely explains specific states' behaviour, whereas neorealism is a scientifically generated systemic theory that explains general international outcomes. In other words, for Waltz, classical realism was not a theory, but merely a *Weltanschauung*.⁷

As an alternative, neorealism is principally based on the assumption that it is the anarchic nature of the system that best explains the historical regularities and repetitiveness in international politics. Accordingly, it is the 'third image' that prevails when we try to 'explain how the organization of a realm acts as a constraining and disposing force on the interacting units within it'.⁸

But what connects the system's anarchical characteristic to Waltz's observable sameness or regularity of unit behaviour throughout history? Essentially, it is the self-help element and the dynamics of the security dilemma that, in his view, constrain and encourage different state actors with opposing ideologies and divergent regime types in different periods to act in a similar manner.⁹ To quote Waltz:

competition and conflict among states stem directly from the twin facts of life under conditions of anarchy: States in an anarchic order must provide for their own security, and threats or seeming threats to their security abound.¹⁰

Anarchy, in this respect, denotes the absence of a supranational sovereign with the authority and capacity to enforce its will on all actors and to protect their existence from one another. Thus, in anarchical systems all actors' main objective is to protect their existence.

Within the system's anarchical structure, all state actors are responsible for the preservation of their own national security. This, in turn, motivates states to be aware of others' influence on their existence and to prepare to use force as the main instrument for maintaining security.¹¹ 'A self-help system is one in which those who do not help themselves, or who do so less effectively than others', Waltz warns, 'will fail to prosper, will lay themselves open to danger, will suffer.'¹² Under such conditions, 'units worry about their survival, and the worry *conditions* their behavior'.¹³ However, it must be stressed that Waltz's assertion means 'conditioning', not 'determining', a point that we shall see neoclassical realists were quick to notice and eager to address.

Since anarchy and self-help constitute the basis of neorealism's account of world politics, a resulting outcome is the regular emergence of balances of power. An extremely elusive and ill-defined concept in its own right, balance of power has become neorealism's central proposition. For Waltz, balance of power is a result of neither unit-level interaction nor exceptional statesmanship. It is not the actors' attributes that make the equilibrium among the great powers possible and recurrent. Instead, it is 'produced by the *uncoordinated* actions of states', an inevitable consequence of systemic effects.¹⁴

What are the implications of Waltz's ideas on the study of state behaviour? His model is admittedly similar to classical realism's description, despite the previously discussed alteration in the scientific platform and the inevitability of certain phenomena. Indeed, for the two strands of realism, equilibrium is the most commonly ascribed fundamental characteristic in accounts of international affairs.¹⁵ Both consider the dominance of a single actor over the others hazardous to the stability of the international system. Morgenthau explicitly warned that 'without a state of equilibrium among them one element will gain ascendancy over the others, encroach upon their interests and rights, and might ultimately destroy them'.¹⁶ Waltz, on his part, identified the need to preserve the equilibrium that guarantees states' security in the face of possible rising powers, since 'states having a surplus of power are tempted to use it, and weaker states fear their doing so'.¹⁷

Consequently, both classical and structural realism 'count' poles, chiefly according to the actors' national power, which is determined by

factors such as geography and population size, natural resources, industrial and economic capacity, military capabilities, political stability and competence.¹⁸ These elements constitute a given state's available capabilities in the pursuit of security and its existential interests. But in order to be considered a pole, a state must achieve high levels in all of them.¹⁹

Waltz's great-power bias is also evident in his leaning towards large concentrations of capabilities, preferably in two poles. Whereas multipolar configurations appeal the most to classical realists since they allow greater room for manoeuvring, Waltz considers bipolarity the most stable system.²⁰

Another crucial point of disagreement, which directly results from the different ontological and epistemological basis, is the capacity to reinstate a disrupted equilibrium. Again, while Morgenthau focused on individuals' coordinated 'methods' that constitute balancing behaviour, Waltz contended that only the system will push and shove the actors to reinstate the balance, since neorealism is *not* a theory of foreign policy. Put differently, it is only descriptive rather than prescriptive as far as state behaviour is concerned.²¹

Nevertheless, a number of scholars articulated a modified version of neorealism, able to explain specific state behaviour by applying Waltz's systemic variables and incorporating states' relative and positional place within the structure.²² Colin Elman convincingly showed that it is more than possible and plausible to deduce from neorealism a foreign-policy theory. In this case, and extending Elman's argument, if the system historically tends towards equilibrium, then it is obviously the outcome of intentional balancing behaviour practised by states alone or in cooperation with other security-seeking actors.²³

Some of these insights are also noticeable in Waltz's own writing.²⁴ Waltz acknowledges that the system is the result of state interaction, hence not completely independent from foreign-policy behaviour.²⁵ Thus, despite Waltz's attempt to present a perfectly structural approach, neorealism can nevertheless account for states' policy alternatives and constraints. Consequently, neoclassical realism can both claim continuity with respect to Waltz's structural realism and underline its novel character by further developing neorealism.

The second major external factor that shapes and determines states' behaviour in the international sphere, according to neoclassical realism, is international institutions. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to fully explore the role of international institutions within international politics. Therefore, we will limit ourselves to an appraisal of the basic notion of institutions within neoclassical realism and how they constrain states.²⁶

John Mearsheimer presented principled criticism of international institutions and concluded that they 'have minimal influence on state behavior, and thus hold little promise for promoting stability in the

post-Cold War world'.²⁷ Yet, while Mearsheimer's position was certainly predominant within the neorealist camp, there were neorealists who questioned this firm anti-institutional approach. Scholars like Joseph Grieco, who were extremely critical of liberal institutionalism's disregard of the relative and absolute gains problem, became more receptive to a modified version that highlighted the interest-driven motivation for international cooperation and institutionalization.²⁸

As a matter of fact, the concept of international institutions is not foreign to the different realist schools, since military alliances or great-power concerts are but the same expressions of structured relationships between states.²⁹ Even Mearsheimer, employing an extremely narrow definition in his critique of a liberal version of the concept, posits that institutions are 'a set of rules that stipulate the ways in which states should cooperate and compete with each other. They prescribe acceptable forms of state behaviour, and proscribe unacceptable kinds of behavior'.³⁰ In a fashion that resembles Peter Gourevitch's 'second image reversed' thesis, neoclassical realists believe that the international institutional realm imposes certain constraints and limitations on members' freedom of action and preferences, even though they may not be fully able to dominate it.³¹

Indeed, one need only to think of the Warsaw Pact, the Concert of Vienna, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or the European Union to discover that institutions' influence on state behaviour may be accounted for by committed neorealists. Glenn Snyder³² and Paul Schroeder³³ showed, for example, that intrastate dynamics between different parties may alter the overall conduct of any given alliance. On the one hand, the intra-alliance security dilemma can lead states to get caught in an 'abandonment/entrapment' predicament and sometimes weaken their commitments, as Snyder suggests. On the other hand, Schroeder indicated that weaker members of an alliance can hinder the policies and even suppress the ambitions of the stronger member(s) through 'pacts of restraint', which mitigate the structural distribution of capabilities by applying predetermined rules, procedures and norms.

Naturally, with the move to expand neorealism's boundaries, more and more neorealists began to appreciate institutions' independent role in determining states' behaviour and to amend structural realism accordingly.³⁴ Jennifer Sterling-Folker concluded that although institutions are influential in determining state behaviour, they must be 'embedded within the larger group context which is itself a function of the environmental context', and thus 'neoclassical realism allows institutions to be important causal variables in their own right'.³⁵

In sum, Waltz admitted that 'without the first and second images there can be no knowledge of the forces that determine policy'.³⁶ It is imperative at this point to go beyond the structural level and demonstrate

how these two additional 'images' explain states' behaviour. Hence, it is time to reopen the 'black box' of the state, since neorealism is 'best conceived as a framework for further inquiry, not as the end of inquiry', as Shibley Telhami maintained.³⁷

State-level factors

Since the differentiation between systemic-level and the unit-level variables determining states' foreign-policy behaviour looked rather artificial methodologically and unhelpful descriptively, the initial task was to debunk the Waltzian assumption of a unitary actor and to move to a more sophisticated articulation of system–unit interaction. Thus, because '[s]tates rarely conform to realism's assumption of units as coherent actors', neoclassical realists seek to incorporate *both* systemic variables and intervening domestic variables into their analyses.³⁸ The school posits that:

complex domestic political processes act as transmission belts that channel, mediate, and (re)direct policy outputs in response to external forces (primarily changes in relative power). Hence, states often react differently to systemic pressures and opportunities, and their responses may be less motivated by systemic-level factors than domestic ones.³⁹

At the same time:

neoclassical realists believe that the *Innenpolitikers'* preferred independent variables must be analytically relegated because, over the long run, a state's foreign policy cannot transcend the limits and opportunities thrown up by the international environment.⁴⁰

This and the fact that neoclassical realists never lose sight of the strategic character of foreign policy under anarchy solidly anchors the school in the realist camp.⁴¹

Understanding why states react differently to similar systemic pressures and opportunities inevitably requires looking at the unit level. However, a generally accepted catalogue of intervening variables to be taken into account by neoclassical realists, and more precisely a theory of how these variables interact, has yet to emerge. What is uncontested is what is to be explained: by opening the black box and engaging with its inherent complexity, neoclassical realists find themselves in need of explaining state behaviour – one of the major differences between neoclassical realism and neorealism.

State behaviour, in neoclassical realism, is usually defined in two complementary ways: balancing patterns and, more broadly, foreign-policy

output. Whereas earlier neoclassical realist work primarily concerned deviations from structural realist expectations in a narrower sense – mostly (under)balancing – more recent contributions claim that neoclassical realism ‘is a useful approach for understanding foreign policy, more generally’.⁴² Neoclassical realists thus no longer limit themselves to studying underperformance or maladjustment in light of systemic pressure(s), but rather deal with state behaviour broadly defined.

In explaining such behaviour, a wide variety of *Innenpolitik* variables – playing the role of intervening variables – is conceivable. They may pertain to intra-state structures such as the domestic institutional environment, the existence or absence of pressure groups, regime type or political constellations and the distribution of interests within the state. They may also include psycho-cognitive variables such as policy-makers’ perceptions and historical path dependency. What may be taken from the growing body of neoclassical realist literature is that these intervening variables can be clustered into two categories: (1) perceptions in filtering systemic factors; and (2) domestic constraints in designing foreign policy. These two categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but each of the strands presented below highlights a different aspect of the interplay of domestic and systemic variables. Neoclassical realists may thus distinguish between perception-based approaches and approaches based on institutional characteristics at states’ domestic levels. Perception-based approaches ask: how – based on what perceptions – do domestic actors filter systemic factors? Approaches based on characteristics of domestic institutions, especially governments and their political environments, place factors such as elite cohesion, government stability, interest-group pressure and the government’s ability to mobilize and extract resources from society at the centre of attention. In the sections below, we shall discuss these two sets of intervening variables in greater detail.

Perceptions in filtering systemic factors

For neoclassical realists, the state apparatus and its policy-makers constitute the missing link between power resources and foreign-policy output. Consequently, ‘[t]he first intervening variable they introduce is decision-makers’ perceptions, through which systemic pressures must be filtered’.⁴³ In designing foreign policies and filtering structural factors, decision-makers need to assess characteristics of the system in terms of polarity and other states’ intentions, as well as changes in the relative distributions of power. This assessment logically takes place at states’ domestic levels, within those entities concerned with making foreign policy. Perceptions of the above-named factors held there are thus of crucial relevance in explaining foreign-policy outputs.⁴⁴

It is in this respect that neoclassical realism veers towards positing that the role of anarchy is relative, contingent on states' positions within the international system and their capabilities, implying that 'neoclassical realists occupy a middle ground between pure structural theorists and constructivists'.⁴⁵ Neoclassical realists acknowledge the fundamental anarchical nature of the system, but unlike constructivists they believe that the severity of anarchy's consequences varies from state to state, depending on domestic institutional characteristics and psycho-cognitive perceptions rather than intersubjective understandings or constructions.⁴⁶ Yet it is important to understand that neoclassical realism 'problematizes perception, but not the objective nature of reality. States must often fall back on perception not because reality is socially constructed but rather because they lack complete information.'⁴⁷ This is why neoclassical realists are realists, who focus on cognitive processing of data, and not constructivists, who apply an interpretative approach mainly driven by ideational or normative factors.⁴⁸

If the basic assumptions of balance-of-power and/or balance-of-threat theory are to constitute a point of departure for neoclassical realist reasoning, it is evident that neoclassical realists need to account for the way in which states detect and assess threats and/or power shifts. Put differently, neoclassical realists must be able to explain how perceptions of systemic factors affect the formulation of states' foreign policy. This is a path pursued by William Wohlforth, Aaron Friedberg and Thomas Christensen, who concluded that although 'objective' power certainly mattered, perceptions thereof came to play a crucial role in the formulation of states' foreign and defence policies.⁴⁹ Their conclusion only supported Raymond Cohen's assertion that 'threat perception is the *decisive* intervening variable between action and reaction in international crisis'.⁵⁰ The step ahead for neoclassical realism in the perceptions strand thus consists in attaining a unified understanding of perceptions' role in determining foreign-policy outputs.

In an attempt to offer such a framework, Steven Lobell proposes a threat-identification model based on a neoclassical realist theory of threat assessment.⁵¹ For Lobell, threat assessment is a complex endeavour of a 'nested and multitiered nature' that can take place at the systemic, sub-systemic and domestic levels.⁵² Those who make foreign policy inevitably play a 'two-level game' in which threat assessment may be influenced by their respective positions within the political system, while their political calculations also matter.⁵³ In assessing outside threats, decision-makers actually assess 'specific components of a foreign state's power'.⁵⁴ In other words, states not only consider systemic factors, but actually look inside other units when assessing power and threats. Perceptions of intentions are consequently relevant because states consider 'aggressive intentions' in addition to material factors.⁵⁵

A consideration of 'aggressive intentions', in turn, is reminiscent of the classical realist distinction of revisionist states on the one side and status-quo powers on the other. Neoclassical realism, contrary to neorealism, hence includes a certain focus on states' – potentially revisionist – intentions.⁵⁶

Yet states' intentions are only one part of the equation, since, when states assess other states' material power, '[w]ether a foreign state is viewed as threatening is in part a function of which component of its power is rising'.⁵⁷ Classical geopolitical reasoning therefore also has its place in neoclassical realism, where 'different components of power pose different threats to societal actors in other states'.⁵⁸ A number of societal actors assess threats but it is the foreign-policy executive that 'formulates grand strategy and maximizes the state's national security'.⁵⁹ Both grand strategy and short-term responses to emerging threats are designed by the authoritative maker of foreign policy, responsible for identifying and implementing 'those long-range measures which would be appropriate to the accomplishment of that end'.⁶⁰

In sum, perception is a crucial component in neoclassical realism's framework of analysis. 'Perception' may refer to perception of system polarity in general, perception of the balance of power, perception of other states' power (resources) or perception of other states' intentions. Different actors within the state may have different perceptions, a matter of relevance when analysing domestic constraints in making foreign policy, since divergent threat perceptions entail different reactions.⁶¹

Domestic constraints on foreign policy

Neoclassical realists have primarily approached domestic constraints on foreign policy as restrictions on states' capacity to mobilize and extract resources from society. Moreover, besides studying the state as a collective entity, these students of international politics have focused on constraints and checks and balances within the group of relevant foreign-policy actors, restricting leaders' freedom of action. For neo-classical realists, a state's foreign-policy apparatus sits at the intersection between national and international politics. For that reason, not only its perceptions of systemic factors are relevant, but also the limitations it is subject to at the domestic level. Accordingly, Gideon Rose qualifies 'the strength of a country's state apparatus and its relation to the surrounding society' as the 'second intervening variable' that neoclassical realists incorporate into their analyses.⁶² The argument is essentially based on the idea that no matter what systemic factors are assessed and what needs for balancing are consequently deduced, 'national leaders may not have easy access to a country's total material power resources'.⁶³

The issue of mobilization and resource extraction has occupied a prominent position within the neoclassical realist research agenda. Echoing the work of Raymond Aron,⁶⁴ this problem may be summarized as follows:

Between potential force and actual force the factor of mobilization intervenes. The force available to each political unit in its rivalry with others is proportional not to its potential but to its *potential of mobilization*. The latter, in its turn, depends on many factors which can be reduced to two abstract terms: *capacity* and *will*.⁶⁵

Neoclassical realists have introduced distinctions along the lines of 'national power' versus 'state power' in pursuing Aron's distinction between potential and actual force. Potential force is 'the total human, material and moral resources which each unit possesses *on paper*', whereas actual force is 'those of its forces that are mobilized for the conduct of international relations in wartime or peacetime'.⁶⁶ Fareed Zakaria defines 'state power' as the amalgamation of national power and state strength and concludes that 'the stronger the state, the greater its ability to extract national power for its ends'.⁶⁷

This position relies on the Weberian distinction of the 'state' on the one hand and 'society' on the other. It is this conceptual dichotomy that mobilization-capacity approaches are built upon, that is, the idea that a state's capacity to extract resources from society in order to conduct foreign policy is crucial in assessing both the making of foreign policy and foreign-policy behaviour.⁶⁸ The relevance of that factor results from the fact that '[e]ven when confronted with the same threats, states vary in their ability to mobilize domestic resources for defense'.⁶⁹ Indeed, the problem is not necessarily the lack of will on behalf of the key decision-makers to mobilize and extract national resource but rather the intensity of the resistance to this attempt.⁷⁰

For that reason, it seems almost obvious that 'international power analysis must take into account the ability of governments to extract and direct the resources of their societies'.⁷¹ Much has happened in this strand of neoclassical realism, as a great deal of neoclassical realist scholarship has attempted to come to more specific statements on the matter. A number of works addressed this feature of state power as a determinant of state action while acknowledging a certain trade-off between the term 'mobilization' and extraction: 'mobilization is the creation of wealth and investment in power. Internal extraction is the creation of power and the consumption of wealth'.⁷²

'Mobilization' need not imply material support for a certain policy, but could rather be conceived as shared convictions about that policy's appropriateness. In analysing mobilization, it is thus crucial to bear in

mind that societal or non-material factors matter, as they determine the foreign-policy executive's room for manoeuvre beyond material constraints.

By considering all these factors, neoclassical realists are essentially embracing a unit-level perspective: they look inside states, assuming that the system alone cannot account for their behaviour. That said, state behaviour can naturally have systemic objectives, like counterbalancing moves or expansionist ambitions. It is in that context that Randall Schweller argues that a state's mobilization capacity for the purpose of counterbalancing is determined by four factors: elite consensus, elite cohesion, social cohesion and the degree of regime or government vulnerability. Schweller's model is arguably the most elaborate attempt at a theory of domestic determinants of state behaviour.⁷³

Within the context of these variables, ideology appears as a cross-cutting issue with an impact on all four factors. Ideology thus becomes a factor in 'the ability of great powers to mobilize the resources required to pursue expansionist grand strategies'.⁷⁴ Taliaferro concurs that 'ideology and state-sponsored nationalism are two other determinants of state power', as nationalism tends 'to increase social cohesion and the propensity of individuals to identify with the state, which in turn facilitates leaders' efforts to extract and mobilize resources from society for national security goals'.⁷⁵ Yet 'mobilization capacity is only one important aspect of a realist foreign policy; it alone tells us nothing about how a state chooses to use its enhanced capabilities.... The particular shape that power takes – and the consequences for those that possess it – depends on the ideas that motivate how and when it is exercised'.⁷⁶

If mobilization and resource extraction are crucial in explaining state behaviour, who then exactly is the mobilizing entity, that is, the state?⁷⁷ Neoclassical realism has so far offered a rather coherent list of domestic actors relevant in explaining foreign-policy behaviour. Candidates to be named in response to 'who matters?' are thus many, including the foreign-policy executive with its officials, but also the legislative branch, public opinion and the media, economic actors and organized interest and pressure groups. Yet the most important actors are those responsible and accountable for actual decision-making. Among those entities, the 'state' as distinguished from 'society' holds a special position.⁷⁸

The foreign-policy executive is the embodiment of the state, or sovereign, who, in the words of Thomas Hobbes, 'may use the strength and means of them all, he shall think expedient, for their peace and common defence'.⁷⁹ This pivotal intra-state entity possesses superior and 'privileged access to information about international threats, opportunities, and national capabilities. Consequently, it is best positioned to respond to international exigencies as the relative distribution of power in the international system requires'.⁸⁰ Following that line of argument, Norrin

Ripsman ascribes different roles and motives to the foreign-policy executive on the one hand and other domestic actors on the other hand: 'the executive, aware as it is of all relevant information available on international strategic affairs, determines its preferences largely in accordance with international constraints and incentives'; domestic actors other than the executive, in turn, are said to be 'primarily motivated by personal, parochial, or domestic politic motivations', not least the preservation of their own power.⁸¹ In this respect, the final weeks of the 2002 German election campaign are highly illustrative, as Germany's potential participation in the US-led Iraq war became one – if not the – defining matter for the German public, which in turn put heavy strain on the transatlantic partnership.⁸² Swedish non-alignment policies during the Cold War may serve as a longer-lasting example: by promoting a discourse of non-alignment equalling moral goodness, Swedish governments of all colours found themselves bereft of alignment options to this day, due to a strong anti-NATO public opinion.⁸³

Ripsman's simplified assumption does not escape criticism; other neoclassical realists therefore work according to slightly different assumptions. Lobell, for example, separates societal leaders from the foreign-policy executive, without sharing the assertion that society is necessarily ignorant or uninterested in international affairs. Societal leaders may be either 'nationalist' or 'internationalist', respectively inward-looking or outward-looking. Lobell's societal leaders respond to events taking place outside the domestic political system they operate in, whereas Ripsman argues that societal elites essentially have a domestic focus. Ripsman's societal elites consequently are 'far more likely to influence the timing and style of a state's national security policies than the definition of the national interest'.⁸⁴

The ability to influence leaders' prospects of staying in power is the crucial leeway for societal groups, and moreover determines the kind of groups that should be expected to have the most influence, for the simple reason that they can reward or punish leaders in terms of voting behaviour.⁸⁵ In addition to electoral payoff, 'political leaders are also interested in those domestic actors who can provide resources that can be used either to retain power or, in cases of corrupt regimes, to line their pockets'.⁸⁶

Concluding remarks and avenues for further research

This chapter has offered an overview of the external and unit-level determinants of state behaviour identified by neoclassical realists. In filtering systemic constraints, states are constrained by a variety of domestic factors, and their assessment of systemic conditions is contingent on

perceptions. Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro claim to have 'elucidated the view of the state that unites [the] diverse strands' of neoclassical realism, so that it is now time to move ahead.⁸⁷ Indeed, neoclassical realists are right to argue that they managed to identify intervening variables that act as determinants of state behaviour beyond, or complementary to, constraints imposed by anarchy.

In that sense, neoclassical realism certainly has made progress towards becoming a full-fledged research framework. However, in explaining foreign-policy outcomes, neoclassical realism must be able to say something not only about the assessment of threats and systemic factors in general, but also about the way in which such assessments add up to decision-making with regard to states' ability to mobilize and foreign-policy outputs. It is therefore increasingly important to come to terms with the definition of relevant intervening variables and focus on theories of how these interact. The perhaps biggest challenge ahead, therefore, is the construction of a model which incorporates both strands discussed above – perceptions and domestic constraints – and explicitly describes which factor becomes more influential under what circumstances. For example, when will policy-makers attribute greater weight to practical economic mobilization challenges rather than political or societal opposition? Or under what circumstances do international institutions play a greater or lesser role in strategic formulation of foreign and security policies?

Lobell *et al.* sought to present a broad conditional description in order to bridge the domestic–systemic divide, but they did not tackle the specific variables they previously identified (ideology, identity, resource mobilization, threat perception, public opinion, international institutions etc.).⁸⁸ Only such an inclusive model will, in the long run, free neoclassical realism from the accusation of being an *ad hoc* approach, incorporating domestic variables as needed, falling in the trap of merely dealing with *sui generis* case studies. If the emerging tradition is to assert itself as an established research framework, it must propose generalizable theories with explanatory power beyond single cases, but also beyond the aspiration to prove that specific variables matter. How exactly these variables matter and why is therefore the key question for future neoclassical realist research. If neoclassical realists fail to do so, 'they might find themselves bumping into chastened *Innenpolitikers* coming from the other direction',⁸⁹ who eventually came to discover that systemic conditions do matter. For these scholars, neoclassical realism may serve as the logical pathway to realism – clearly another of the school's strengths.

Yet, although neorealism may be criticized for its radical emphasis on parsimony, exaggerations in the opposite direction are hardly helpful either. This is nonetheless problematic, since neoclassical realism lacks a coherent understanding of state objectives, which could serve as an

ordering element in the bazaar of intervening variables other than states' self-preservation.⁹⁰ Neoclassical realists should not forget the warning example of a long-forgotten (at least outside Germany) attempt at establishing a German version of 'complex neorealism', essentially based on 'constellation analysis' and attempting to take the full complexity of making foreign policy into account – an approach that arguably never asserted itself precisely because of the sheer number of variables.⁹¹ At the same time, there is a rich European tradition of broadly realist approaches that may well feed into the further development of neoclassical realism.

After a phase of exploring the content of the black box, therefore, the time has now come for neoclassical realism to bring some order to all the relevant variables identified. First and foremost, neoclassical realism needs to establish a hierarchy of intervening variables and specify the conditions under which they can be expected to play more or less dominant roles. So far, neoclassical realists cannot say which variables matter most and which matter less in explaining state behaviour. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore this matter fully, but let us describe in some broad strokes the conditions under which certain variables have greater weight than others.⁹²

First, the regime type, or the structure of the decision-making entity, has immense influence on the making of foreign policy. Democratic regimes are considered more sensitive to the influence of public opinion, political opposition and legal constraints (i.e. domestic structural determinants).⁹³ The sources of state power are more dispersed and there are more than a few actors involved in the actual policy-making process. Furthermore, their role in policy-making may be anchored in existing procedural mechanisms or even protected by certain laws or a constitution. Non-democratic or authoritarian regimes, on the other hand, tend to be highly centralist in nature and less sensitive to domestic opposition and therefore more flexible in their policy choices.⁹⁴

Second, the severity of the emerging challenge and its possible ramifications for the wellbeing of the state or its key national interests largely determine the duration of the policy-making process. When decisions have to be taken immediately, most often procedural and structural considerations are marginalized, even in well established democratic regimes. Public opinion is taken for granted or at least expected to be sympathetic *ex post* fact, and political or judicial support is provided to the leadership rather freehandedly. As British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher explained her role in managing the Falkland crisis:

The idea that you could run things competently by having everything [brought] to Cabinet is nonsense. There are twenty-one members of Cabinet. On one issue if they all speak two minutes that's forty-two minutes. It's absolutely ridiculous [to think] that you can do things that way.⁹⁵

Third, the managerial style of the key decision-maker(s) is relevant.⁹⁶ Centralist leaders may possess the capacity to motivate or manipulate their subordinates or colleagues according to their personal understanding of the situation and thus eliminate any opposition or at least considerably lessen anticipated friction.⁹⁷ Others may be flexible and inclined to facilitate opposition or completely abstain from confronting domestic opposition rather than challenging it. Some may be more prone to take risks while others may refrain from doing so.⁹⁸ Furthermore, time, defined in terms of electoral cycles in democratic regimes, should also be considered, since it influences decision-makers in their position as part of a hierarchical or procedural arrangement.⁹⁹

Yet bringing some order and hierarchies into the menu of intervening variables is not the only task left for future neoclassical realist research on the determinants of state behaviour. What essentially characterizes realist thinking is the strategic element, the assumption that states' main business is 'statecraft', 'the construction of strategies for securing the national interest in the international arena, as well as the execution of these strategies by diplomats'.¹⁰⁰ It is therefore remarkable that most neoclassical realists dodge the question of what states actually want, aside from basic security.¹⁰¹ Much of their work focuses on the circumstances under which foreign-policy decision-making occurs. The objectives states pursue, however, remain underexplored. A sympathetic observer, and especially an observer who buys into the assertion that neoclassical realism is the logical continuation of neorealism, will admit that this is because neoclassical realism considers *all* state objectives as given – but such an assumption remains highly questionable.¹⁰² Why this is so remains an intriguing question, but it may be assumed that one explanation is the avalanche of complexity that would arise from taking a classical realist definition of state objectives seriously, allowing for a host of motives and ends of statecraft.

As a matter of fact, although state behaviour is widely accepted as neoclassical realism's *dependent* variable, a concise definition of state behaviour remains to be found. It therefore seems inevitable that a deeper understanding and better conceptualizations of state motives and objectives are required if neoclassical realism is to consolidate its status as an influential theory of international relations and foreign policy. Neoclassical realism cannot remain a theory accounting for maladaptation and deviation from neorealist expectations, and it cannot merely be concerned with states' reactive behaviour, as a focus on balancing (or underbalancing) moves implies. That neoclassical realism can account for balancing moves (or their absence) has been demonstrated on many occasions, even leading to the contention that '[n]eoclassical realism can explain states' abilities to adapt to changes in the international environment through internal balancing better than Waltz' balance of power

theory can'.¹⁰³ It also seems that neoclassical realism is more than capable of accounting for divergence in balancing patterns, since it can explain how different actors similarly perceive emerging threats or how actors do not correspond to the same interpretation and thus clarify why certain coalitions are built and others are not. For example, different values of resource extraction and threat perception can explain the different responses to the ascendancy of the United States in the post-Cold War era *and* the lack of effective counterbalancing the rise of Nazi Germany and imperialist Japan through alliance-building in the inter-war period.¹⁰⁴

To sum up, what follows for future neoclassical realist research is that a considerable number of answers to relevant questions remain to be found. First and foremost, neoclassical realists need to reconsider the question of states' objectives, as this matter has wide ramifications for any theory of foreign policy. Second, neoclassical realism needs to establish a hierarchy of variables, that is, to attain a scaling of factors in terms of their relevance in explaining foreign-policy behaviour. Third, neoclassical realism needs to come to terms with its relationship to structural realism: is it merely an extension of neorealism or does its added-value lie beyond Waltz's theory of international politics? All these matters do not exclusively pertain to the question of determinants of state behaviour, yet they are so closely interlinked that no neoclassical realist theory of foreign policy is conceivable without these issues being resolved.

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Raymond Aron: a neoclassical realist before the term existed?

Dario Battistella

Acknowledged by Stanley Hoffmann, but also by Hans Morgenthau, Hedley Bull, Kenneth Waltz and Robert Gilpin, as a major contribution to international relations, Raymond Aron's work has progressively been neglected since Aron's death in 1983. Until the 1970s, however, Aron was ranked among the most important international relations scholars, and his *Peace and War* was considered to be one of the most influential publications in the field.¹ This is in sharp contrast to what is observable today: Aron seems to have fallen into oblivion, both in teaching and in advanced scholarship – not least among colleagues interested in the same matters: the causes of peace and war and the dynamics of international stability or the foreign-policy behaviour of great powers. Perhaps most remarkable, North American neoclassical realists almost completely ignore the one scholar who could easily be labelled a neo-classical realist ahead of his time. The aim of this chapter is to show that this neglect is explicable but nonetheless unfortunate. Indeed, seen from the perspective of contemporary neoclassical realism, Aron should be considered a neoclassical realist before the term existed.

First of all, I will analyse the causes of Aron's fall into oblivion. The reasons have arguably to be looked for in the evolution of international relations as a discipline. A closer look at the criticism raised against Aron reveals that he was a victim, via Waltz's neorealism, of the impact of the behaviourist revolution on realism. By postulating that no general theory of international relations is possible, because states' foreign policy is fundamentally undetermined, Aron sided with the 'traditional' approach to international relations during the second great debate. Further, he also defended an 'understanding from within' approach to international actions instead of an 'outside' way of accounting for foreign-policy behaviour, and was therefore marginalized by mainstream scholars convinced of the possibility of successfully applying the explanatory epistemology prevailing in natural science.

I will go on to argue that Aron's sinking into oblivion is regrettable in light of post-Waltzian neoclassical realists' ambition to overcome Waltz's major dead end, namely his exclusive focus on recurrent international outcomes and his neglect of concrete foreign-policy behaviour. I will recall Aron's assumptions and hypotheses in order to show that he shared many points with Morgenthau's classical realism, while also anticipating Waltz's neorealism. I will then compare methodological and ontological commonalities with neoclassical realism as summed up by Gideon Rose and Steven Lobell, Norrin Ripsman and Jeffrey Taliaferro. Concerning methodology, neoclassical realists introduce intervening variables in order to account for dependent variables. In doing so they actually follow Aron, who refused to discriminate systematically between exogenous and endogenous variables. Neoclassical realists assert that states' foreign-policy behaviour is shaped both by the distribution of power in the international system and by the domestic perception(s) of this distribution. Aron's historical sociology of foreign-policy behaviour occupies a comparable *via media* between neorealists' focus on system-level factors and liberals' privileging of the actor level, but also contains implicit constructivist elements, recalling neoclassical realists' cognitivism.

For all the reasons detailed below, I will conclude that neoclassical realists ought to end their cold-shouldering of Aron and instead embrace his legacy as a treasure trove invaluable for the future development of the neoclassical realist paradigm of international relations.

Aron's career in international relations: from recognition to oblivion

During his lifetime, Raymond Aron (1905–83) was acknowledged as an important scholar within the field of international relations, both in France² and in the discipline's modern homelands, that is, Britain and the United States. When *Peace and War* first came out (in French) in 1962, it was received with enthusiasm by leading scholars of the time: Stanley Hoffmann,³ Robert Tucker⁴ and also Hans Morgenthau⁵ praised the work.

Aron's ideas have made it into the body of standard international relations literature; Aron is quoted favourably by scholars like Hedley Bull⁶ and Robert Gilpin.⁷ Kenneth Waltz of course did not borrow from Aron's writings, but felt compelled systematically to distinguish his approach from Aron's, thus indirectly acknowledging Aron's crucial impact. In his *Theory of International Politics* he notably cites Aron's approach as an example of the reductionist theories he rejects, making Aron as important a target as Morgenthau in his plea for 'neorealist theory' and against 'realist thought'.⁸

Things radically changed from the 1980s onwards. Handbooks (initially) published earlier regularly referred to Aron in their chapters dealing with the realist paradigm.⁹ More recent textbooks¹⁰ and readers,¹¹ in contrast, no longer contain substantial parts dedicated to Raymond Aron – or, indeed, none at all.

Strangest, though, is the fact that Aron is neglected by scholars concerned with the realist paradigm, be they sympathetic or critical. Granted, French-trained Stefano Guzzini regularly refers to Aron,¹² as does Michael Doyle.¹³ These scholars are, however, the exception. In his study of ‘realist thought from Weber to Kissinger’, Michael Smith admittedly quotes Aron, but does not devote a chapter to him;¹⁴ Jack Donnelly¹⁵ does not allude to him even once. Aron is generally ignored by contemporary mainstream realists eager to ‘restate and renew’ the realist paradigm,¹⁶ as well as by contemporary reflectivist realists fond of classical authors.¹⁷ North American neoclassical realists such as Thomas Christensen, Fareed Zakaria and Jeffrey Taliaferro never refer to Aron’s analyses in their respective works;¹⁸ William Wohlforth and Randall Schweller¹⁹ merely allude to him once or twice;²⁰ and the contributors to the volume edited by Steven Lobell, Norrin Ripsman and Jeffrey Taliaferro never quote him, although his name appears in the editors’ introductory chapter.²¹ The best illustration of the phenomenon, however, is the fact that the 2003 US edition of *Peace and War*²² is edited by a political theorist and an editor of a magazine on urban affairs rather than by international relations scholars.²³ It is, though, contemporary neoclassical realists’ neglect of Aron that seems especially odd in light of the current interest in rekindling the broader realist tradition.

Historical sociology versus scientific theory: the reason why Aron’s neglect is not so strange

As I shall argue, Aron’s fall into oblivion is due to the dissatisfaction engendered by his scepticism towards the possibility of developing a pure theory of international relations. For a professional guild striving to develop *a* theory of international relations, this scepticism can hardly be welcome.

And, indeed, the criticism of Aron indicates that he was a victim, both directly and via Waltz’s neorealism, of the behavioural revolution’s impact on the field. Aron claimed that the fundamentally undetermined nature of states’ foreign policy can at best be the object of historical sociology but not of – positivist – scientific theory. He stuck to the traditional approach to international relations, that was defended by Hedley Bull during the discipline’s second great debate.²⁴ Aron favoured ‘understanding from within’ in international actions, instead of an ‘outside in’

way accounting for foreign-policy behaviour. He argued in favour of an interpretative understanding of international actions, stressed the contingency of human decisions and looked for the meanings social actors themselves ascribe to their actions. In other words, he differed from the majority of mainstream scholars, who were convinced of the possibility of successfully applying in international relations the explanatory conception of theory prevailing in natural science.

Striving to understand the implicit logic of relations among organized communities, Aron pursued the same objective as any other international relations scholar. He was not a historian, describing and narrating, but a scholar convinced of the possibility and necessity of theoretical undertakings. However, he was a specific kind of theorist, eager to plunge theory into history and submit general concepts to the critical touchstone of historical records. In other words, he did not deny the possibility of theorizing in international relations, but was convinced that a theory's mission was both to complement and to be inserted into his so-called 'historical sociology' of international relations. Aron underlined that theoretical undertakings in international relations as a social, rather than a natural, science could not go much beyond a 'conceptualization' aimed at defining 'the essential features of a sub-system' and providing 'a list of the main variables', which might suggest 'certain hypotheses about the operation of the sub-system', while always remembering that international systems, as social systems, were by essence indefinite. There can, therefore, be no general theory of international relations comparable to economic theory, because international relations are not governed by universal laws. Whereas economists are right to postulate that economic actors indeed pursue one and the same objective (the maximization of profit), international relations scholars deal with states' fundamentally undetermined foreign-policy behaviour. At the system level of analysis, he thought it was impossible to discriminate between 'exogenous and endogenous variables': given the permanent interaction of the international system with all the (sub-)systems of social relations, foreign-policy actions and decisions are shaped by factors both political and non-political (economic, ideological, cultural). At the level of analysis of the unitary state actor, Aron refused to postulate the rationality of the decision-making process, because states(men) behave only more or less reasonably – not necessarily rationally – when aiming to obtain power, security or prestige. Consequently, he posited that a theorist, in order to comprehend the intelligible structure of states' behaviour on the international scene, has to make reference to the meaning that agents give to the actions they undertake.

Concerning this Weberian-inspired interpretative approach to foreign policy, Aron never claimed that 'sociological understanding is *limited* to the discovery of subjective meanings of behaviour (or to the formulation

and clarification of subjective meanings only dimly perceived by the agents'.²⁵ He just postulated that the logic of states' behaviour cannot be disentangled from their self-understood specific characteristics. Aron thus refused to start either from general concepts, such as Morgenthau's national interest defined as power, or from hypothetico-deductive systems, such as game theory, 'whose relationships between terms or variables are most often given a mathematical form'.²⁶ Convinced of the difficulty of separating regular recurrences from randomness in international politics, and sceptical towards deterministic and monistic theses (he denied the possibility of explaining complex phenomena such as foreign-policy decisions through a single factor), he was convinced that abandoning actors' perspectives and searching for the reasons for an event's occurrence in factors of which the actors themselves were wholly unaware 'risks distorting the event by ascribing to them mechanistic principles of behaviour'.²⁷ Aron therefore rejected any science that 'gives to the forms of behaviour it studies explanations *contrary* to or *divorced* from the meaning understood by the participants'.²⁸

Throughout Aron's lifetime, from Morgenthau to Waltz via the behaviourists, the very aim of a majority of international relations scholars (convinced of the possibility of a cumulative scientific undertaking in the domain of the social sciences) was precisely to 'present *a* theory of international politics',²⁹ to 'aspire to a *science* of (international) politics',³⁰ and to 'construct *a* theory of international politics that remedies the defects of present theories'.³¹ All these authors shared the same epistemological postulates: eager to 'go beyond the familiar understanding [*Verstehen*] of the state of mind of actors whose behaviour [they] want[ed] to describe and explain',³² they adopted 'the "outside"-way of accounting for behaviour modelled on the methods of natural science and usually described as a search for [objective] causes',³³ convinced as they were of their ability to account for an actor's thoughts and actions 'perhaps better than he, the actor on the political scene, does himself'.³⁴

Consequently, the criticism of Aron focused on his decision not to aim to develop a general theory of international politics, with this theory being based on the epistemological bedrock assumptions of the explanatory conception of theory pervasive in natural science.

Hence in his review of *Peace and War*, Morgenthau wrote that Aron's 'ambitious conceptual and theoretical framework ... is essentially the frosting on the cake, a tribute to intellectual fashion rather than a contribution the advancement of theoretical knowledge'.³⁵ Behaviourists refined and magnified the criticism. In 1969 Oran Young acknowledged Aron's refusal of the dominant (economists') hypothetico-deductive model of science – as he did himself – but nonetheless accused him of never making 'any really serious attempts to realise the objective of deductive theory in his *magnus opus*'. Considering Aron's historical

sociology to be the equivalent of empirico-inductive methodology, he furthermore stated that 'once again, the results are disappointing', because Aron 'fails for the most part to abide by even the most basic rules of the empirical procedure'. Young went so far as to deny that there was anything of interest in Aron's willingness to improve the concepts used within the field: in his view, concepts such as 'homogeneous' and 'heterogeneous' systems are intrinsically imprecise and ambiguous, vague and open-ended, particularly since 'Aron denies the possibility of making a clear-cut distinction between independent and dependent variables'. Young considered *Peace and War* to be an 'exercise in contemporary history' or, worse, 'an exercise in high-class political commentary' rather than 'an outstanding contribution to the literature on international relations' and eventually hoped that 'Aron – like Jonah – [would] repent [and] abandon his unhappy sojourn into the realm of theory'.³⁶

Some fifteen years later, Urs Luterbacher, an adherent of formal and quantitative methods in the study of arms races, considered Aron to be a both 'accomplished' and 'frustrated commentator'. Recalling that past French authors such as Quesnay, Turgot and Condorcet had defended the application of scientific methods like probability theory to economics or political science, Luterbacher correctly ascribed Aron's abandonment of Walras's, Pareto's or Durkheim's legacy to the influence German sociologists exercised over him (notably Dilthey, Rickert, Simmel and Weber, whom he had discovered during his stay in Germany).³⁷ But instead of considering the potential usefulness of a controversial debate of the conception of theory in social science defended by those German sociologists, Luterbacher accused them of insisting 'on a radical methodological division between natural and social sciences and on the crucial importance of the historical context for the process of explaining social phenomena'.³⁸ Luterbacher eventually inferred that Aron's philosophical stance – which underpinned his historical sociology of international politics and led him to claim that international political stakes and issues could not be rigorously quantified – was sceptical, eclectic and, indeed, relativist.

Finally, Kenneth Waltz, seeking to escape the criticism behaviourists raised against classical realists, drove the point home within realism. He started his 1990 article 'Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory' with the idea that a parallel exists between the two 'related' disciplinary fields of economics and international politics. Waltz believed that looking at the 'comparable difficulties' economics 'surmounted' would be 'instructive' to anyone eager to develop a general theory of international politics. He explicitly accused 'traditional' realists of denying the possibility of doing in the field of international politics what physiocrats had done in economics. Concerning Aron, he rejected one after another of the French scholar's various arguments in favour of the fundamentally contingent

character of any historical experience. For Waltz, the complexity of international politics, the plurality of states' aims and the impossibility of discriminating between domestic and systemic variables do not 'work against theory. Rather, theory is a means of dealing with complexity' and in order to do so, it has to make 'drastically simplified ... assumptions about states' motivations'. As for the nonexistence in international politics of 'accountable identities' (such as 'investment equals savings' in economics), the absence of any mechanism likely to restore a disrupted equilibrium, and the impossibility of predicting and controlling international politics, he considered them to be 'not impediments to the construction of theory, but to its application and testing'.³⁹

Given Waltz's authority in the field of international relations, his attack on Aron had a decisive impact on subsequent generations of scholars. Aron has since become a neglected theorist; his 'theory no longer engenders critical scholarly debate'.⁴⁰ He came to be considered 'anti-scientific',⁴¹ because he challenged the widely held idea that the social sciences can – or at least should strive to – achieve the sort of accuracy and validity obtained by the natural sciences.

Yet his critics were unfair; their treatment of him verges on the excommunication of an ideological enemy rather than a refutation of a scientific opponent. To say the least, they erred through ignorance of the inherently plural and controversial nature of theoretical undertakings in social science in general and international relations in particular. They failed 'to realize or to appreciate that Aron's understanding of theory emerged from and [was] grounded upon a trenchant philosophical investigation of history and historical understanding'.⁴² Aron was thus as 'scientific' as his critics; he just happened not to share the same conception of theory in social science. The important point, however, is that Waltz's negative attitude led him, as well as his successors, to focus exclusively on what he considered to be Aron's epistemological shortcomings and thus to miss his substantive analyses.

Aron's theory, a *via media* between classical realism and neorealism

Aron shares important features with both classical realists and neorealists. He shares classical realism's tragic vision of international relations as a never ending story of competitive power politics opposing collective units in an all-encompassing state of war without any possibility of profound change, authentic progress or genuine learning. According to Morgenthau, 'the struggle for power is universal in time and space', due to human nature.⁴³ Aron, in turn, writes that 'the world [is] what it is'.⁴⁴ Although he does not explicitly hinge his approach on a Hobbesian

conception of human nature, he considers 'the constant data of ... human nature' to be one of the two 'structural conditions for [the] hostility' characterizing international relations, besides the 'constant data of international society'.⁴⁵

The postulate of an inherently conflicting character of international politics constitutes the second common point with classical realists. Just as major states are 'continuously preparing for, actively involved in, or recovering from organised violence in the form of war' for Morgenthau,⁴⁶ 'war is to be found throughout all history and all civilizations' according to Aron.⁴⁷ Even when wars do not break out, the Hobbesian state of war prevails for Aron: 'Relations among states involve, in essence, the alternatives of war and peace'; they 'take place within the shadow of war'; peace is a mere truce, that is to say 'the more or less lasting suspension of violent modes of rivalry between political units ... within the shadow of past battles and in the fear or expectation of future ones'.⁴⁸ The reason for this state of war is to be found in the nature of international politics, by definition synonymous with power politics according to both Morgenthau and Aron. Aron's claim that 'foreign policy, in and of itself, is power politics', since 'political units seek to impose their will upon each other',⁴⁹ sounds like an echo of Morgenthau's statement that 'international politics is of necessity power politics'.⁵⁰

Finally, both share the same Weberian, relational definition of power. While Morgenthau defines power as 'a man's control over the minds and actions of other men',⁵¹ Aron defines it as 'the capacities of acting upon each other possessed by the political units'.⁵² The two establish fairly comparable lists of the elements of power. Morgenthau enumerates nine elements: geography, natural resources, industrial capacity, military preparedness, population, national character, national morale, quality of diplomacy and the quality of government.⁵³ Aron distinguishes three sets of elements: 'milieu, resources, collective action'.⁵⁴ These three are respectively synonymous with: the space occupied by the political units; the available materials and people, as well as the techniques by which these materials and people can be transformed into weapons and soldiers; and a state's collective capacity for action, including the organization of the army, the discipline of the combatants, the quality of civil and military command, and the solidarity of the citizens during an armed conflict.

Admittedly, Aron was no offensive realist considering that power was the only objective pursued by states in their interactions with each other. Whereas Morgenthau asserts that 'power is always the immediate aim', whether states may ultimately look for freedom, security, prosperity or power itself,⁵⁵ Aron posits that power is merely one aim besides the two other objectives pursued by states, namely security and glory.⁵⁶ He consequently refuses to consider Morgenthau's concept of national interest defined in terms of power as 'the main signpost helping political realism

to find its way through the landscape of international politics', which 'provides for rational discipline in action and creates that astounding continuity in foreign policy which makes American, British, or Russian foreign policy appear as an intelligible, rational, continuum'.⁵⁷ Criticizing Morgenthau without naming him, Aron thinks it impossible to find

the equivalent of the rational goal of sport or economics for international relations.... A single imperative, national interest, simply proclaims the theoretician, ... as if adding the adjective 'national' to the concept of interest were enough to make it unequivocal.... The national interest cannot be the object of a rational determination.... The plurality of aims at which a political unit may aim ... makes the national interest an object of study, not a criterion of action.⁵⁸

Aron also parts company with Morgenthau by underlining the specificity of the power political game taking place internationally compared with domestic power politics. For Morgenthau, there is no essential difference between domestic and international politics, since human nature is characterized by an unceasing lust for power, which is at the root of political and social life in general. Following Reinhold Niebuhr and Edward Carr, he postulated that 'the essence of international politics is identical with its domestic counterpart', given that 'both ... are a struggle for power modified *only* by the different conditions under which this struggle takes place in the domestic and in the international spheres'.⁵⁹ Aron, in contrast, explicitly underscores the radical specificity of international politics due to the anarchical international system. Combining Hobbes and Weber, he writes that the specific quality of international relations consists in the state of anarchy synonymous with a state of war, since, in modern civilizations, international relations are the only social relations characterized by

the legitimacy or legality of the use of military force.... Max Weber defined the state as a 'monopoly of legitimate violence'. Let us say that international society is characterised by 'the absence of an entity that holds a monopoly of legitimate violence'.⁶⁰

He offers this definition as an answer to whether international politics could be the object of a theoretical study: 'States have not emerged, in their mutual relations, from the state of nature. There would be no theory of international relations if they had'.⁶¹

This, however, is exactly what Waltz expects from theory: 'Theory becomes possible only if various objects and processes, movements and events, acts and interactions, are viewed as a domain that can be studied in its own right'.⁶² In other words, Aron's accentuation of the radical difference between the domestic and the international sphere

perfectly anticipated the bedrock assumption of neorealists' separating 'centralized and hierarchic ... domestic systems' from 'decentralized and anarchic ... international systems'.⁶³ Waltz thus merely repeats what Aron had written a generation before:

States, in our age as during the preceding centuries, reserve the right to make autonomous decisions, including the decisions of peace and war... If we call power politics the peaceful or belligerent relations between states which acknowledge neither law nor arbitrator and attempt to constrain, seduce and convince each other, the politics of our period conforms more than ever to this age-old model.⁶⁴

Beyond any doubt, Aron's analysis constitutes what Waltz calls a 'third image' type of analysis: by writing that 'the political units ... are rivals by the very fact that they are autonomous', by stressing that each political unit, 'in the last analysis, can count only on itself', and by underlining that the international game is 'a struggle in which the player who abides by the rule runs the risk of being victimized by his – relative – morality',⁶⁵ Aron's conception is quite obviously reminiscent of Rousseau's stag hunt analogy, the very one Waltz uses when ascribing states' self-help behaviour to the anarchical structure of the international system.⁶⁶

In sum, Waltz thus exaggerates when he considers Aron's approach to international politics to be a reductionist theory, accounting for 'international outcomes through elements and combinations of elements located at national or sub-national levels'.⁶⁷

Concerning the relative importance of system-level versus unit-level factors, Aron posited that the anarchical setting of the international scene was coupled with an 'oligopolistic structure', since 'in each period, the principal actors have determined the system more than they have been determined by it' and 'a change of regime within one of the chief powers suffices to change the style and sometimes the course of international relations'.⁶⁸ This statement is hardly different from Waltz's distinction between anarchy as the ordering principle of an international system and the principle of unequal distribution of capabilities across the system's units. When Aron asserts that he cannot discriminate between exogenous and endogenous variables, he alludes to the difficulty of establishing univocal causality from systemic factors to unit-level behaviour precisely because major actors as much shape the system as they are determined by it. Concerning the relative impact of material versus ideational determinants of states' behaviour, while acknowledging that 'the first characteristic of an international system is the configuration of the relation of forces', Aron also writes that 'the conduct of states towards each other is not controlled by the relation of forces alone: ideas and emotions influence the decisions of the actors'.⁶⁹ This is the second dimension of Aron's sociological approach: despite the fact that international politics and

domestic politics take place in distinct settings, foreign-policy decisions are co-determined by the domestic sphere, in which ideological debates matter as much as economic or social contentions.

Aron then combined his two postulates: given that the concrete working of the international system is determined by its major powers, and given that the major powers are anything but similar,⁷⁰ it is the 'homogeneous' versus 'heterogeneous' nature of the international system that ultimately accounts for international political outcomes at the system level and for foreign-policy behaviour at the actor level. Aron considers a homogeneous system, 'in which states belong to the same type and obey the same conception of policy', to be stable. In such a system, decision-makers in major powers are satisfied with the existing status quo and do not seek to overthrow it. On the contrary, a heterogeneous system, 'in which states are organized according to different principles and appeal to contradictory values',⁷¹ is prone to war because statesmen may consider it profitable to attempt to change the existing order.

It is understandable that international relations scholars seeking theoretical parsimony may, at best, consider such an approach 'eclectic':⁷² by combining a holistic with an individualistic perspective on the agent–structure problem, and by refusing to choose between an exclusively materialistic or idealistic ontology, Aron indeed rejects the traditional hierarchy between 'primary' and 'secondary'⁷³ factors favoured by theorists postulating the possibility of a 'scientific' approach to international politics. Yet those scholars who consider realism 'a philosophical disposition and a set of assumptions about the world rather than ... in any strict sense a "scientific" theory'⁷⁴ should rather welcome Aron's theoretical pluralism as a relevant and original approach, and as a refuge for their dissatisfaction 'with theoretical explanations that at once are too far removed from the texture of political life and do not seem sensitive enough to capture diverse historical factors influencing international politics'.⁷⁵ Neoclassical realists arguably belong to this latter category.

Aron, the forgotten founding father of neoclassical realism

Aron was rejected by Waltz because of his refusal to sacrifice the complexity of international life for the sake of parsimony. At the same time, neoclassical realists are ill at ease with Waltz's conception of a theory as being, 'after all, mostly omissions'.⁷⁶ The conclusion should be that there are obvious parallels between Aron and contemporary neoclassical realists, not least regarding the epistemological dimension. Just as Aron's method occupied a *via media* between the empirical description proposed by historians of international politics and the mathematical models behaviourists favour, 'neoclassical realists think that neither

spare game-theoretic modelling nor pure thick description are good approaches to foreign policy analysis'.⁷⁷

First, neoclassical realists' willingness to account for particular foreign-policy outcomes rather than for recurrent patterns of behaviour is tantamount to reclaiming 'the rich variety and wondrous complexity of international life'.⁷⁸ By asserting that 'understanding the links between power and policy requires close examination of the contexts within which foreign policies are formulated and implemented',⁷⁹ neoclassical realists implicitly adhere to the basic postulate of Aron's historical sociology:

the course of international relations [is] eminently historical, in all senses of the term: its changes are incessant; its systems are diverse and fragile; it is affected by all economic, technical, and moral transformations; decisions made by one man or several men put millions of men into action and launch irreversible changes.⁸⁰

Second, neoclassical realists' eagerness to take into account domestic actors' perceptions and motives guiding foreign-policy decisions exactly recalls what Waltz accused Aron of:

When Aron and other traditionalists insist that theorists' categories be consonant with actors' motives and perceptions, they are affirming the pre-eminently behavioural logic that their inquiries follow. The characteristics and the interactions of behavioural units are taken to be direct causes of political events.⁸¹

Third, the neoclassical realist distinction between independent – systemic – and intervening – domestic – variables is a kind of compromise, reached in order to escape the opposition of the two contending claims that it is (Waltz) or is not (Aron) possible to discriminate between endogenous and exogenous variables.

Moreover, the 'middle ground'⁸² neoclassical realism occupies between structural realists, liberals and social constructivists is comparable to Aron's position. For Gideon Rose, neoclassical realists postulate that:

the scope and ambition of a country's foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power capabilities.... They argue further, however, that the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level.⁸³

Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro defend the same idea, stating that neoclassical realism aims 'to explain why, how, and under what conditions the internal characteristics of states ... intervene between the leaders'

assessment of international threats and opportunities and the actual diplomatic, military, and foreign economic policies those leaders pursue'.⁸⁴ In other words, in explaining a state's foreign policy, neoclassical realists combine a primarily realist postulate – states undertake the foreign policy their relative power permits them to conduct – with a touch of liberalism, or pluralism, in their analyses. They refuse to 'black-box' the state and they take into account the personality and perceptions of individual actors, thus agreeing to some extent with Andrew Moravcsik, who argues that a state's foreign policy is 'constrained by the underlying identities, interests, and power of individuals and groups (inside and outside the state apparatus) who constantly pressure the central decision makers to pursue policies consistent with their preferences'.⁸⁵ Neoclassical realists nevertheless postulate the relative autonomy of national makers of foreign policy, and consider the 'national security executive, comprised of the head of government and the ministers and officials charged with making foreign security policy' and 'sitting at the juncture of the state and the international system, with access to privileged information from the state's politico-military apparatus', to be 'best equipped to perceive systemic constraints and deduce the national interest'.⁸⁶

Aron's approach is essentially similar. His basically realist conception of foreign policy is complemented by elements pertaining to the liberal approach to international politics, with a view to underlining the crucial role of a statesman in the implementation of foreign policy. After repeating that 'the distribution of forces is *one* of the causes'⁸⁷ that determine state behaviour, Aron recalls the role of a state's domestic regime defining its national interest. He notably writes that the national interest cannot be defined without reference to 'the internal regime, the aspirations characteristic of the different classes, the political ideal of the state',⁸⁸ prefiguring the neoclassical claim that the executive has 'to bargain with domestic actors ... in order to enact policy and extract resources to implement policy choices'.⁸⁹ However, he also underlines that 'the national interest is not reducible to private interests', as 'it reminds present-day leaders that security and greatness of the state must be the objectives of diplomatic man, whatever their ideology [*sic*]'⁹⁰ – an idea comparable to the neoclassical assumption that states are not

simply aggregating the demands of different societal interest groups or economic classes. Rather, leaders define the 'national interests' and conduct foreign policy based upon their assessment of relative power and other states' intentions, but always subject to domestic constraints.⁹¹

And just as neoclassical realists argue that there is no immediate or perfect transmission belt linking material capabilities to foreign-policy behaviour and that, consequently, the power that can be brought to bear

in the pursuit of foreign-policy goals is a function of what the state can extract from society, Aron recalls the role of the statesman in mobilizing society's resources. He underlines (thanks to the subtleties of the French language) the distinction between power within a political unit – *pouvoir* – and the power of a political unit – *puissance*:

The political unit ... can act as a political unit only by the intermediary of one or several men. Those who come to power are the guides, the representatives of the political unit in relation to the outside world. They are thereby responsible for mobilizing the unit's forces in order to permit its survival in the jungle where 'cold monsters' disport themselves.... Men *in power*, that is, those responsible for the nation in relation to the outside world, are at the same time *men of power*, possessors of an extended capacity to influence the conduct of their fellow men.⁹²

In short, Aron's conception of foreign-policy actions as embodying the 'intelligence of the personified state'⁹³ exactly corresponds to the 'distinct *raison d'état* focus' a statesman's foreign-policy decisions reflect, according to neoclassical realists.⁹⁴

Furthermore, Aron takes into account not merely the distribution of resources within states or the material interests of civil society constraining statesmen's foreign-policy decisions. He also stresses the role of ideology within society, the impact of political parties' ideas and the importance of beliefs statesmen hold. These cultural factors and personal idiosyncrasies not only constitute lenses through which the world is perceived by unit-level actors, but are also relevant at the systemic level: when shared by a significant number of states(men), the beliefs and convictions contribute to a homogeneous system.

Aron hence once again anticipates neoclassical realism. Randall Schweller's typology of states as wolves, foxes, jackals, ostriches, lambs, doves, lions and owls or hawks is obviously compatible with Aron's distinction between homogeneous and heterogeneous regimes. More generally, the neoclassical realist assumption that leaders' perceptions of states' relative power capabilities matter more than objective quantities of resources leads – just like Aron's thinking – to the conclusion that the international system is not completely given, 'out there', but is 'partly of their own making'.⁹⁵

Admittedly, the systemic impact of existing beliefs and perceptions plays a lesser role in neoclassical realist analyses than in Aron's writings. Neoclassical realists are better described as individualist cognitivists than as holistic constructivists: they take into account the influence of an individual statesman's idiosyncrasy on his subjective perception, not the common culture collectively shared by a significant number of fellow statesmen.

And there is, of course, another major – epistemological rather than ontological – difference between Aron and contemporary neoclassical realists. Eager to resort to ‘greater methodological sophistication than their classical realist predecessors’,⁹⁶ neoclassical realists aspire to construct a generalizable theory of foreign policy able to explain and predict concrete foreign policies. Aron would have considered such a quest to be elusive. While acknowledging that ‘all human behaviour] is comprehensible’, he preferred to believe in ‘manifold modes of intelligibility’,⁹⁷ given his conviction that ‘the science of international relations ... permits neither prediction nor manipulation’.⁹⁸

But all in all, the threads of their substantive argumentation are common, and the fundamental interest guiding Aron’s and neoclassical realist research is the same. Eager to contribute to a better understanding of ‘the daily stuff of international relations’,⁹⁹ neoclassical realists obviously agree with Aron that ‘in every century’ states look for security, power and glory, with the qualification that ‘many circumstances – of military or economic technique, of institutional or ideological origin – intervene to limit and specify the objectives statesmen actually select’.¹⁰⁰ By writing that ‘over the long term, international political outcomes generally mirror the actual distribution of power among states’, while specifying immediately that ‘in the shorter term, however, the policies states pursue are rarely objectively efficient or predictable based upon a purely systemic analysis’,¹⁰¹ they implicitly share Aron’s conception of a theory that is of ‘suprahistorical value’ and are similarly desirous ‘to comprehend historical diversity’.¹⁰² By privileging the study of the ‘complex relationships between systemic and unit-level variables shaping foreign policy’,¹⁰³ they are even much closer to Aron than they are to other classical realists – to whom they wrongly prefer to refer – such as Morgenthau. Aron states that ‘the science of international relations has to recognize the multiple links between events on the diplomatic and national scenes’¹⁰⁴ and he acknowledges that political units do not maintain, ‘through revolutions, the same ambitions and the same methods’.¹⁰⁵ Morgenthau, in contrast, claims the existence of the ‘astounding continuity’ characterizing ‘American, British, or Russian foreign policies ... regardless of the different motives, preferences, and intellectual and moral qualities of successive statesmen’.¹⁰⁶ This is all the more true as Morgenthau ‘purports to present *a theory* of international politics’,¹⁰⁷ which is hardly compatible with the ‘diversity of ... *theories*’¹⁰⁸ of foreign policy proposed by neoclassical realists.

In his rehabilitation of the philosophical foundations of Aron’s theory of international relations, Bryan-Paul Frost concluded that if international relations scholars had ‘paid more attention to Aron’s work’, there would probably have been no ‘third debate’¹⁰⁹ in the discipline. Long before contemporary post-positivists, Aron was, according to Frost:

the prophet of the disappointment of positivism in its search for a cumulative behavioural science; and if we had paid more attention to Aron's work as a whole, either we would not be having this debate at all or, if we were, we would be in a better position to state precisely the problems with positivism and to answer questions being raised about its fundamental assumptions and operative principles.¹¹⁰

Frost's conclusion can be applied almost word for word to the parallels between Aron and the neoclassical realists. If neoclassical realists were aware of Aron, they would not only have a founding father to rely upon in order to cut the ground from under the feet of those critics who either claim realism is turning into a 'degenerating research program'¹¹¹ or deplore the division of realism into as many churches as there are pundits.¹¹² They would also have the best advocate available to defend their cause. After all, confronted with accusations that neoclassical realism lacks 'theoretical rigour and predictive power because it eschews a mono-causal focus on either domestic or systemic variables', neoclassical realists reply that 'parsimony must be balanced against explanatory power'¹¹³ and that 'rigid adherence to parsimony, mono-causality, and meta-theoretical orthodoxy should not inhibit political scientists from asking and seeking to answer big and important questions'.¹¹⁴ They go as far as to claim that 'neoclassical realism will continue to flourish as a research program *precisely because* its proponents have not lost sight of the "political" in the study of international politics, foreign policy, and grand strategy'.¹¹⁵ By doing so, they ultimately agree with Aron's conception of the basically undetermined nature of international politics, which is unlikely to be intelligible exclusively within today's predominantly accepted standards of social science methodology.

Notes

- 1 J. A. Vasquez, *The Power of Power Politics: From Classical Realism to Neotraditionalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 65–6.
- 2 See the review of Aron's *Peace and War* by J.-B. Duroselle, *Revue Française de Science Politique*, 12:4 (1962), pp. 963–79, as well as the many references to Aron by M. Merle, *Sociologie des relations internationales* (Paris: Dalloz, 1974). Merle also wrote a tribute to Aron after his death: 'Le dernier message de Raymond Aron: système interétatique ou société internationale?', *Revue Française de Science Politique*, 34:6 (1984), pp. 1181–97.
- 3 S. Hoffmann, 'Minerva and Janus', in S. Hoffmann (ed.), *The State of War: Essays on the Theory and Practice of International Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1965), p. 22.
- 4 R. Tucker, 'Review. *Paix et guerre entre les nations*', *World Politics*, 17:2 (1965), p. 310.

- 5 H. Morgenthau, 'Review. *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*. By Raymond Aron', *American Political Science Review*, 61:4 (1967), p. 1111.
- 6 H. Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 10, 247, 278–9.
- 7 R. Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 29, 197–8.
- 8 K. N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), pp. 44, 47, 61; and K. N. Waltz, 'Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory', *Journal of International Affairs*, 44:1–2 (1990), pp. 21–37.
- 9 See T. Taylor (ed.), *Approaches and Theory in International Relations* (London: Longman, 1978); M. Light and A. J. R. Groom (eds), *International Relations: A Handbook of Current Theory* (London: Frances Pinter, 1985). Things are different in French international relations. See: D. Battistella, *Théories des relations internationales*, third edition (Paris: Sciences Po Les Presses, 2009); A. McLeod and D. O'Mara (eds), *Théories des relations internationales: Contestations et résistances* (Outremont: Athéna, 2007). See also J. E. Dougherty and R. L. Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey*, fifth edition (New York: Longman, 2001).
- 10 A. J. R. Groom and M. Light (eds), *Contemporary International Relations: A Guide to Theory* (London: Frances Pinter, 1994), pp. 219 *et seq.* In this book, Aron is exclusively remembered in the chapter dedicated to non-American approaches to international relations. Aron does not appear in any of the following: S. Burchill and A. Linklater (eds), *Theories of International Relations* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); W. Carlsnaes, T. Risse and B. Simmons (eds), *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage, 2002); J. Sterling-Folker (ed.), *Making Sense of International Relations Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006); T. Dunne, M. Kurki and S. Smith (eds), *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); C. Reus-Smit and D. Snidal (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Wohlforth actually includes Aron in the early Cold War generation of realist scholars (p. 132) but he does not refer to him in his bibliography: W. C. Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).
- 11 See: J. Der Derian (ed.), *International Theory: Critical Investigations* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995); A. Linklater (ed.), *International Relations: Critical Concepts in Political Science* (London: Routledge, 2000); P. Williams, D. Goldstein and J. Shafritz (eds), *Classic Readings and Contemporary Debates in International Relations*, third edition (New York: Wadsworth, 2005); S. Chan and C. Moore (eds), *Theories of International Relations* (London: Sage, 2006); K. Mingst and J. Snyder (eds), *Essential Readings in World Politics*, third edition (New York: Norton, 2008). M. Griffiths, *Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 3–6, included Aron, but the second edition of this work did not – M. Griffiths, S. Roach and S. Solomon, *Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations*, second edition (London: Routledge, 2009).

- 12 S. Guzzini, *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold* (London: Routledge, 1998).
- 13 M. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism, and Socialism* (New York: Norton, 1997).
- 14 M. J. Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986).
- 15 J. Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- 16 See B. Frankel (ed.), *Realism: Restatements and Renewal* (London: Frank Cass, 1996).
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Explaining European military intervention in Africa: a neoclassical realist perspective

Catherine Gegout

This chapter aims to answer the following question: Why do European actors decide to intervene in African conflict areas, and what is the impact of their decision? I argue that the foreign policy of European actors towards African conflict areas from the late 1990s until now can be explained with realist theory alone. Because European actors focused on their own economic and reputation interests to the detriment of African states' interests, Europe has generally had a counterproductive effect on African internal politics.

The realist paradigm not only takes material interests into consideration, but also includes prestige and even, when the security of a state is not threatened by another state, morality, as factors that affect foreign-policy decisions. However, for realists, morality is unlikely to be the most important factor for intervention. Constructivists, on the other hand, have discussed the relevance of 'good' norms, including the norm of humanitarian intervention. They contend that states are increasingly likely to consider this norm when they decide to intervene in a conflict area. I show instead that the prevailing norms for European actors are those of non-intervention and prestige, and that European states are primarily concerned with security and relative power.

The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first concentrates on the relevance of realism and constructivism in explaining and understanding European military intervention in Africa. The second contends that France, the UK and the European Union (EU) have been first and foremost motivated by national prestige vis-à-vis the international community and their own electorate when deciding to intervene in Africa.

Realism, constructivism and motives for intervention in Africa

This first section looks at the relevance of the contribution of realism to explain a decision to intervene. It shows that realism is a broad school of

thought, which offers many explanations for states' policies. In particular, some realists do not consider power politics as *excluding* norms from foreign-policy decisions. It then analyses the contribution of constructivism to understand the motives for intervention.

Interests of European actors in Africa: changing strategies but same goals

The concepts of power, security, wealth, prestige and humanism are analysed in order to determine European motives for intervention in Africa. Then, an overview is offered of reasons given by European leaders in the 1990s–2000s to intervene or not in African conflict areas.

For some academics such as Michael Doyle, Stanley Hoffmann and Andrew Moravcsik and Jeffrey Legro, realists either believe that states should not intervene in another state or argue that intervention occurs only to preserve their own security.¹ Contrary to these authors, I argue that, under certain conditions, realists do allow for the possibility of intervention for non-material reasons, including humanitarian ideas.

I distinguish four types of realist thinking (table 8.1): hard-core realism, core realism, normative realism and ethical realism. Each type focuses on different concepts to explain states' foreign policies. Hard-core realists focus on the survival of the state. Foreign policy depends on geostrategy and on prudence. Intervention occurs only if it enhances the material capabilities of a state and if the advantages of intervention are superior to its costs.

As regards crises in Third World states, external actors should not want to intervene in these conflicts, as states should seek safety. Michael Mandelbaum believes that a US foreign policy concerned not with interests but with values, not with relations with countries that have the capacity to affect these interests but with 'small, poor, weak' and

Table 8.1 Four types of realism

Type of realism	Primary concern of states
Hard core	Security
Core	Security and economic wealth
Normative	Security, economic wealth and ideologies (i.e. militarism, nationalism or prestige)
Ethical	Security, economic wealth, ideologies and defence of humanitarian values

peripheral countries, is foolish: such foreign policy would not have public support and would be a 'deep, protracted, and costly engagement in the tangled political life of each country'.² Hard-core realists would therefore argue that no state should want to intervene militarily in African conflicts, unless this conflict fostered a security risk, such as terrorism or migration flows to Europe.

Core realists argue that states are security *and* economic maximizers. An intervention in a humanitarian crisis can take place only when it is in a state's interest, and in particular when it provides wealth.³ For normative realists, material interests and certain norms matter in order to explain a foreign-policy decision. Stephen Krasner explains that norms can be significant and have an impact on decisions, but rulers can also use norms in order to promote the interest of their states. National ideology and culture are norms which can have an impact on state foreign-policy decisions. For other realists, such as Barry Posen, Randall Schweller and Stephen Van Evera, ideas such as militarism and nationalism influence state decisions.⁴ These authors, considered as realists in this chapter, allow for norms to have an impact on state policy.

A norm which can have an impact on a decision to intervene in a state facing a humanitarian crisis is that of prestige. Hans Morgenthau believes that a 'policy of prestige' aims to demonstrate power. Prestige is a long-term resource for power. Barry O'Neill defines prestige as 'having a reputation for having a reputation'.⁵ Prestige can be used to predict or explain behaviour. It is important 'because if your strength is recognized, you can generally achieve your aims without having to use it'.⁶ For Robert Gilpin, prestige is the 'everyday currency of international relations'.⁷ Raymond Aron stressed that the aim of a state is to have force and glory, defined as *puissance* recognized by others (that is, recognition).⁸ More recently, Richard Lebow also argues that standing is important for individuals and institutions alike.⁹ Normative realists would argue that European states could intervene in African states in order to enhance their prestige in these states and in the international community. This prestige enhances the identity of the state and its nation.¹⁰

Proponents of hard-core, core and normative realism do not seem to believe that morality influences decision-makers. However, contrary to what the critics of realism assume, namely that realists believe only in material interests, some realists would consider plausible a European intervention to respond to a humanitarian crisis.¹¹ Realists do accept that states have both material and moral interests, but they assume that states intervene only under certain conditions to halt mass murder or genocide. This is where the value-added of neoclassical realism comes in: neoclassical realism incorporates the influence of both external and internal factors on decisions, and posits that the defence and promotion of relative material power are crucial when state officials make policy.

In order to make sure a state preserves its relative material power, perceptions of power are crucial. When the promotion of humanitarianism is not precluded on the grounds of its costs to security, it can enhance the reputation and prestige of a state. For neoclassical realists, humanitarianism is an instrument for power. Constructivists, instead, argue that humanitarian aims set new standards in international politics, which will have consequences over time.¹²

Table 8.2 French, British and EU interventions in Africa, 1992–2010

	French	British	EU
1992	Somalia: Opération Oryx US-led operation 'Restore Hope' (2,100 French troops)		
1994	Rwanda: Opération Amaryllis: 500 troops to evacuate foreigners Opération Turquoise (2,500 troops)		
1995	Comores: Opération Azalée (1,000 troops): to stop a coup d'état against President Djohar		
1996–97	Central African Republic (CAR): Opérations Almandin I et II (2,300 troops) to stop mutinies in Bangui		
1997	Republic of the Congo: Opération Antilope (1,250 troops): 6,500 foreigners evacuated from Brazzaville		
1998	Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): Opération Malachite: 2,500 foreigners evacuated from Kinshasa		
2000		Sierra Leone	
2002	Ivory Coast Opération Licorne		
2003			Artemis in the DRC
2006	Chad and CAR		EUFOR-RD Congo
2007	Chad and CAR		
2008–9			EUFOR-Chad/CAR
2008–10			EUNAVFOR-Atalanta (Gulf of Somalia)

How useful are the concepts of power, security, wealth, prestige and humanitarianism to understand European reasons for intervention or absence of intervention in conflict areas in Africa? In official discourses, European leaders refer to the necessity of humanitarian intervention and of multilateralism. Legally, they have signed and ratified the 1948 United Nations (UN) Convention on Genocide, and more recently, in 2005, signed the UN 'Responsibility to Protect' document. They emphasize the need to act within the UN framework, whether they act unilaterally or multilaterally within the EU or the NATO framework.

However, European actors do not systematically and effectively intervene when genocide and/or crimes against humanity are committed in an African state. In addition, many interventions by France were not conducted with a UN mandate, and the British mission in Sierra Leone supported the UN but was not incorporated into the UN mission there. Table 8.2 gives an overview of French, British and EU interventions in Africa in the 1990s and 2000s.

Absence of a norm of humanitarian intervention, but relevance of the norm of prestige for power

Norms are defined as shared expectations about appropriate behaviour held by a community of actors.¹³ Until now, constructivists have mainly focused on the effect of 'good' norms: they focus on ideas which are consistent with a cosmopolitan moral ethic.¹⁴ However, international expectations can be both 'good' and 'bad'. For instance, it was appropriate to be racist in the past, whereas it is now appropriate to condemn colonialism, to condemn racism, to protect state sovereignty and to protect human rights.

Constructivists have recognized that norms do not systematically have an impact on decisions. Nina Tannenwald makes it clear that norms do not determine outcomes but that they shape realms of possibility.¹⁵ Constructivism does not help to explain an event but it does help us to understand the norms which might lead to a certain decision. For a norm to be defined as such, there must be a congruence between the norm and the behaviour.¹⁶ My aim is to understand the norms which might influence European actors when they create their foreign policies towards African states in crisis.

The norm of humanitarian intervention is probed here. This norm does not seem useful for understanding the main reason for European intervention in Africa. Martha Finnemore specifically focused on the norm of humanitarian intervention and argued that states can intervene for humanitarian reasons, even when there are no strategic or economic interests.¹⁷ She also argued that, with time, there was a greater

institutionalization of the norm of humanitarian intervention (norms became embedded in international organizations and institutions). She writes that 'new beliefs about social purpose reconstitute the meaning and rules of military intervention, and ultimately change intervention behavior'.¹⁸ However, following the neoclassical realist approach, I would argue that humanitarian reasons for intervention cannot exist independently from strategic, economic or ideological reasons. New beliefs are insufficient for a change in behaviour, as objective and material conditions do matter.

Besides, a norm of prestige prevails when European actors decide to launch a military mission in Africa. European leaders are not impartial: they do not act as though all human lives are 'equally valuable'.¹⁹ Instead, when there is a crisis in an African state, they focus mainly on their own interests and not on the interests of the people facing the crisis. As a result, European leaders generally decide not to intervene in a crisis. The norm of non-intervention prevails. When they do decide to intervene, this can have a negative impact on the ground in the long term: improving the situation on the ground is only a means of satisfying their own interests, not an end in itself. This will be discussed in the second section of this chapter.

European military intervention in Africa

This section establishes a typology of the factors a leader can take into consideration when making a decision. A distinction is made between a decision made by a leader at the national level (here, France and the UK) and one made by a leader at the EU level. I establish which norms and which interests matter, and under which conditions an intervention could take place.

French intervention and influence on the world scene

French motives do not seem to have changed in the 1990s–2000s: France is mainly concerned with geostrategic stability and historical links. Its *rayonnement*, or influence on the world stage, appears to be the most important factor for intervention.

France is still militarily and legally linked to African security issues through its defence and cooperation agreements, and through its military bases. France has signed twenty-six defence agreements with African states. Within the framework of a defence agreement, France can: help restore order internally; fight a rebellion; or fight against the intervention of another state. France has also signed military cooperation agreements

and technical assistance agreements (involving aid for military and police forces) with more than twenty-six African states. In 2008, France still had four permanent military bases in Africa, namely in Djibouti (2,900 troops), Gabon (980), Senegal (1,200) and Réunion (1,460). One French navy ship with 200 troops is also positioned in the Gulf of Guinea. This part first shows the evolution of French military intervention, and then highlights the motives for intervention.

In the 1990s, France supported the Rwandan government. As early as 1992, 600 French troops had helped the government to fight the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), comprising mostly Tutsi refugees from Uganda. In 1993, France initiated the UN assistance mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) with 2,500 blue helmets, but at the same time French troops left Rwanda. The UN then supported the French *Opération Turquoise* in June 1994.²⁰ Many researchers have criticized the French policy in Rwanda. As Rachel Utlej writes:

the failures of France's Africa policy had been clearly exposed: France had supported and equipped a corrupt, undemocratic government, had sent troops to defend it from rebellion, and had established safe havens for Hutus – including perpetrators of the genocide – to protect 'friends' of France from public scrutiny and accountability.²¹

According to François-Xavier Verschave, too, this operation was biased and did not help transport surviving Tutsis. A well known Belgian journalist, Colette Braeckman, also deplores the fact that France backed the Rwandan government.²²

In the Central African Republic (CAR), France funded the government to pay the army in April 1996, but the President, Ange-Félix Patassé, asked France to intervene militarily directly to stop an army rebellion in May 1996, and 2,300 French troops intervened in Bangui. This operation focused on evacuating over 2,000 foreigners and Jacques Godfrain, the French Minister for Cooperation from 1995 until 1997, insisted that 'France no longer wants to be the "gendarme" [police officer] of Africa'.²³ However, this operation was partial: it favoured the government and led to hostilities towards France.

The military operation conducted by France in the Ivory Coast from 2002 onwards was the largest since decolonization. In August 2002, President Laurent Gbagbo accepted a government of national union with Alassane Ouattara. The north of the country was taken by rebels from Burkina Faso. In September 2002, Laurent Gbagbo asked France to fulfil its military agreement. However, France limited its action to indirect military intervention by launching the *Licorne* mission to the Ivory Coast (4,000 troops) in order to rescue foreign citizens. France evacuated more than 2,700 French and other nationals. It also provided

the government with munitions and means of transport, but it did not help the government to reconquer the north.

In January 2003, on the initiative of France and with the presence of the UN Secretary-General, the Marcoussis peace agreement was signed by the parties in conflict. The French government was ambiguous on its relation with Laurent Gbagbo. France considered him sometimes as a legitimate President and at other times as the instigator of violence carried out by the army and the *patriotes*. After the UN resolution 1464 of 4 February 2003, the Licorne mission also supported the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which had deployed in the Ivory Coast in 2002. In November 2004, Gbagbo breached the cease-fire in order to take Bouaké in the north. Nine French soldiers were killed. Out of 20,000 French citizens in the Ivory Coast, only 8,000 remained.²⁴

The events in CAR in 2003 and 2006 show the hesitations in French foreign policy towards its former colonies. In 2003, France did not intervene in CAR when the Patassé was overthrown by the rebel leader François Bozizé. France had been involved since 2002 in the financial support of a multinational force of 380 troops under the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in CAR. After the coup, France merely deployed operational training detachments. Henri Bentégeat, the French Chief of the Defence Staff in 2004, explained that French operations were conducted within the strict framework of international legitimacy.²⁵ According to him, any peacekeeping or peace-restoring action should be conducted under a UN mandate, or with the help of the African Union (AU), or under an AU mandate or that of a sub-regional organization, and with the agreement of the concerned nations. France nevertheless did intervene in CAR in 2006 in order to support the regime and fight off a rebellion in the north.

In 2006 and 2007, France supported the Chadian regime by targeting the rebels and preventing them from reaching N'Djamena to topple President Idriss Déby. In 2008, France had troops in the following African states: Chad (the French mission Epervier, with 1,250 troops, and the EU mission EUFOR Chad, with 1,200 troops); the Ivory Coast (the French mission Licorne, with 1,800 troops, and the UN mission ONUCI, with 200 troops); CAR (the French mission Boali, with 200 troops); the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (UN and EU missions, with 30 personnel); Ethiopia (the UN mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea UN mission, MINUEE, with 15 personnel); and Sudan (the EU and AU missions).

In the 1990s–2000s, the two major reasons for French intervention in Africa were prestige and economic gain. There was no direct security risk for France from intervening or not in Africa. French elites are concerned with two types of prestige: vis-à-vis the international community; and vis-à-vis African leaders. I will analyse these types of prestige and then turn to study the economic motive.

Military interventions in Africa enhanced the *rang international* and *rayonnement de la France* (international rank and influence of France) vis-à-vis the international community. France needed Africa to show its power. France wished to 'be able to exert influence in places where no other power can do quite the same' and there was a 'need for *rayonnement*'.²⁶ Africa was part of France's only two policies which sought to enhance its international prestige, the other being nuclear power. Africa was seen as a vital element of France's status at the international level. The French military Chief of Staff, General Jean-Louis Georgelin, emphasized that the deployment of the military contributes to the image and 'voice' of France internationally.²⁷ Stephen Smith, a French journalist, also believes that if France wants to be credible and project its *rayonnement* at the UN, it cannot withdraw from Africa.²⁸

Gaullism still seems to influence the makers of foreign policy in France. De Gaulle wished to maintain rank with the major world powers, preserve equilibrium among blocs of states and pursue a policy of active involvement and even intervention around the world.²⁹

The necessity of promoting French prestige is linked to the past of France in Africa and the historical place of France in international relations. According to John Chipman, 'the relation maintained with Black Africa is the last vestige of French imperial logic, and its deterioration would, in French official eyes, damage French prestige'. As mentioned by Chipman, François Mitterrand wrote in 1957 with reference to the problem in Algeria, 'without Africa there would be no history of France in the twenty-first century'. Still according to Chipman:

Strong links with Africa did not constrain French policy, rather they gave it a purpose and proved that France still held a position of responsibility in the world. This sense of responsibility remains essential to French descriptions of national power.³⁰

As a result of the French policy, some authors speak of 'French hegemony' in Africa.³¹ In the 1990s, almost thirty years after the independence of most African states, France continues to wield

considerable and exclusive political, diplomatic and economic power in large sections in Africa. In fact, this continent remains the only area of the world where France retains enough influence to support its claims to medium-power status in the international system.³²

When France intervened to support an African regime, it gained political weight at the UN. France could ensure useful support for its own national interests at the UN. This was emphasized Jacques Godfrain in his book *L'Afrique, notre avenir*, where he argued that Africa provided France with exceptional leverage.³³

French leaders want to honour their legal military agreements with African regimes and to support African leaders in difficulty. They favour cooperation with their 'friends' rather than with African states. In the 1990s, France stopped a new type of internal disorder: rebellions aimed at forcing the government to pay troops. This French policy was welcomed by many African governments, as rebel movements were a potential problem for all leaders.³⁴

France also wanted to make sure its economic ties were secure. In Gabon, for instance, France apparently intervened in 1964 in order to guarantee oil and uranium imports.³⁵ France had agreements with countries which were 'central to France's economic interests, namely Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Ivory Coast, Gabon and Senegal'.³⁶ In addition, France started to establish links and developed its trade relations with non-francophone countries in Africa under Georges Pompidou's presidency. In the 1980s, economic relations with Africa were still relevant to France. According to Chipman, most of its uranium, a third of its copper, a third of its phosphate, a fifth of its iron and a third of its oil came from Africa.³⁷

In 2007, in sub-Saharan Africa, France had important trade relations with South Africa, Senegal and Gabon. The United States and China imported respectively four times and twice as much as France from Gabon, a country with important resources. France also had very limited trade with Chad and the Ivory Coast. The economic factor would no longer seem to be relevant for France when it decides on intervention.

France did not intervene in African conflicts primarily for humanitarian reasons. It intervened to protect its own citizens and to show its on-going power and influence in Africa. In order to be considered an important power, it had to show it could still honour and was still honouring its legal agreements with African states. French leaders seem to believe that France must be involved in stabilizing African states in order to show French commitment to Africa. France has been biased in the respect of its military agreements: it either helped rebel movements or did not react to all the coups d'état perpetrated in former French colonies. As a result, France has not respected the principle of sovereignty.

British intervention and a false image of a humanitarian actor

The UK is reluctant to intervene in African conflicts. Its major mission in Sierra Leone seems to have been launched to 'prove' its humanitarian concerns in conflict areas. The low cost of intervention seems to have been a major factor in the decision to intervene.

Officially, the UK advocates the principle of the 'responsibility to protect' and multilateralism. British Prime Minister Tony Blair established

the following conditions for intervention: all diplomatic options must be exhausted; military operations should be sensibly and prudently undertaken; the intervening state should be prepared to act in the long term; and it should have national interest involved.³⁸ However, it prefers in fact to leave Africa to Africans, and not to intervene. When the UK does intervene, it does not necessarily comply with multilateralism, as illustrated by its intervention in Iraq. This part first gives an analysis of British military involvement in Africa, and then a study of British motives.

In the 1990s–2000s, the UK became more active militarily in Africa. In fact, the UK developed military training for some of its former colonies. Between 2000 and 2002, it intervened directly in Sierra Leone, and it still has a military presence there to train the armed forces. In 2003, it intervened within the EU Artemis force in the DRC. It nonetheless was not part of the EU mission in the DRC in 2006, and was absent from the EU mission to Chad/CAR in 2008.

The UK is active ‘indirectly’ in South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Namibia and Mozambique. In South Africa, the UK helped integrate former forces of the African National Congress (ANC) into the South African National Defence Force and it helped with the development of the Ministry of Defence. It has also supported the South African peacekeeping mission in Burundi. In Kenya, the UK has created a British Peace Support Training Centre (BPST) to train Kenyan and East African peacekeeping forces. In Ghana, the Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College (GAFCSC) is supported by the UK in terms of personnel, training and infrastructure. The UK provides staff to the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), which is also in Ghana. In Nigeria, the UK has a Defence Advisory Team, which is located in the Nigerian Ministry of Defence, in order to help with the management of peacekeeping training. According to Mats Berdal, the UK also used small-scale military assistance missions to help with training, monitoring and verification tasks in Namibia and Mozambique.³⁹ From 2001, the UK used a special fund for conflict prevention, the Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (ACPP), which had a budget of £60 million a year, and it supported peacekeeping training, security projects, re-integration programmes, defence advisory teams and radio programmes. However, this British involvement was low key.

The UK is reluctant to intervene militarily directly in African conflicts. When it did intervene, the British Chief of Defence Staff, Michael Boyce, explained that the UK aimed to be ‘early in, early out’.⁴⁰ It also favours multilateral over unilateral interventions. Its only major direct military operation in the 1990s–2000s was in Sierra Leone, from 2000 until 2002, where the UK played ‘a crucial role in ending the civil war’.⁴¹

The war in Sierra Leone broke out in 1991 and lasted until 2002. It left over 50,000 dead, an estimated 300,000–400,000 internally

displaced, and tens of thousands permanently maimed by amputations of arms and legs. In 1991, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), led by Foday Sankoh and aided by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Forces of Liberia (NPFL), opposed the government of Sierra Leone led by the All People's Congress (APC). In 1992, following a military coup, the APC was replaced by the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). The NPRC and the RUF continued fighting. In 1996, as a result of domestic and international pressures, elections were held and won by the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), led by Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. However, this government was overthrown in May 1997.

This led to the intervention of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (named ECOMOG) to restore President Kabbah to power. He was reinstated in 1998 and the UN Security Council (UNSC) voted to create a UN observer mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL). The United States closed its embassy operations at the same time as the conflict continued between the rebels and the government of Sierra Leone, backed by ECOMOG. A peace agreement known as the Lomé Peace Accord was finally signed in 1999.

During this period, the UK faced the 'arms to Africa' scandal or 'Sandline affair'. In 1997, the UNSC condemned the coup which had ousted President Kabbah, and imposed an arms and oil embargo. Despite this UNSC embargo, the British private military company Sandline International, with the support of the British government, supplied thirty tons of arms and ammunitions to ECOWAS and to the Kamajors who supported Kabbah's legitimate government in exile in Guinea.⁴²

This affair had a negative impact on the status of the UK, a state traditionally against indirect and illegal involvement in African politics. The Lomé Peace Accord was signed by the Sierra Leone government represented by Kabbah and the RUF rebels represented by Sankoh in July 1999. Sankoh became Chairman of the Strategic Mineral Resources Council and Vice-President of Sierra Leone. A Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programme was created. UNOMSIL was replaced by UNAMSIL in order to police the peace agreement, and it grew from 6,000 to 17,500 troops. ECOMOG withdrew from Sierra Leone in early 2000. The peace agreement was not respected by the parties. In May 2000, approximately 500 UNAMSIL peacekeepers were captured by the rebels.

The UK deployed forces in Sierra Leone on 8 May 2000 in order to 'secure the airport to allow the arrival of UN reinforcements and to evacuate British nationals'.⁴³ William Fowler explains that the UK evacuated 'European Union citizens, those from the Commonwealth ... and Americans'.⁴⁴ A total of 700 paratroopers were deployed in and around Lungi airport and Freetown, and 40 SAS soldiers were engaged in surveillance and intelligence missions in the Sierra Leone countryside. An amphibious group led by the helicopter carrier HMS *Ocean* – with an

artillery battery and 600 Royal Marines on board – and the aircraft carrier HMS *Illustrious*, with Harrier strike bombers were also deployed.⁴⁵

The UK changed its policy on 9 May: the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, saw the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, on that day. On 10 May at the House of Commons, Blair changed the emphasis, saying that British troops were also there to back up the UN force.⁴⁶ In Sierra Leone, the UK took control of UN and government forces for an offensive against RUF rebels. It arrested Sankoh, the head of the rebellion, on 10 May.

British troops then trained Sierra Leone's armed forces so they could defend the country against any future rebel threats (Operations Basilica and Silkman). The UK also supported the UN mission (UNAMSIL) by organizing a series of high-profile military exercises to stabilize Sierra Leone, and assisted the DDR programme. Despite the Abuja cease-fire agreement which resumed the peace process in November 2000, fighting continued and disarmament was slow. In January 2002, President Kabbah declared the civil war officially over, as 72,000 ex-combatants (including 45,000 rebels) had been disarmed and demobilized. Democratic elections were held in May 2002.

In July 2002, the UK withdrew a 200-strong military contingent. It then provided seven headquarters staff officers, including the Chief of Staff, and fifteen military observers to UNAMSIL.⁴⁷ The UK remained involved in Sierra Leone: a ninety-strong military training team (the International Military Advisory and Training Team, or IMATT) was sent to train the armed forces.⁴⁸

Several researchers have argued that humanitarian motives were an important determinant of the UK intervention in Sierra Leone. Abrahamsen and Williams, for instance, argue that 'it seems that at least some of the explanation for Britain's deployment ... can be located in New Labour's "ethical" commitment'. And for Williams, the UK intervened because it wanted:

to protect British citizens; to avert a humanitarian crisis like that which had engulfed Freetown in January 1999; to defend the democratically elected government of President Kabbah; to live up to its stated foreign policy principles; and to support the UN operation, UNAMSIL, to carry out its mandate.⁴⁹

I argue instead that the British government acted with opportunism in Sierra Leone. It sought to make political capital out of its military intervention by appearing to be a 'moral' actor, with the main aims being: to gain support from the British people; and to gain influence at the international community level.

The initial aim of the British government was in fact *not* to send troops to Sierra Leone to help the UN or to fight the RUF. The government made it clear that it was deploying troops to evacuate British nationals.

Robin Cook stressed that the military measures had been taken primarily 'to respond quickly to safeguard the safety of British nationals'.⁵⁰ Even when Brigadier David Richards was showing his desire to act against the RUF, the Foreign Office tried to distance itself from him.⁵¹ It is only once the UK had evaluated the low degree of risk at the local level that the government decided to authorize the British military to support the UN and fight the RUF.

Realist theory is useful here to understand the British attitude in Sierra Leone. First, Sierra Leone was not a country which presented an economic interest for the UK. The main trading partners of Sierra Leone are the United States (which accounts for 31 per cent of its trade), followed by Germany (12 per cent). Only 9 per cent of its trade is with the UK.⁵² In terms of security threat, British officials have the following opinion on states similar to Sierra Leone:

Weak and failing states ... can contain areas of ungoverned territory which provide potential havens and sources of support for terrorist groups and criminal networks involved in drugs production or the plundering of natural resources.... Internal conflict, poverty, human rights abuse and famine can all create the conditions for mass population movements, adding to pressures on neighbouring countries or emerging as a surge in migration to Europe.⁵³

Despite this perception, Sierra Leone does not in fact present any security threat to the UK. In this context of both low economic interests and the absence of security threat, British leaders were first and foremost prudent. They did not want military casualties, and made sure that a military mission to support the UN and fight the RUF entailed very limited risks.⁵⁴ Prestige, and not humanitarianism, seems to have been the major factor for intervention in Sierra Leone. This is in accordance with Comfort Ero, who contends that Africa is symbolically important in the struggle to broaden the UK's global role.⁵⁵

After Sierra Leone, the UK intervened symbolically within the EU Artemis force in the DRC in 2003, as it sent troops only to upgrade the airfield in Bunia. Here again, prestige seems to have been the main reason. A British official stated that 'in case the EU mission was successful, it would have been a shame not to have taken part in it'.⁵⁶ Finally, the UK was completely absent from the EU mission in Chad/CAR. This lack of British involvement in EU missions was in apparent contradiction with the government's official position. Speaking in Addis Ababa in 2004, Prime Minister Tony Blair said: 'I want Africa to be the top priority for the EU's new rapidly deployable battle groups and to get them operational as soon as possible in 2005'.⁵⁷ He said they would be able to respond to a crisis on the continent within ten days.

EU intervention and projection of power

The EU seems to be an instrument of its states' foreign policies. States appear to project their own interests onto the EU decision-making process. The prestige of the EU enhances the prestige of the member state which initiates the EU policy.

There are many differences between a military intervention on behalf of a state and one on behalf of the EU. The requirements for a national military intervention are political will and military capabilities. In order to have EU military intervention, in addition to these requirements, one needs cooperation between twenty-seven states, as decisions are taken by unanimity, and a UNSC resolution. As mentioned by Javier Solana, when EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: 'the fundamental framework for international relations is the United Nations Charter'.⁵⁸

Effectively, for states to intervene militarily in Africa, the political will of France and of the UK is paramount to reaching an EU decision, as other EU states are unlikely to take the lead in this field. I argue in this chapter that 'further' EU military interventions in Africa are unlikely now, at least in the short term. Despite the fact that EU states are developing EU military capabilities, the major obstacles are that states are unwilling either to act in Africa or to work together. This part first gives a background to and an overview of the EU missions in Africa, and then gives an analysis of the motives for these interventions.

Until 2003, the EU had not been involved in security and defence matters in Africa. The legal background to EU intervention in Africa can be found in the Treaty on the EU, the Cotonou Agreement, the European Security Strategy and the Africa–Europe Dialogue. According to the Treaty on the EU, one of the five foreign-policy objectives is to prevent violent conflicts. One of the aims of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is to contribute to international peace and security, and to promote democracy, the rule of law and respect of human rights. But article 11 of the Cotonou Agreement, which links the EU with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, provides that preventing war rests primarily with the ACP countries themselves.

The European Security Strategy of December 2003 mentions the conflicts in Somalia and Liberia, but it does not refer to sub-Saharan Africa as part of its strategic objectives; Africa is not the EUs' priority. According to Solana, 'the impact of the Israeli–Arab conflict, the continuing instability in Iraq, and our relations with the countries of the Mediterranean will be on top of our agenda'.⁵⁹

Effectively, in the diplomatic sphere, the EU initiated the Africa–Europe Dialogue in Cairo in 2000. A common position on conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa was adopted in

January 2004. It identified the need for an integrated approach to conflict prevention. In terms of capabilities, the EU can rely on national troops to conduct missions abroad. In November 2004, it also decided to create thirteen battle groups by 2010 to deploy ahead of or as part of a larger NATO or UN military operation. EU operations can be managed by one of five EU operational headquarters in France, Germany, Greece, Italy and the UK (Paris, Potsdam, Larissa, Rome and Northwood).⁶⁰ However, these battle groups have not yet been deployed in Africa. Instead, national troops have been used.

The EU conducted direct military interventions in the DRC in 2003 and 2006. It also is present in the DRC with two training missions. The EU has helped the AU since 2004 to deploy forces to Sudan, in relation to the crisis in Darfur. Since 2008, the EU has deployed troops to Chad and CAR. In the DRC, the EU conducted two military missions in order to support the UN, in 2003 and 2006. These missions were held to be successful by European diplomats, as they achieved their direct aim of ensuring security on the territory on which they were present.

In June 2003, the EU mission code-named Artemis deployed 2,000 troops to Bunia in the DRC. This mission lasted until September 2003. Its aim was to contribute to the stabilization of the security conditions and the improvement of the humanitarian situation. This was the first time EU troops had been deployed out of Europe and independently from NATO. France initiated this European mission and provided the majority of the troops, which totalled approximately 1,000. This mission enabled the return of refugees to their homes. However, it was very limited in space and time. Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General at the time, regretted that the EU restricted its deployment to Bunia: 'We have not been able to get the Multinational Force to go beyond Bunia – and in fairness to them, their mandate limited them to Bunia'.⁶¹ The mission withdrew, as planned, in September, as European leaders did not wish to extend the Artemis mandate.

In summer 2006, after lengthy discussions, the EU decided to support MONUC, the UN stabilization mission in the DRC, to help the transition process during the elections. These elections were symbolically and politically important, as the last fair elections in the DRC had taken place in 1965. But they took place in a very unstable environment, both in Kinshasa and in eastern DRC. An EU mission was deployed in Kinshasa with a UN Chapter VII mandate. It lasted from June until December 2006. Eight hundred European military personnel were present in Kinshasa. Military intelligence enabled effective enforcement of the ban on weapons in Kinshasa. Despite on-going violence and instability in Kinshasa and in eastern DRC, the EU yet again withdrew from Kinshasa at the end of its mandate. This mission nevertheless seems to have been perceived as positive and impartial by the people in the DRC.⁶²

The EU was still present in the DRC at the time of writing. Two low-scale training missions contribute to conflict management in the DRC: EUSEC DR Congo (EU security sector reform mission) and EUPOL Kinshasa (EU police mission in Kinshasa for the Integrated Police Unit). EUSEC DR Congo was created in March 2005. This small mission with personnel from a few European states (ten from France in 2007) provides advice and assistance to the Congolese authorities in charge of security, while ensuring the promotion of policies that are compatible with human rights and international humanitarian law, democratic standards, principles of good public management, transparency and observance of the rule of law.⁶³ It essentially advises the Minister for Defence on the reform, training and payment of the army, and the Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (CONADER) on the reintegration of former militia soldiers. It seems, however, to lack funding and material capabilities.⁶⁴ EUPOL Kinshasa was likewise launched in spring 2005. Approximately thirty experts give advice to the Congolese Integrated Police Unit (IPU), which in turn trains approximately 1,000 police officers through EU financing.

The EU has especially focused on diplomacy in order to negotiate with the Sudanese government on the Darfur crisis, which officially started in 2003. It has refused to send military troops to Darfur, but has supported the AU, which created the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) in spring 2004 in order to observe and verify the cease-fire agreement that had been signed in N'Djamena.

As early as 2004, there seems to have been talks within the EU to send troops to Sudan. The chair of the EU Military Committee, Gustav Hägglund, announced in 2004 that the EU had the military capabilities to act in Darfur and that an EU mission would be conducted under the UN framework.⁶⁵ In summer 2004, the EU sent military officers and observers to assess the possible support of the EU to the AU in Darfur. In February 2005, Kofi Annan asked the EU and NATO to help the AU.⁶⁶ In April 2005, the AU submitted an official request to NATO and the EU for military assistance in expanding AMIS. Karel de Gucht, the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs, mentioned that EU leaders would discuss the deployment of troops in Sudan in order to help the AU.⁶⁷ However, the EU decided finally to focus on technical aid with planning, military observers and strategic and tactical transport. For instance, in the EU framework, the UK purchased more than 900 vehicles for AMIS and funded the airlift of troops into Darfur. The UK also provided one officer through the EU as an advisor to AMIS in El Fashir, Darfur, and a military observer. It also contributed six police experts to the EU's civilian policing mission to AMIS.⁶⁸

In January 2008, the EU decided to launch EUFOR Chad/CAR in order to work for the improvement of the security situation in Chad

and the Central African Republic. It was based on UN Security Council Resolution 1778 (2007). But Germany and the UK did not deploy any troops to the region. This mission worked alongside the UN mission MINURCAT. It was present at the same time as France's Epervier operation. France provided most of the EUFOR Chad/CAR troops (1,500 out of 3,700). Solana made it clear that these were two separate missions, but Chadian rebels criticized the European deployment. The rebel leaders threatened EUFOR, as they considered it as a move from the French government to 'save' the Chadian President, Idriss Déby.⁶⁹

The most important EU missions in Africa, namely those in the DRC in 2003 and 2006, and in Chad/CAR in 2008, were initiated by France. The 2003 Artemis mission was apparently conducted first and foremost to show the international community that the EU was a fully fledged international actor, capable of independent military action outside Europe without the help or support of the United States.⁷⁰ This corresponded to the interest of France of promoting the EU as an independent actor (from NATO and the US) in the security field. Indirectly, this enhances the prestige of France as French leaders prefer to build a strong and capable EU, rather than rely on the US for their security and foreign policy.

The 2006 EUFOR DR Congo mission was led by Germany. French leaders made it clear that they were not going to take the lead in a mission to DRC in 2006. This shows that the priority of France was not humanitarian, as it was not going to act in the DRC if no other state was willing to act within the EU framework. German decision-makers were apparently convinced that the mission was feasible and non-risky. After the UK taking the lead for the EU mission in Macedonia, the French in the DRC in 2003, Germany also had to prove its commitment to developing a European security and defence policy. It did so at a very low cost, as the mission was extremely limited, and as most of the troops deployed were French. The low-scale conflict management missions in the DRC were also in the interests of EU member states which wanted to show the multidimensional role of the EU, namely military and civilian.

The 2008 EUFOR Chad/CAR mission highlights the on-going tension between European member states to deploy troops in Africa. The UK and Germany both agreed with the deployment of this mission, but refused to take part in it. They were reluctant to take part in a mission which was likely to be perceived as biased, as the French already had their own troops deployed in Chad. However, they also want to show that they are, at least indirectly via the EU, acting to help refugees from Darfur, as this mission is carried out under a UN mandate. As a consequence, they adopted the middle-ground position of agreement but of non-intervention. French leaders were very eager to create this mission as it reinforced European identity, and as the foreign affairs minister Bernard Kouchner and the President Nicolas Sarkozy wanted to appear

as the promoters of a 'new ethical Africa policy'.⁷¹ However, according to Jean-François Bayart, the way France imposed its mission onto its European partners was in fact detrimental to its image.⁷²

Conclusion

As expected by neoclassical realists, humanitarian considerations were generally eclipsed when states did not gain from an intervention in terms of security or economic interest. A norm of non-intervention prevails in Europe: intervention is considered costly, as it is risky for troops and expensive. Non-intervention does not present any problem in terms of state security or trade for European states. States in Europe are still first and foremost concerned with their own political gains when state officials discuss military intervention in Africa. The structure of the international system is therefore crucial: if European states decide not to intervene militarily in conflicts in Africa, they are not threatened by any other state. In addition, when European leaders encourage the AU to act, they avoid putting their own troops at risk. This is why states are likely to favour multilateralism over unilateralism.

When European actors decide to intervene in an African conflict, as suggested by neoclassical realists, perceptions matter. European actors are especially motivated by their own prestige, which contributes to the security of their European states, as other actors perceive them as ethical states. Two types of prestige are important: the prestige of individual EU member states, and the prestige of the EU. National prestige is enhanced when the EU's security identity is reinforced through a successful military mission outside the EU. Prestige is important for a European state, as it increases its moral stance at the EU level, that is, in negotiations within the European Council, and at the international level, that is, in discussions at the UN or with other regional organizations and states, such as the AU, the United States or China. Intervention is conducted at low cost when it occurs within the EU framework, as European states share the risk of an intervention. Neoclassical realism seems the most appropriate theory for explaining European military intervention policy towards Africa: geostrategic interests are crucial for European states, which are concerned with their relative power, and humanitarianism is a factor for intervention only when intervention benefits European states.

Notes

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Looking after the 'European' interest? Neoclassical realism and the European Union's engagement with sub-Saharan Africa

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The approach of the European Union (EU) to sub-Saharan Africa offers a useful case study to explore the tensions between the realist and idealist tendencies of the EU. EU discourse regarding Africa has been dominated by the concept of 'development', but this coexists with behaviour geared towards expanding its own economic and political power in the region. This is particularly surprising as, beyond the political rhetoric, European society is greatly concerned with poverty alleviation and development in Africa. The major transnational campaigns to support African development, such as the Jubilee 2000 and the 'Live 8' networks, have been driven by European civil society, for example. Also, this area has clearly been of less acute strategic and security importance to the EU than closer regions, such as eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. Yet despite all of this, one can divine self-interest and power-related objectives overshadowing development interests in the EU's policies towards Africa. Clearly, the EU has attempted to exploit opportunities created by the post-1989 international order (and the acute weakening of African states) to shape the continent according to its own geopolitical, ideological and geo-economic interests. In some cases these policies seem almost diametrically opposed to the concerns of European civil society, although they are in line with the inclinations of other societal forces. Neoclassical realism offers considerable explanatory potential here, as it leads to a focus on how domestic institutions, interests and ideology interact with the international power structure to shape state behaviour.¹ This is provided, of course, that one assumes that the EU is a sufficiently coherent entity to function as an international actor. As argued below, this is a valid assumption in certain dimensions of international relations. However, given the unique nature of the EU, and the fact that economic factors still dominate its external policies, theories of international political economy (IPE) are necessary to divine the specific causality behind the EU's behaviour.

This chapter offers an explanation of the EU's policies towards Africa, using neoclassical realist and IPE insights. The first section outlines what neoclassical realist and critical IPE theories have to contribute to our understanding of the EU as an international actor and of its foreign-policy and external-relations system. Subsequently, it analyses how the EU's policy towards sub-Saharan Africa has evolved, with a particular emphasis on its trade policy, in relation to the changing global context and the developing strategies of other international actors.

The EU, realism and critical IPE

For obvious reasons, the EU lends itself to theoretical interpretations quite different to mainstream realist international relations theory. It is not a state, it has little real military power and it explicitly professes a worldview quite different from *realpolitik*, in which integration and co-operation overcome the security dilemma and transcend power politics. Essentially liberal (and more recently 'constructivist') approaches to international relations have provided the theoretical basis for understanding the EU's international activities. Others have adopted a more realist, power-centric approach to the EU's international behaviour in recent years, criticizing the benevolent connotations of these more liberal approaches.² Mainstream realism, which focuses on the interaction of power-maximizing states within an anarchic world system, seems to have little relevance. However, as Seán Molloy has convincingly illustrated, realism is a broader church than might appear from a brief purview of the neorealist school.³ In fact, the originators of realism (E. H. Carr and Hans J. Morgenthau) had a much broader vision of international relations and did not postulate that politics need be centred on the nation-state.⁴ Classical realist thought was based essentially on the crucial role of power and interests (as opposed to specific institutional forms) in shaping international relations. Once this broader view of realism is accepted, it can be applied to many more issues and may indeed fit in with more critical or even postmodernist approaches.

The school of neoclassical realism itself is a relatively moderate reformulation of mainstream realist approaches. Some describe it as merely a 'fleshing out' of structural neorealism.⁵ Others articulate it as more of a revival of traditional realist approaches to international relations. Neoclassical realists accept the overwhelming importance of the anarchic international system, and the distribution of power as a means of explaining the production and impact of a state's foreign policy. However, they also place a much greater emphasis on the domestic system, emphasizing that the international system in itself cannot explain what happens. (It has been argued that neoclassical realists have in fact

borrowed from liberal international relations theory and the stress it put on the importance of domestic institutions, but that is not our main concern here.⁶) Determining factors here include the dominant ideology, the bureaucratic traditions and the real power of state institutions, as in their ability to mobilize the resources of the country in question. Fareed Zakaria makes a very useful distinction between national power and state power, the former referring to the latent power of a country and the latter to the power that can be actualized by the government at a given point in time.⁷ This focus on internal dynamics is especially relevant to the EU (which is much less coherent and much more complex than a state). If it is problematic to view a state as a monolithic actor, it is even more so in the case of the EU. The gap between potential and actual power is acutely relevant to the EU also. Many arguments are made based on aggregate data regarding Europe's economic, financial and political resources but it is, to put it mildly, debatable whether these resources can be actualized by the EU institutions.

Accordingly, neoclassical realism may have relevance but it hardly seems adequate to capture the full range of EU external relations. First, like other mainstream international relations theories, it is still based on a state-centric ontology of the international system. It avoids the excessive minimalism of structural neorealism but it also rests on an internal/external dichotomy (the internal realm of the state and the international realm). Transnational forces and institutions are not really catered for. Second, EU activity is fragmented into various sectors (trade, energy, defence etc.) and its power varies across these. Its major influence appears to be in what realists would call low politics,⁸ rather than in the macro-structure of international security. To fully engage with the EU's international political role, broader forms of social and economic interaction must therefore be discussed. The field of international political economy is specifically focused on the interaction between economic and political factors, and its impact on power and welfare; and thus the role of a wider range of socio-economic actors is considered. With regard to Marxist IPE, the concept of 'class' has been the dominant factor but other forms of interest groups and formal or informal institutions are included (from transnational companies to epistemic communities). IPE, in general, and critical IPE, in particular, is explicitly non-state centric. In this respect it differs from most contemporary forms of realism but it also differs sharply from more liberal views of international politics. Indeed, what realists and Marxists share is a vehement objection to the liberal tendency to underplay the reality of power as a defining feature of relationships.⁹ Alex Callinicos notes that many Marxists also share with realists an emphasis on the inherent competition between major states, although the former have a much greater focus on the role of socio-economic class in determining the shape of this struggle.¹⁰

Susan Strange, a prominent and iconoclastic IPE theorist, made explicit these linkages in outlining what she called 'new realism' in 1997.¹¹ The 'r' word was used to denote an approach that was attuned to power relations and opposed to liberal assumptions about interdependence or pluralist global governance. The 'new' aspect was that it avoided a fixation on the state, to include other public and private entities (such as transnational organizations and companies). This was not 'realism' in the mainstream sense of the term; Strange was concerned with social, economic and political regulation in a very broad sense on the global level. Strange's major argument was that, apart from the United States, state power and public power in general was reduced in many areas of life, in favour of an array of other private actors, that combine to form 'market forces'.¹² The relevance of this to the EU is clear. Within Europe it is one of these transnational forces superseding the state, and it may be viewed as form of globalization but it is also a form of regional public power, which seeks to steer and control market forces. This tension between public and private, global and regional, is arguably the most important feature of the EU. Strange's notion of structural power (the power to shape the underlying institutional, material and cognitive structures within which other entities have to act) is also particularly applicable to the form of power the EU articulates within Europe. One of the core functions of EU foreign policy is to develop this kind of structural power at the global level on behalf of Europe as a whole, and in particular its core stakeholders (governments, businesses and so forth).¹³

In summary, neoclassical realism encourages us to look for opportunities caused by changes in the international distribution of power to study the internal dynamics of the EU to understand how it has reacted to these. Theories from critical IPE offer more precise explanatory potential regarding the particular nature of the EU and its global role (and are here applied to the study of its African policy). It should be noted that is not intended to argue here that these two schools of thought can be definitively fused. As stated above, IPE is a broad church that includes many different approaches to understanding interconnected social, economic and political power. The interaction between states and other territorial forms of political organization is just one element of this. Standard neo-Marxist IPE, which emphasizes the role of transnational classes and social forces, would be difficult to combine with neoclassical realism; the more open theories and concepts of Susan Strange are more flexible in this respect. What all IPE theory has in common is that (insofar as it focuses on states/regions) it will emphasize the socio-economic dimension of the 'intervening variables', in neoclassical terminology.

The production of 'EU foreign policy'

The Treaty of Maastricht (ratified in 1993) created a complex and divided internal architecture for the EU, in which institutional powers and roles varied widely according to which pillar the policy area fell under.¹⁴ Pillar I was the European Community itself, which included mostly socio-economic but also some political issues, including the promotion of democracy. For most of its history, EU 'foreign policy' operated via these economic and legal instruments. Pillar II included traditional high politics, defence and foreign-policy issues, while pillar III concerned justice and home affairs. (Before the creation of the European Union, European Community external relations were rigidly separated from foreign-policy coordination.) In reality, the distinction between pillars was always fuzzy, as they were combined to form holistic policies. The eventual ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009 transformed this situation. The European Community is no more and the pillar system is ended. The new High Representative and the supranational European External Action Service is involved with old pillar I issues such as development aid as well as more traditional high-politics issues. However, the crucial distinction remains concerning policy-making in different areas. With regard to high politics and standard security policy, the Council and lower-level member-state bodies are dominant. As a rule, decision-making is on the basis of unanimity. However, for other economic and political issues (including trade, development policy and environmental policy), qualified majority voting is the rule and the Commission is delegated much more autonomous power to shape as well as implement policy.

Developing an analytical model of the EU's 'domestic system' is especially challenging because of this complexity, and because it inevitably leads to deeper questions about the nature of the EU and European integration. There is a long-running debate as to whether the EU may be considered an actor akin to a state (in terms of the degree of power the central institutions have and their autonomy of action in the outside world).¹⁵ The original theory of integration, the neofunctionalist thesis, argued that due to the creation of supranational institutions with such important political and economic powers, a new centre of power had been created in Brussels.¹⁶ Hence Brussels would become the major focus for lobbying by various economic and political interest groups. To the contrary, approaches such as liberal inter-governmentalism argue that real power remains with the nation-states and that European integration is the result of national interest groups pushing their governments to use European institutions for specific purposes.¹⁷ (From an IPE perspective, the EU may be perceived as a structure or as an agent/actor, depending on the context.) In general, 'grand theories' of European integration have fallen out of fashion, as it has become apparent that a clear, parsimonious

answer to existential questions regarding the nature of the EU is not possible. However, these questions overshadow any attempt to theorize the EU's international role. The rest of this section will focus on the operation of specific policies, arguing that in the case of external economic policy, where the institutional framework is highly integrated, the EU can be considered as an actor. In such cases the member-state Council is still the highest executive power but it must combine with powerful supranational institutions, in particular the European Commission, to form EU law and policy.

EU trade policy has been its single-most important external policy and it is worth noting that international trade politics has been striking realist in many respects. The World Trade Organization (WTO) is touted by liberals as a 'rules-based' institution, but these rules are rather limited and a close analysis of how it operates reveals it to be more of a forum for organized combat than a real constitutionalization of international relations. Trade negotiations are characterized by brinkmanship and a constant atmosphere of crisis, with enormous pressure put on developing countries to open their markets.¹⁸ Its dispute settlement system is useful only for states or regions with sufficient economic clout.¹⁹ The EU has been at heart of the power struggles within the WTO (which it was instrumental in establishing). It has used its economic weight to lever concessions from other countries, while retaining protectionist policies for agricultural and textile products. It combined with the United States to convince developing countries to agree to a new round of trade liberalization in November 2001, exploiting the new geopolitical context after the attacks of '9/11'. At the same time, the EU has been ready to threaten the United States with trade conflicts over various issues. The EU can act like this because of its economic weight and the relatively supranational operation of its trade policy. From the beginning of the European customs union, the Commission was given the role of agent, to negotiate trading relationships with other countries and regions. In practice, trade policy is a delicate balance between the Commission's role and the member states. The Commission acts on a mandate from the Council but is given substantial leeway, although member-state committees work to keep tabs on it. (The European Parliament has a much greater say on external trade policy since the Lisbon Treaty but has not historically played a major role.)

Beyond the political institutions, what social forces influence EU policy? Obviously, economic interest groups will be very active in lobbying here, through either national or European channels. Recent work by Andreas Dür has outlined precisely how this works.²⁰ He argues that the EU's negotiating position in multilateral trade talks has been more or less exactly in line with the needs of major economic interest groups. On the other hand, aspects of EU trade policy appear to be

guided more by the interests of autonomous political and bureaucratic elites. This has been noteworthy in the use of the EU's trade instruments for geopolitical purposes, to develop strategic relationships with regions which are not necessarily the most commercially important. The relative importance of interest groups and political elites has been the subject of much debate in studies of trade policy.²¹ Many other societal groupings seek to influence EU trade policy for more ethical and idealistic objectives. The lobbying of human-rights, development and environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is a considerable factor in EU policy-making. NGOs such as Amnesty International and Oxfam International have devoted considerable resources to lobbying and networking in Brussels. The influence of such forces is evident in trade concessions such as the Everything but Arms initiative.²² However, one would expect their role to be overshadowed by the key political and economic forces and the underlying ideology.

Development policy is an area where one would expect to see much more of an influence for civil society groups and their ethical objectives. This is true up to a point, as aid policy *is* used for development and humanitarian objectives; this is illustrated in numerous EU publications. However, aid policy is also used overwhelmingly to support a certain economic model. Also, development policy includes trade policy and, as argued above, it would be naive to expect trade policy not to serve as an instrument of EU interests and power. The same political/strategic interests predominate, and development policy in important areas such as the Mediterranean often seems to serve trade and strategic interests rather than development *per se*.²³ One aspect of EU external relations that is to a large degree steered by the Commission (and the Council Secretariat) is the development of legal and institutional relations with other countries. This includes regular summits of leaders but also much broader forms of institutionalized contacts between public officials and other societal actors. These may be bilateral (EU–China contacts) or multilateral/inter-regional, a format that is particularly favoured by the Commission as it attempts to bolster its own position (and if possible replicate European-style institutionalization and legalization throughout the world).²⁴ The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP, and the Common Security and Defence Policy, CSDP) remains distinct. Inter-governmentalist approaches seem particularly appropriate here, where overwhelming legal power remains with the member-state governments, and significant decisions and initiatives must be unanimous. Accordingly, the focus would have to be on analysing the foreign-policy processes of the individual states. However, there is substantial evidence that, even for the CSDP, the processes of socialization and pressures of collective decision-making mean that policy-making is more cohesive and continuous than one might suppose.²⁵

In brief, in attempting to explain the EU's foreign policies, no one model of foreign-policy analysis is possible, due to the heterogeneity and complexity of EU policy-making. The assumption here is that the EU institutions do have a substantial degree of coherence and power with regard to traditional 'pillar I' external relations. Although the neo-functional thesis may be exaggerated, there is strong evidence for the historical institutionalist²⁶ view that the supranational EU institutions have developed a substantial role in forming policy, due to the accumulation of tasks and international interaction over time. With regard to formal foreign policy, the situation is more fluid and inter-governmental dynamics prevail, although they are mediated by processes of socialization. Overall, there is ample reason to justify treating the EU as an actor in international affairs (even if it is not as coherent as a state). The EU can produce sustained policies that influence other regions, but the overall strength of EU policy will depend on the interests of the member states. The form of the EU's response to opportunities and threats in its external environment is determined by this complex interplay of institutional, ideological and cognitive factors and the differentiated input of various social forces (what neoclassical realism refers to as intervening variables). As highlighted above, EU trade policy is the outcome of the different (although not always contradictory) interests of policy-makers, economic interest groups and other social groups. The precise manner in which this affects the EU's actions towards different regions depends on the configuration of interests and ideas for the region in question. Let us now turn to the case of sub-Saharan Africa.

The EU in Africa: the Cold War years

On the European side, there is a long history of ideas and proposals for a special relationship (beyond formal colonialism) between Europe and Africa.²⁷ The period when European integration was set in motion also heralded the end of formal European colonialism and it was almost inevitable that the new European Economic Community would develop a relationship with Africa. In this case, the impetus was given by France, whose government was at that time attempting to maintain its colonial connections through various forms of integrative schemes (within which colonies would have autonomy). It was eager to use the economic instruments of the EU on this behalf. Thus the Treaty of Rome included special trading arrangements for colonies and a European Development Fund (EDF) to administer aid. The EDF was separate from the regular budget and would be controlled by a committee of member states (as they wanted to keep close control over this foreign-policy instrument) but inevitably the Commission's role would increase over time. The

1970s witnessed a large increase in ambition on the EU's part, with the launch of the Lomé Convention. This was with the African, Caribbean, Pacific (ACP) group, which was dominated by sub-Saharan African states and did not include the Arab states of North Africa.²⁸ This was due to the entry of Britain into the EU (and the new external relationships this involved) and the development of decolonization and the Cold War in general. The new African states had become a major focus for Cold War competition between the Soviets and the Communist bloc, as both vied for influence. This was also a period of relative Third World power, as these countries sought to use their role as commodity producers to change the terms of the global economy (the OPEC oil cartel was one very special example of this). In Africa, large states such as Nigeria saw themselves as vectors of a newly empowered continent, and it played a major role in negotiating Lomé.²⁹ This international context is the reason why the Lomé arrangements were so extensive and relatively generous. It gave the ACP countries duty-free access to the EU for most industrial products and it offered increased economic aid, to be used according to the ACP states' own priorities. In return, EU member states ensured a continued European presence (in political and socio-economic affairs) and maintained the existing economic relationship at a relatively cheap price. The EU's policies thus served a broad geo-economic and geopolitical function: securing the supply of raw materials, maintaining diplomatic relationships and supporting the maintenance of capitalist systems more generally. The last was more of an ideological role but in the Cold War context this had a geopolitical dimension. It is also important to note that member states were not constraining their own autonomy of action. Most notably France pursued a series of very proactive policies to maintain its own power in Francophone countries. It nurtured and preserved two currency unions based on the French franc and essentially controlled from Paris.³⁰ It distributed its own extensive economic aid; it managed a network of allies and clients in Africa; and it maintained numerous bases and intervened militarily several times in support of its allies.³¹

The EU and Africa in the globalization era

The EU's range of policies in Africa expanded notably as the international system evolved and the pretensions of African states faded. The banking and financial turbulence of the 1980s led to acute financial crisis in most African states. The cash-strapped Soviet Union was of no use in this scenario. Governments had to turn to Western international institutions. In return for financial aid, these insisted on denuding states of much of their role and public expenditure.³² In retrospect it is clear that the crisis

and the response helped deprive the governments in question of much of their capacity for autonomous action and legitimacy.

The imposition of a harsh neoliberal orthodoxy was led by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, while the EU institutions played a minor role. However, this process created a space for the EU to project its power more forcefully at a later date. The Lomé IV Agreement, signed in 1989, witnessed much more assertiveness on the part of the Europeans. Aid would have more strings attached with regard to economic reform. Prescriptions on democracy and human rights (with associated conditionality reinforced in a mid-term review), while hardly realist in nature, did signal an increased willingness on the Europeans' part to promote their political values. Shortly after the terms for Lomé IV were agreed, the end of the Cold War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, reduced whatever geo-strategic importance Africa had and thus further diminished its leverage. Governments could no longer rely on Western fear of Soviet influence. Generally, the efforts towards regional integration after 1989, and the creation of the continent-wide African Union in 2002, were more about attracting foreign investment than forging an indigenous power bloc. The transformation of South Africa raised the possibility of it being a leader and a strong interlocutor with the EU, but the latter took care to develop a separate trading and political relationship with South Africa, separating it from other African countries.

The 1990s witnessed a further implosion of many African states, amid continued economic failure and political chaos. On the European side the new post-1989 international dispensation opened up a plethora of possibilities. The EU had greatly integrated since the 1970s and was set to extend its legal and institutional framework over the entire European continent. The apparent decline of interstate conflict within a globalizing world (albeit one maintained by US hegemony) opened up a space within which an entity like the EU could extend its role in many sectors. Geo-economics appeared to trump geopolitics as the dominant issue in international affairs and the security problems that were most salient appeared as features of socio-economic problems. All of this inspired a much more proactive effort on the part of the EU to use its economic instruments to influence international politics and economics. This was evidenced in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, launched in 1995. This project, from which the United States was excluded, sought to combine economic, political and security policies to develop a sphere of influence in the Mediterranean. Sub-Saharan Africa had clearly faded in importance (both strategically and economically), although it was still a vital source of raw materials, such as cobalt, and still of relevance to European security. In global commercial terms, EU business interests were not primarily directed at Africa itself: emerging markets in Asia and Latin America were much more tempting.

All of the above opened what Federica Bicchì calls a 'policy window', in that a strikingly new environment seemed to require a new approach, the nature of which was unclear.³³ Within the EU, the Commission attempted to set the agenda. Its inclination was not to break the elaborate institutionalized relationship that had been developed and which it had a prime role in operating.³⁴ However, it proposed a radical reshaping of the existing relationship, essentially aligning it more closely with EU interests. (This Commission proposal was complied with by the EU member states.) The interests included direct trading interests of the EU as well as support for the neoliberal globalization agenda more generally. This decade witnessed the reinvigoration of the world trading regime, in which the EU led the way in changing the rules and in expanding the remit of 'trade' law to deeper elements of the economy. An element of this effort to reinvigorate multilateral trade law ran contrary to the notion of special preferential trading relationships with developing regions (apart from with those states classified as 'least-developed countries' due to particular vulnerability). The EU was in no way willing to fight to preserve the Lomé trade preferences. Although civil society movements to support Africa's poorest picked up momentum in this decade, this had more effect on aspects of EU discourse (references to poverty reduction and the millennium development goals) than on the thrust of its economic policy. Meanwhile, within the political institutions, general moves to develop the Union's identity in security and defence issues were also relevant.

All of the above helped to shape the Cotonou Agreement, signed between the EU and ACP countries in 2000. This was much more flexible, from the EU's point of view, than the Lomé Conventions.³⁵ It laid out a broad framework for interaction between the (entirely unequal) partners. Conditionality was increased and there were no guaranteed commitments for countries any more. Money would be granted according to progress. A broader political dialogue was established which would include security issues (conflict prevention and peace-building) and migration. Regarding trade, the current preferences were extended until 2008, after which there would be a radical reshaping of the relationship one way or the other. Only the least-developed countries would be offered 'free' access to the EU market. Richer (but still very poor) developing countries would have to open their own domestic markets in return, exposing their own economies to full competition with European business.

The EU actually proposed an arrangement to sign regional economic partnership agreements (EPAs) with six regions. This broke up the ACP as a trading group, which was now to be divided up into six geo-economic regions, or into a series of bilateral arrangements with the EU should this option be rejected. Such a move led to criticism that the EU was adopting a 'divide and conquer' approach. Furthermore, the four regions which the EU delineated in Africa (see table 9.1) cut across existing regional

Table 9.1 The EU's proposed regional economic partnership agreements

Acronym	Title	Opening of negotiations ^a
CEMAC	Communauté Économique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale (Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa)	4 October 2003
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States	6 October 2003
ESA	Eastern and Southern Africa	7 February 2004
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community	8 July 2004

^a Date of opening of negotiations over economic partnership agreement.

Source: European Commission Trade Directorate General, Factsheet on Regional Negotiations on Economic Partnership Agreements, 6 November 2006, <http://ec.europa.eu/trade>, accessed 4 December 2006.

structures. The Treaty on an African Economic Community had isolated eight regional economic organizations, which were to integrate internally and then with each other, eventually to form an African common market, which would increase the continent's leverage in world affairs. The Commission had now created different regional frameworks and was linking their own integration with integration with the EU. Thus the EU vision threatened to distort the development of regional integration in Africa. It had already done this in southern Africa through its free trade agreement with South Africa.³⁶

The Commission was given a mandate to begin EPA negotiations in 2002 (see table 9.1). As many had feared, the EPAs were essentially free trade agreements, similar to what the EU had been negotiating with much wealthier developing countries, such as Argentina and Brazil. There were no new policies to support development, apart from the offer of longer transition periods than usual. In addition to allowing for free trade in goods, they also provided for free trade in services and some protection for EU investors. The EPAs gave an opportunity for the EU to reintroduce the infamous Singapore issues, which had been intensely resisted by developing countries within the WTO. These included agreeing common rules for national procurement policy, competition policy and other issues that impinged on the freedom of states to control their own economies. Developing countries see efforts to create binding international law on such issues as overly intrusive and these issues have been (together with agriculture) the greatest stumbling block to a new world trade agreement.³⁷ Unsurprisingly, the EU's pursuit of this kind

of trade deal led to heated rhetoric and criticism from the African side and from international civil society groups. The EPAs have been likened to a form of neocolonialism, and even modern-day slavery. Meanwhile, Commission officials and leaders doggedly pursued their goal, quietly insisting that the EPAs would be for the long-term benefit of all. African governments were less vitriolic than civil society groups but it is apparent that the EPA format was not what they would have wished for (this is clear from their arguments within the WTO on similar issues). The fact that EPA negotiations were begun, and progressed significantly in some cases, is testimony to the power and prestige of the EU. African governments felt unable to explicitly reject the EU's policy framework. They chose to engage in negotiations but made clear their unhappiness with the process.³⁸

Given the feelings of the European public, and the wave of popular support for development in Africa, the harshness of the EPAs is surprising. It is strikingly illustrative of the EU's role in supporting Europe's economic power above all. Officials and politicians from EU member states have expressed concern at the Commission's approach, but it is the member states which gave it this mandate. In fact, this is a classic case of the member states using the Commission to perform a useful but not very edifying policy. While politicians such as Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac portrayed themselves as pro-African leaders, the much-maligned Brussels bureaucrats performed their function of pursuing EU commercial and geo-economic power. As it turns out, for reasons discussed below, the EU's vision was not implemented and no regional EPAs were signed with Africa before the end of the deadline. It was always going to be difficult for the designated regions to complete integration within the designated timeframe. (Regional integration has been a long-running official objective in Africa but has rarely been realized, for various reasons, including state weakness and the prevalence of neo-patrimonial politics.) Bilateral interim EPAs were signed with most of the larger economies when the 2008 deadline was reached. Some interim regional EPAs were also agreed, although not in the comprehensive manner envisaged in table 9.1, and with considerable acrimony. For example the South African Customs Union (the oldest customs union in the world) came under intense strain, as some member countries agreed an interim regional EPA with the EU in 2009 but others did not. The EU has succeeded in intermingling itself with the endogenous integration process in these regions, at some cost to its own reputation and to the regional organizations. As one NGO alliance put it:

At the end of 2007, Europe deployed manipulative and heavy-handed tactics in an attempt to force African governments into so-called 'interim' agreements. When it became clear that no African regional

bloc would agree to its demands, the European Commission, with the active support of its member states, resorted to blatant divide-and-rule tactics. Europe capitalised on the fact that, for historical reasons, a few export sectors in Africa are largely dependent on the European market.³⁹

EDF aid in this period (2001–7) primarily served as the sweetener to compensate for the harsher trade diplomacy. Indeed, of the €11,300 million allocated for this period, a relatively large proportion went directly to poverty-reduction, humanitarian and infrastructural projects (compared with EU aid for more strategically important regions, such as the Middle East).⁴⁰ A significant proportion did go to purposes directly linked to the EU's trade promotion agenda (especially regional-level aid). Blunt conditionality was used mainly against countries with severely repressive governments or which had fallen into internal conflict: states such as Sudan and Equatorial Guinea received delayed and/or minimized aid. The new element of Cotonou was to have performance-based funding to act as an incentive for government behaviour. For smaller, aid-dependent African countries, this could have been a significant factor in government calculation. In fact, though, only Cameroon suffered a significant real reduction in aid; other countries had minor reductions or aid reallocated to different sectors (or in some cases the reserve amount was reduced). The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) received a massive boost in EDF support, which was clearly related to the EU's broader political engagement with the country. Cotonou had signalled the EU's intention to have a greater security role in Africa. This decade did see a major increase in EU interventions of different sorts. (The vast majority of EU CSDP/ESDP actions have been in either wider Europe, for obvious reasons, or in sub-Saharan Africa.) A French-led ESDP mission to the DRC in 2003 heralded the EU's arrival as a military actor in Africa. This was followed by another mission to provide security for the elections in 2006. The largest single mission was to Chad, to help provide security for refugees from Darfur (2008–9). This was a tricky affair, as the force was French-dominated and France is not seen as an impartial actor by rebel forces within Chad. The EU flag (and an Irish commanding general) did, though, help it project a more neutral stance. As well as military missions, there have been numerous policing and security training missions, and financial and technical support to other peacekeeping efforts. All missions have been coordinated with EU aid policy and other aspects of its engagement, as symbolized by joint press conferences held by EU military staff and Commission officials. These operations are in line with United Nations actions and are an illustration of the EU's professed values, although a more cynical view has been put forward that the EU has been using sub-Saharan Africa as a means to

practise its new military coordination and planning mechanisms and to promote its own military and foreign-policy identity.⁴¹ Certainly, it is not clear that its military activities are a direct response to demand: it refused to provide troops to the DRC in 2008 despite appeals from local and international voices. The revision of Cotonou in 2005 added more meat to the political dimension, with new clauses on cooperation regarding terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

Ironically, while the reality of Cotonou was unfolding, Africa's general importance for EU policy-makers had revitalized somewhat. The reasons for this change in attitude are worth dwelling on. Obviously, there were always basic economic and security interests, but since the end of the Cold War Africa's broader strategic significance was diminished. The attacks of '9/11' increased US and European security elites' concern about sub-Saharan Africa's failed states and religious/ethnic tensions. Of course, Al-Qaeda's first attacks had been in East Africa, rather than the Middle East or the West, but this was not taken so seriously at the time. Now, for better or worse, Africa had the full attention of US policy-makers. Apart from security issues, US dependence on oil from West Africa is growing. For the first time it looked to establish its own Africa military command, although this was received without much enthusiasm. Also, the massive economic growth of countries such as China and India was further changing the geo-economic/geo-strategic environment. With the rise of such heavily populated countries, the relative scarcity of natural resources was thrown into sharp relief.

India began to develop its deep, but relatively dormant, relations with the continent in this period. But by far the most striking new operator was the People's Republic of China. The energy and mineral reserves of Africa were highly prized by China, which devoted massive financial and diplomatic resources to developing strategic economic relationships with key countries.⁴² It was able to do this with some success because of its willingness to offer direct aid, in terms of cash, people and equipment, with no strings attached (no inconvenient conditionality). Thus China became a major partner of oil-rich countries such as Angola. The high-profile Forum on China Africa Cooperation (with regular high-level ministerial meetings) launched in 2000 heralded its new role. The Forum also signified China's intention to derive broader diplomatic and geo-strategic benefits from its economic diplomacy. China's emergence as a major power in Africa would appear to be an example of the EU being outmatched by a more coherent partner. This conclusion should be moderated by the fact the Chinese role in Africa has not been as monolithic as the headlines suggest. Ian Taylor describes the Chinese policy-making system as a form of 'fragmented authoritarianism' which does not always lead to coherent policies; for example, he points out that the two major Chinese state oil companies have been competing

with each other as much as with Western companies.⁴³ He also notes that many of the Chinese economic entities that are contracting with Africa are private-sector companies. Nevertheless, China's success does illustrate the impact that a state can have, as opposed to a regional bloc. Its expanded presence illustrated that the continent was no longer to be taken for granted as Europe's backyard, or as a site in which new techniques of global governance could be exercised.

Accordingly, the phrase 'scramble for Africa' came back into fashion. Apart from any specific European need, it was this competition that motivated it. This is not to say that its thinking was entirely zero-sum, but the renewed interest clarified the long-term importance of Africa. As the EU Development Commissioner put it:

Africa is evolving and changing more than many other region of the world. Africa is once again being courted by all the global powers, with the United States and China leading the way. It is no longer regarded as a 'burden', but as an opportunity, a 'new frontier'.⁴⁴

Thus, completing the move away from the ACP framework, the EU launched its own Strategy for Africa in 2005⁴⁵ (this included North Africa, although this region was already saturated in EU policy initiatives). Why another initiative? Apart from the exclusive all-Africa focus (which allowed for a coherent treatment of the migration question) the strategy was to help develop a holistic analysis of Africa. Above all, the major aim was to help develop coherence between EU policies and member states' policies towards Africa, and an end to the pattern of member states using the EU as an instrument for broad policies while pursuing their own agendas. In practice, this will be difficult to maintain. Energy-rich but repressive states such as Equatorial Guinea may be cold-shouldered by the European Commission but they find individual member states more cordial.

The EU's strategy was to a large extent transferred into a joint Africa–EU Strategic Partnership agreed at a rather awkward EU–Africa summit at Lisbon in 2007. Buoyed by renewed interest from other great powers, African governments had shown renewed assertiveness towards the EU, in different senses. As stated above, they only grudgingly signed trade agreements. The programming process for the next round of aid (post-2007) was also one of the most controversial processes in memory, not because the EU was any more insistent about funding its own priorities than before, but because Africans were more conscious of other options. The partnership offers new modes of cooperation within key sectors: energy, climate change, trade, science, migration and mobility, the millennium development goals, democratic governance and peace and security.⁴⁶ It is not clear what the partnership offers in addition to the already extensive Cotonou arrangements. It does involve a new focus on

the African Union itself (which the EU is heavily involved in supporting) and the rhetoric emphasizes the move beyond a donor–recipient relationship. This was also illustrated by the Lisbon summit controversy over the attendance of Robert Mugabe. Many Europeans objected to the latter but the African leaders insisted on his presence and the EU acquiesced.

A rising or a fading power?

In the post-1989 era, the EU and its key stakeholders have been attempting to take advantage of the dominance of global neoliberalism and the weakness of the African state. They have attempted to further the deep power of the EU and of (Western-dominated) global governance structures more generally. On the economic frontier, the regional free trade areas should promote its business interests and further strengthen its negotiating power in the WTO.

The EU has also sought to insert itself inextricably into the regional integration process in Africa, to ensure that Africa develops in partnership with Europe, with structural advantages for European business. (The evolving security role should add another dimension to the EU's presence.) All of this supports an interpretation of the EU acting as an expansive neo-mercantilist force in the post-Cold War order. It is important, though, to qualify this view with the fact that the EU is supporting global capitalism more generally, as well as its own particular configuration of business interests. Values are a factor (although in reality they are applied inconsistently and autonomous member states' policies may openly flout them), as is the broader project of developing global governance. Indeed, arguably, the EU could benefit by being more conventionally realist and acting more like China (or France in the Cold War era). Also, while there is a degree of competition with China, this is not an all-encompassing zero-sum rivalry, as the EU and China are different kinds of actors, and the EU's interests are broad. China is also a major economic partner of the EU and, in a typical EU move, the EU has offered China a collaborative 'triangular partnership' vis-à-vis Africa.⁴⁷ It is offering the value of its experience and subtly trying to draw China into the donor community, and thus to attach some 'strings' to its aid.⁴⁸

Bearing in mind the very particular objectives of EU policy, how successful has it been? It is indisputable that some of the EU's key objectives for its Africa policy have not yet been achieved (most notably the complete set of regional trading arrangements it wanted). Certainly the opinion among the commentariat would be that it is being overshadowed by more dynamic powers. Its role with regard to the most explosive political issues, such as Darfur and Zimbabwe, appears to be weak. The goal of achieving complete regional economic partnerships was always

very ambitious on the EU's part, as they are sharply contrary to popular opinion and its own pro-development rhetoric. Interim economic partnership agreements have been signed with most of the major partners and the relentless push for integration continues. The EU is still Africa's greatest trading partner and has a much deeper relationship (in terms of societal and cultural links) than the likes of China. It is true that this deep economic and social power cannot be transformed into immediate political power (as evidenced by its failure to exclude Robert Mugabe from the Africa–EU summit and its frequent disagreements with African states within the United Nations). However, the EU's presence will never be as bombastic and impressive as the presence of powers such as China and the United States, and it should not be evaluated in these terms.

Conclusion

Although there has been an underlying continuity in the EU's policy towards sub-Saharan Africa over the years (most notably an effort to institutionalize relationships), a closer examination reveals that substantial changes have taken place. The reasons for these changes can be found in the changing international political and economic system (the fall of the Soviet Union and the intensification of neoliberal globalization), corresponding changes in the strategy of the EU institutions, as well as broader political and economic interests within Europe. The new dispensation after 1989 allowed the EU to pursue its ethical objectives more directly but it also led policy-makers to attempt to exploit its relationship with Africa to further its geo-economic trade strategy, and this was the major thrust of EU policy (as exemplified by the Cotonou Agreement). In the last decade, due to Africa's renewed importance, the EU has paid more attention to the continent as a geopolitical entity and has developed new efforts at a cooperative partnership.

Liberal understandings of the EU's role are patently inadequate. Clearly, considerations other than ideals or free markets have played a major role in its African policy. Mainstream neorealism is hardly appropriate either. The EU is not a state nor about to become one. Its increased CSDP activity does not herald its arrival as a military power. It is not mimicking the standard 'great power' approach to carving out a sphere of influence (as the French did in the post-war period). Structural neorealism cannot really accommodate the EU as an agent, as opposed to an instrument of member states. On the other hand, the neoclassical approach does have much to offer. It can help us understand how EU processes, elites and interest groups combine to expand its role, in accordance with the opportunities presented by the evolving global order. It also helps us understand the limitations of the EU's role, as it

fails to apply the latent power of the states that make it up. Furthermore, the emphasis on culture, and how it interacts with institutions and power structures, is fruitful. EU policy-makers are certainly acting on behalf of Europe's interests but aspects of their approach, such as the obsession with region-building, reflect more than purely rational calculation: this regionalist approach is a cultural or ideological bias. The EU as a totality is likely to remain a conundrum both for policy-makers and for theorists. I would argue that neoclassical realism in itself can offer only a rough panoramic model of the EU's evolving international role. Its structure is *sui generis* and the 'intervening domestic variables' are phenomenally complex in such a multi-level, and to a degree transnational, system. No international relations theory resting on an internal/external dichotomy can truly capture this entity. We need theoretical insights from IPE to comprehend the socio-economic forces which shape the evolution of the EU and its foreign policies.

Notes

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- 14 The term 'EU' is used here to denote the European Economic Community,

founded in 1957, although the European Union, which subsumed the Community, did not actually exist until the Treaty of Maastricht was ratified in 1993.

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- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 An initiative launched in 2001 which removes tariffs on nearly all exports from least developed countries to the EU.
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- 24 For a dated but still relevant account of this tendency see G. Edwards and E. Regelsberger, *Europe's Global Links: The European Community and Inter-Regional Cooperation* (London: Pinter, 1990).
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The rise and fall of the Common Security and Defence Policy: bringing strategic culture back in

Jean-Yves Haine

A civil war breaks out in a country neighbouring the Europe Union (EU). Civilians are targeted and suffer many casualties. Europeans are divided: one of the European 'big powers' recognizes one side to the conflict, unilaterally and without any consultation, while another breaks ranks with its European counterpart and no consensus can be reached. Brussels is the theatre of a European cacophony and the EU becomes irrelevant. The United States is reluctantly dragged into the crisis. In an emergency, the Security Council of the United Nations (UN) designs a resolution allowing for a no-fly zone. Nothing is solved on the ground. Sound familiar? When it happened in Bosnia twenty years ago, the discord seen in Europe was tragic.

When the Libya crisis flared up in 2011, the same display of divisions was farcical. So, after two long decades of introspection, triggered by several constitutional crises and failed referenda, after the creation of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) which was supposed to give the Union one telephone number and an EU 'foreign minister' who was supposed to speak in its name with one voice, more than ten years after the establishment of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which allows Europe to act militarily on its own, Europe's coherence and influence do not seem to have moved one inch further since the end of the Cold War.

How can we explain this paralysis? The traditional explanations and theoretical frameworks, realism and constructivism, are at odds to explain the rise *and* fall of Europe's CSDP. What needs to be introduced is a neoclassical realist understanding that underlines the role of historical context, elites' consensus, shared beliefs and actual practices, all encapsulated in the rich and contested notion of strategic culture.

Neoclassical realism has its roots in the Aronian tradition in international relations, which emphasized a 'historical and sociological' *understanding* of international politics, rather than abstract

generalizations deduced from *explaining* the international system.¹ Its focus on historical knowledge implies 're-enactments' of thinking and intentions and offers a 'synoptic judgement' based on interpretations.² As an approach, it thus rejects the overzealous and ultimately fake rigour of rationalism; it remains sceptical about artificial demarcation and excessive formalism between causes and effects, dependent and independent variables.³ As such, it proudly claims its reductionist aspect and its pragmatist eclecticism. It is well aware of its marginal status in any academic department of political science and often feels more at home in a department of history. At the same time, it tries, with all its 'scientific' limitations, to fill the gap between abstract theories and real-world politics.⁴ In doing so, it has embraced the intangible realm of ideas, beliefs, emotions and cultures in parallel to the more tangible domain of national interests, *raison d'état* and power calculations. In short, it recognizes that rational and non-rational expressions of domestic interests and leaders' preferences – what Raymond Aron called 'passions' versus 'interest' – do matter in world politics. It acknowledges the considerable significance of power and influence but at the same time it admits its elusiveness and its ambiguity. It is keen to underline the specificity of high politics, but it accepts the role and the complexities of individual, cultural and sociological factors in the decision-making processes of foreign policies.

These elements allow for 'deviations' from the international system's constraints and forces.⁵ In a sense, neoclassical realism tends to give 'muscles and blood and nerves' to the complexities of world politics.⁶ In the development of international relations theories, neoclassical realism was thus first a reaction to the blind and cold logic of structural world politics, a plea for recognition of the diversity of international goals and configurations, and a call to integrate the richness of domestic politics and the complexity of decision-makers' preferences and processes. *Vis-à-vis* constructivism, neoclassical realism is more accommodating, as long as constructivists remember that what is ultimately voluntary cannot be made necessary or, to put it in another way, that ideas belong to human *virtù*, not to mechanistic *necessità*. The common foes are reification and structure – material *and* ideational – which deny human freedom, responsibility and thus tragedy; the common aversion is to causal determinisms that exclude the contingent, the unexpected and thus also the tragic. It is ultimately a matter of common sense and a question of middle ground about what realism and constructivism could achieve.⁷ As a research programme, neoclassical realism has thus emphasized different elements and factors that blurred the transmission belt of the international system: resource extraction, state capacities, social mobilization, leaders' beliefs and cognitive systems, elite consensus, domestic interest groups, threat assessments and strategic beliefs. Focusing on CSDP processes and outputs, this chapter will focus primarily on the last

element, encompassed in the familiar notion of strategic culture. It will argue that this concept offers the best framework to understand the rise *and* fall of the CSDP.

The concept of strategic culture has been controversial since its development in the late 1970s. These controversies were part of a larger debate about realism versus constructivism, which was itself an illustration of the old dispute about the nature of causality in international relations.⁸ Broadly defined, a strategic culture encapsulates the set of basic assumptions, values, norms, beliefs and knowledge shared by actors which help to shape and rank policy and military options and operations to achieve security and defence goals. Following Colin S. Gray's well known formulation, strategic culture offers a context – the historical contingency – and a framework of cognition – the sociological milieu – that informs and is informed by practices. As we shall see, these two elements are crucial to understand the kind of 'security' culture developed by the EU,⁹ its painful translation into practice and ultimately its demise as an efficient and coherent means to achieve political objectives. Indeed, when applied to the EU, the concept becomes even more disputed, because the Union as a strategic actor is a matter of dispute. Indeed, the EU in security and defence issues is a strange political animal. For some analysts, the very idea of a European strategic culture is a contradiction in terms. Precisely because the EU is not a state and never will be, it cannot have a proper strategy, since the unity of command and the legitimacy of the decision to use force will always escape it.¹⁰

The concept has three main advantages, however. First, it gives a better understanding of agency. If the EU could be best described as a classic inter-governmental entente, it operates nonetheless in a dense institutionalized environment.¹¹ It is sensitive to power positions among its member states but it is also heavily influenced by linkages and bridges with other European policies. It is equally open to other actors' influence, in particular the Commission, which has the crucial leverage provided by money and administrative capacities. If the process is thus mainly shaped by inter-governmental politics, it is also informed by the density of networks, institutions, bureaucracies and transnational actors that crowd the EU. Indeed, constructivists underline the role of institutions as key elements of an ongoing socialization process and this feature makes the Union a relevant level for the analysis of a strategic culture. The Lisbon Treaty – which established the External Action Service to assist the European 'foreign minister' – is supposed to bring more coherence and efficiency to this peculiar process of decision-making, but it will not erase the inter-governmental nature of the CSDP.¹² By its very nature, the CSDP is thus preoccupied with internal legitimacy and due process, and therefore is not very receptive to systemic forces. It represents a case in which neoclassical realism would seem particularly pertinent.

Second, the concept of strategic culture allows for a more comprehensive approach to defence and security. As we shall see, in the case of the EU, it is remarkable how foreign policies and defence strategies have been developed in parallel, without effectively converging. There remains considerable discrepancy between the structure and the level of forces, the strategic thinking and the overall foreign-policy objectives. Or to put it differently, there are few organic links between Europe's grand strategy and CSDP developments and operations. Yet the CSDP cannot be properly understood outside the context of the CFSP.

Third, the CSDP has to be evaluated in terms of its institutional development and shared beliefs, as well as in its actual implementation and results on the ground. Together, discourse *and* practice constitute a culture. The significant strategic test for CSDP endeavours occurs in actual engagements, where the enemy has a vote. Precisely because strategy is about 'an adversary's will and behaviour', relevant learning occurs in conflicts and on battlefields.¹³ This 'strategic' dimension of the CSDP is often neglected by constructivist approaches. Inside the Union they have mainly focused on the legitimacy and socialization process – most often in relation to its NATO counterpart – and outside the EU they underline its normative 'power' dimension.¹⁴ It is often overlooked that the most relevant evaluation belongs either to Europe's eventual adversaries or to its potential allies. Seen from Beijing, Moscow or indeed Washington, the perception of Europe's actual power seems to be quite different from the normative-power mantra repeated *ad nauseam* in Brussels.

Before turning to the study of Europe's security culture as the crucial element to better understand the trajectory of the CSDP, the chapter will first review the traditional approaches to its rise and fall and underline their limits.

Classic interpretations and their limits

When observing the rise of the CSDP, both realist and constructivist scholars have presented important explanations and supporting arguments. Yet, when confronted with its current crisis and its demise, none could offer a coherent analysis. Neoclassical realism, through the concept of strategic culture, has to come to the rescue.

The realist approach has underlined the two traditional elements of power and threat as the main variables to explain the rise of the CSDP. Starting with its structural version, it has been suggested that the EU launched its defence and security initiative mostly because US power and its exercise became a concern for Europeans. The CSDP is a classic illustration of the balance-of-power theory, with its usual pitfalls of

indeterminacy, oversimplification and ambiguity. As argued by Barry Posen in 2006:

the EU is preparing itself to manage autonomously security problems on Europe's periphery and to have a voice in the settlement of more distant security issues, should they prove of interest. It is doing so because Europeans do not trust the United States to always be there to address these problems and because many Europeans do not like the way the United States addresses these problems. They want another option, and they realize that military power is necessary to have such an option.¹⁵

We have to differentiate at least two aspects of US power to fine tune the realist argument. First, in its plainest version, it is the very power of the United States which, after the end of the Cold War, was a sufficient element to explain the rise of a European defence policy. Implicitly, the relevant aspect concerned the likely US disengagement from Europe, which would have triggered the end of NATO as a meaningful alliance for European security and thus have led to the process of building European military capabilities, which in turn would make the prediction of US withdrawal accurate. Instead, the 1990s saw the slow and complex process of the Europeanization of NATO, that is, Europe's search for more autonomy, not to break the Atlantic circle but, on the contrary, to strengthen it.¹⁶ As we shall see, the 1998 Saint-Malo Agreement was in many ways the last embodiment of that process. Second, behind US power, what is referred to is actually its *revisionist* character during the 'Bush revolution' in world affairs after the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001. US revisionism was translated in an exceptional prerogative to proclaim right and wrong for the world, with a clear emphasis on unilateralism to achieve US objectives, a shift from institutions to *ad hoc* coalitions and a new prominence of the preventive use of force. This 'hegemonic revisionism' is the crucial element that may have triggered Europe's balancing behaviour.¹⁷

Neoclassical realists have long pointed out that in order to explain balancing behaviour, it is necessary to bring the revisionist back in to correct the status-quo bias of neorealism.¹⁸ The evidence of Europe's balance against a revisionist United States is slim, however. Beyond the obvious point that the CSDP pre-dated Bush's agenda, the fundamental reality of Europe during the crisis years of the early 2000s was its core division. If there were indeed some French and German declarations about the exorbitance of US power, these were met by opposite positions held in London, Warsaw, Rome, or Madrid.¹⁹ If NATO went through a near-death experience, the EU's foreign policy itself ceased to exist. There was no consensus among Europeans on the need to 'balance' the United

States, and a significant number of them did the opposite, preferring to 'bandwagon' it, for a variety of reasons, none strategic.²⁰

Precisely because the evidence is so thin, some scholars have introduced the rather problematic concept of 'soft balancing' to depict Europe's reactions, as yet another extension to the concept of balance.²¹ Soft balancing is the use of diplomatic measures, tacit understanding, international institutions and the creation of *ad hoc* entente to neutralize a threatening power.²² In this view, the CSDP is understood as a restraining institutional device against the US hegemon. To substantiate further the claim of Europe's soft balance, some have pointed to the so-called 'praline' summit of April 2003, when Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg proposed the creation of a European headquarters for CSDP missions, and to the meeting between Germany, Russia and France to coordinate at the UN their positions on the Iraq war. The first was a fiasco that divided Europeans. The second was a symbolic gesture that cannot be properly understood without taking into account a French attempt to find common ground with the Bush administration in December 2002, whereby if the United States wanted to go to war, it should do so under Resolution 1441 and not under a second UN Security Council Resolution. In that case, the French would agree to disagree. The idea was to go for a Kosovo scenario, where no formal vote would have taken place.²³ Basically, President Bush left them no choice. Beyond these two minor elements, conceptual problems make soft balancing undistinguishable from normal diplomatic practices and regular conflicts of interests. It does not resist empirical evidence in Europe's case.²⁴

The second variable usually considered by realists concerns the threat element derived from and infused in power. In an effort to refine the balancing proposition, some scholars have introduced this subjective element – itself a contradiction to neorealism – but the results remain unconvincing. Facing a danger, a state still has a wide range of options and it is not clear that balancing is actually the most frequently chosen.²⁵ No one of course has suggested that the United States represented a threat to Europe – except in the constructivist sense developed below – but there was another obvious candidate which could have brought Europe to seek a balancing strategy, namely Russia. Although weakened, Moscow remained a formidable nuclear power. Its increasing assertiveness during the years of Putin's presidency culminated with the war in Georgia, which caught Europeans by surprise and exposed Europe's vulnerabilities. Yet the rising Russian problem in fact divided, rather than united, Europeans. The division among Europeans was so blatant that the actualization in 2008 of the 2003 Solana paper, the *European Security Strategy* document,²⁶ was simply abandoned, although it was one of the key objectives of the French presidency. Simply put, between Berlin and London or Warsaw, there was and remains no consensus about a meaningful

European strategy vis-à-vis Moscow. In the same vein, countries with the highest stakes in the Russian matter could not wait indefinitely for a common position in Brussels and, not surprisingly, Poland and Sweden launched the Eastern Partnership in May 2008.²⁷ So, fragmentation rather than aggregation was the main result of a rising neighbour.

Overall, the realist approach could at best explain Europe's autonomy, but autonomy is not balancing. In fact, the CSDP is more an expectation in realist theory than an explanation. Some authors have offered 'hedging' as a middle ground between the two familiar concepts of balancing and bandwagoning, and this seems to better describe the CSDP project. Borrowed from the traditional alliance dilemma defined by Glenn Snyder – entrapment when an ally is forced to enter a conflict in which it has no stakes and abandonment when an ally is refused assistance in a conflict – hedging is a behaviour where an actor seeks to offset risk by pursuing multiple policy options to undermine, frustrate and increase the cost of unilateral action of the hegemon. In the case of the EU, it thus combines policies that 'on one hand stress engagement and integration mechanisms and on the other hand, emphasize alternative security cooperation in the shape of CSDP'.²⁸ Europe's security and defence framework is thus an insurance policy vis-à-vis the US unipolar position, not an inspiration against its power. Precisely because Washington may have other priorities, Europe's sudden fall from primacy in American interests meant the creation of a more autonomous 'fifth wheel' on the Atlantic cart. If the CSDP has indeed been inspired by the traumatic Bosnian conflict and the belated US intervention, as a practice it fell short of an insurance policy. The CSDP was thus not balancing, hard or soft, nor even hedging: as we shall see, it was just posturing.

The constructivist approach may seem more promising but it also has clear limitations. Focusing on the sociological aspect of institutions or the reflective approach to security regimes, constructivist arguments underline the convergence of security norms, the increasing ideational and cognitive homogeneity among European states, and the role of epistemic communities in bringing these ideas to the inter-governmental level. Through this lens, the CSDP is the result of a successful socialization process through European institutions and the translation of a collective identity that sustains them.²⁹ Institutions are important because they constitute 'social environments' where friends share ideas, agendas and best practices.³⁰ As such, however, this norm emergence does not tell us why a separate European institution was created beside NATO. To fill that gap, some scholars developed the concept of ontological security: a sense of self built on narratives and principles and translated into security preferences.³¹ The constructed identity is less a matter of differentiation with others than positive security with friends. In this respect, institutions offer a comfortable, friendly and legitimate

zone where a specific identity is recognized and accepted and where domestic and international ideas of order are shared. If in the NATO circle – ‘where friends can fight and even agree’, as Lord Ismay once put – inappropriate behaviour, most significantly by the most powerful of these friends, is imposed on the others, first dissonance then estrangement threaten this ontological security. This may lead to emancipation, where new friendship is sought and alternative institutions are created. So, US behaviour in Iraq exposed crucial dissonance between the United States and some European countries, notably France and Germany, which felt alienated and then created an alternative institution, the CSDP, which they deemed more legitimate and more appropriate.³² If this process of dissent, estrangement and emancipation fits the German trajectory relatively well, it is at odds however to explain why France, one of the two key pillars of the CSDP, did return to NATO’s integrated military command,³³ and why Britain never perceived the CSDP as an alternative but as a complement to NATO. Moreover, as we shall see, the process of dissatisfaction seems to affect the CSDP as well, whose actual military operations have often taken place in Africa, where Germany and many others have no stakes at all. Estrangement thus occurred in the European context also. In other words, Paris and Berlin may temporarily have shared a common aversion to Bush’s Iraqi adventure, but this did not translate into a permanent entente based on common interests.

This elegant constructivist approach, not dissimilar to soft balancing, suffers from several and, in many ways, opposite pitfalls. First, it tends to underestimate the domestic base of ontological security, or, to put it in other way, it neglects the national character, which expresses its own specific security preferences despite socialization. For example, German pacifism is an essential component of Germany’s ontological identity before it was a translation of Berlin’s dissonance with Washington. The individuality of a state’s identity is more important than its attribute as an ally or a friend.³⁴

Second, if this emphasis on collective friendship captures well the legitimacy of the CSDP, it encounters another set of problems. The EU is not in the business of collective defence (i.e. the in-group definition is more important than the out-group dynamic). It has no enemy to fight, only friends to save or help; it has no war to wage, just peace to keep or build. But precisely for this reason, participation in operations linked to collective security or humanitarian objectives becomes a matter of national choice, not of collective necessity. This reinforces the domestication of foreign-policy issues and the predominance of national sensitivities, preferences, constraints and caveats. The collective dimension is lost through the prism of national experiences. All security institutions suffer from this unavoidable predicament, but especially the ‘ethical’ EU.³⁵ Situations, not institutions, shape foreign-policy choices.

Friendship does not erase strategic preferences and interests. Neither the position of a European 'foreign minister' nor the External Action Service will change this fundamental dynamic and, for this reason, the Lisbon Treaty is unlikely to succeed in bringing more coherence to Europe's voices.³⁶ The Europeanization of national interests can happen only if it follows a strategic, not a political, logic. If discussions at the European Council address the threat posed by a resurgent Russia, then Finland's high stakes cannot be reduced to Austria's complacency or Portugal's indifference. The qualified majority voting cannot be politically defined *semper idem*: it has to be strategically measured *hic et nunc*. That was and remains the crucial advantage of core and flexible groups.³⁷ In practice, the CSDP is thus reduced to *à la carte* groupings, whose actions are triggered by the thrust of the big powers' agenda or the congruence of some members' foreign-policy objectives, but not by a sense of collective obligations. Every crisis thus demands an intense and difficult debate about the rationale and the stakes of a potential mission. If CSDP military operations have been collectively endorsed, they have been implemented in practice by only a few member states, with symbolic contributions being the rule rather than the exception.

Lastly, the CSDP is about security and defence and thus the collective identity formation and European socialization process concerned a different level of analysis, that is, the military themselves. First, it should be noted that, at the highest level, European defence ministers still rarely meet. At a lower level, the EU military staff could in theory represent a nexus for exchanging best practices, yet the turn-over of military personnel is high, and for officers of the most powerful nations it is not clear whether a 'tour' in Brussels would represent a promotion. More importantly, operational headquarters remain mostly national. In the same vein, the European battle groups have been useful exercises in inter-operability, in standards harmonization and in shared practices but they remain just that – exercises, and, in some instances, temporary ones.³⁸

As mentioned before, the real test for the CSDP occurs in actual engagement and relevant learning occurs on battlefields, not in Brussels seminars.³⁹ Transformation, adaptation and innovation are more a product of engagements with enemies than the result of a socialization between and emulation of friends. Was the conscription system in Germany reconsidered because of European peer pressures or because of the experience of the Bundeswehr in Afghanistan?⁴⁰ Was not Srebrenica a decisive learning moment for Dutch troops and Rwanda for Belgian troops? The 'battle groups' concept itself was a key lesson of the CSDP engagement in Ituri, eastern Congo. The socialization process cannot ignore strategic encounters in practice.

Realists define world politics with too strong an emphasis on enemies and rivals that need to be balanced, while constructivists focus excessively

on the socialization process among friends. To capture the rise and fall of the CSDP, the concept of strategic culture needs to be introduced.

Strategic culture as context⁴¹

Since its introduction at the end of the 1970s, the concept of strategic culture has enriched and divided security and defence scholarship. As noted above, following Gray's classic distinction, the concept of strategic culture offers a historical context and a sociological framework of shared beliefs that informs and is informed by practices. The context helps us to better understand the European insistence on autonomous actions and the focus on Africa, while shared beliefs help us to better define the specific nature of European 'security' objectives and the acceptable risks to achieve them.

The historical context brings us back to the core of the ambiguity of the Saint-Malo Agreement, the complex relationship with NATO and the relative position of Europe vis-à-vis the United States. This background is well known and thus does not demand elaboration here. Less well known, however, is the B-side of the Anglo-French cooperation, i.e. the African theatre as the pre-eminent zone of potential actions. As cognition, the concept of human security as understood and implemented by the Union, with an implicit 'zero casualties' doctrine attached to it, encapsulates the strategic beliefs inside the CSDP. Essentially, Saint-Malo was the last episode of a decade-long question about the role of the United States in European crises. The 'Europeanization' of NATO, through a separate identity and separable (but not separate) forces within a Combined Joint Task Force, could not hide the two fundamental discrepancies of, on the one hand, an American selective and non-negotiable engagement and, on the other, Europe's increasingly inadequate military capabilities after a decade of peace dividends. Against the background of the Bosnian tragedies and the bitter success in Kosovo, the British pragmatic approach, focused on the second disparity, and the French more political approach, focused on the first imbalance, led to a fragile but real compromise that became the founding act of the CSDP.⁴² In its aftermath, transatlantic discussions were largely dominated by the compatibility of this new European focus on capabilities with the NATO framework. Overall, the reorganization of European military capabilities within NATO but under an EU umbrella was tolerable, while any political body reflecting this military impetus was unacceptable. The conundrum was partly solved by the 'Berlin Plus' agreement within strict US limits. The implementation of the nascent CSDP naturally took place in the Balkans, as a belated redemption for Europe's 'hour' failure.⁴³ In practice, Washington was not really interested in protracted state-building missions in a zone that was

Europe's responsibility and the CSDP was a benign addendum of 'a foreign legion of peace-keepers' to the Pentagon's and NATO's fighting forces.⁴⁴

The missions in the Balkans, as a theatre of operations, drew from a European postmodern identity based on strengthening states rather than weakening them – as a balance-of-power framework would predict – and they were essentially a continuum of an agenda of eventual enlargement driven by the Commission. From the start, these missions were thus framed in a state-building framework and were mostly civilian by nature. Soldiers were also deployed, but their task was to assist rather than to compel, to deter rather than to fight. They were also tasked to be different from NATO, the EU being extremely keen to claim very publicly its new ownership of the operation, for internal and external audiences.⁴⁵ Incidentally, as far as Bosnia is concerned, this overall enlargement strategy, which was a clear success for central and eastern Europeans in 2004, is currently in serious crisis.⁴⁶ The first application of the CSDP was thus an exercise in succession and in gentle separation from NATO, without antagonism or balancing, but with a distinctive EU mould.

This initial *modus vivendi*, uneasy but practical, did not resist the shock of '9/11' and the US reaction to it. With the global 'war on terror' mantra and the war in Iraq, the fundamental equation of the transatlantic partnership dramatically changed: it was no longer about the US role in Europe for European security, but about Europe's place in the US strategy for global security. With the unilateral and revolutionary character of US security strategy, the debate about decoupling turned out to be essentially different: the US fear of Europeans decoupled from NATO was replaced by the reality of Washington estranged from NATO. This fundamental shift had two significant consequences. First, it gave a new momentum to the French ambition to build Europe's military autonomy and a new credibility to the traditional French objective of creating an independent political Europe. Yet if Europeans, with significant internal dissonances, opposed the US way in global security, a consensus about what Europe should do in world affairs was more difficult to reach. It was one thing to emphasize the divergence with the United States, quite another to demonstrate this difference in practice. In that gap, the 'African' chapter of the Franco-British rapprochement of 1999 became suddenly very convenient, at least for France. Before and at Saint-Malo, London and Paris had bilaterally strengthened their defence cooperation through several instruments aimed at joint crisis-management operations in Africa.⁴⁷ A significant agreement in defence cooperation was signed at the Cahors Franco-British summit in February 2001, and subsequently, in Le Touquet in February 2003, Paris and London set up the framework for a European role in African crises.⁴⁸ In the worst division with Washington after the start of the Iraqi war, French President Jacques Chirac thus seized the opportunity offered by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to

put this Franco-British agreement into practice by accepting an offer for a UN bridging mission in the Ituri region in Congo.

France was determined to demonstrate that the EU could act autonomously and in a distinct and contrasting manner to the American unilateral regime change.⁴⁹ It was an ideal case of what the Iraq war was not: legitimacy was ensured by a UN Security Council Resolution; the ownership of the process belonged to the African Union; the use of force was only a temporary device to restore order and prevent further atrocities; and a devolution to African peacekeepers would deny any imperial design. What actually happened militarily in Bunia was far less important than the political objective of branding an autonomous Europe as a legitimate and legal force for good. To achieve this, and with London's tacit consent, France was the main, if not the sole, leader of the mission. The command was entirely French, with the OHQ (Operational Headquarters) located in the Defence Ministry in Paris and with a Force Headquarters in Entebbe, while London provided logistical and engineering support in setting a joint support base. Operations in the city of Bunia were conducted mostly by French soldiers.⁵⁰ Yet, although the European force had secured Bunia, the rest of the Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained the theatre of massacre and the strict exit date clearly signalled to the armed belligerents the transitory nature of the intervention. Bunia itself saw renewed violence a year after the Artemis operation.⁵¹ So, when the then French Defence Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie declared – with an unfortunate choice of words – the 'mission accomplished' at the end of August 2003, she obviously referred to its political objective rather than its military accomplishment. Indeed, in European rhetoric, the mission was deemed successful precisely because it was an autonomous operation. Instead of a means to an end, it became an end in itself, setting the pattern for future operations in Africa. Building on that 'success', France and the United Kingdom in November 2003 fleshed out the role of the EU military in Africa.⁵² Using the battle groups, which would become operational in 2005, the EU should be able to respond quickly to a crisis while giving time for the African Union or the UN to prepare a longer-term intervention. Short-term military missions – 'quick in and quick out' – to support the UN or the African Union became the strategic framework. This was echoed by the Solana paper's call for a European strategic culture aimed at 'early, rapid and robust interventions' and translated into a European agreement about the battle groups concept.

The war in Iraq had a second and more profound impact. If it transformed the CSDP into an exercise in posturing differences vis-à-vis Washington, it also led to the beginning of a genuine strategic debate in Europe which culminated in the adoption of the European Security Strategy (ESS) in December 2003, which, at least on paper, had the

ambition of offering a grand strategy for Europe. At the most general level, a grand strategy, traditionally defined, is 'the capacity of a nation's leaders to bring together all of the elements, both military and non-military, for the preservation and enhancement of the nation's long-term, that is, in wartime and peacetime, best interests'.⁵³ Essentially, a grand strategy is the adaptation of domestic and international resources to achieve foreign-policy and security objectives. Beyond the usual imprecision attached to such documents, a grand strategy represents an important element in foreign and security policy formations and as such is an essential element of a strategic culture.⁵⁴

The remarkable novelty of the ESS lay in the identification of threats and vulnerabilities for Europe as a whole. The document was relatively precise about the nature of these threats – international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), regional conflicts, failed states and organized crime – even though these were presented in a very generic fashion and without any hierarchy attached to them. Much more problematic was the common design to address them, and it has been widely noted that two essential concepts at the core of the document – 'preventive engagement' and 'effective multilateralism' – were vague means rather than specific ends.

As a strategic document and as a framework for foreign-policy choices, the ESS was more notable, however, for what it was lacking than for what it set out. First and most crucially, a strategy is about dealing with significant others, friends and foes. Making a difference vis-à-vis the second determines the kind of relationships with the first. Within the nascent CSDP and the overall ESS framework, it was more the other way around. The relative position with the United States largely determined the shape and the content of the European security framework. The only enemy implicitly mentioned was Al-Qaeda, but counter-terrorism policies were a matter for member states, not a European endeavour. The same can be said about dealings with Iran: a common approach developed outside CSDP structures and before the ESS, aimed at engaging in a dialogue which was, at the time, taboo in Washington. This tendency to mark a difference with a friend rather setting the conditions and objectives 'to influence an adversary's will' became even more pronounced with the first CSDP missions.

This leads to the second gap, the relationship between objectives and resources – the essence of what a strategy is all about. The discrepancy between the European security framework and the actual development of resources and capabilities to fulfil it is indeed striking. If an essential part of *strategic* culture is the 'art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the ends of policy', then the CSDP process has been a quantitative and a qualitative failure, even though military capabilities were at the core of the Saint-Malo grand bargain.⁵⁵ Moreover, one may argue

that these capabilities were developed in a strategic void, and the ESS did nothing to clarify their organic and command structure, their necessary transformation or their doctrinal framework. The CSDP process was much more capacity-driven than strategy-led. The saga of the much talked about but never used battle groups illustrates this discrepancy.⁵⁶ Beyond military capabilities, other crucial resources – diplomatic assets, intelligence services, civilian officials, assistance budgets – need to be adjusted and streamlined to the overall strategy. All have lagged behind the proclaimed ambition of a strategic role.

The last gap is more familiar and is of course a consequence of the above discrepancy. The link between a European overall strategy and actual operations is tenuous at best. The Petersberg tasks, now extended and formally codified in the Lisbon Treaty, offered a framework for EU military missions, but by themselves they do not constitute a strategic umbrella: they suggest only vague security preferences.⁵⁷ As Richard Betts has noted, strategy is a distinct plan between policy and operations, ‘an idea for connecting the two rather than either of the two themselves’.⁵⁸ What was this idea and how ‘European’ was it?

Strategic culture as cognition

The historical context helps us to better understand the exercise in difference, in words – in the form of the ESS – and in practice – in the form of the Artemis operation. Yet, the application of the CSDP in Africa was not unanimously supported among Europeans. The obvious instrumentalization by France of CSDP structures and goals was met by the reticence on the part of those European member states with no tradition and no willingness to play an active military role in Africa, most notably Germany, which started to call the CSDP ‘the French Africa Korps’. Moreover, if Africa was to become the main theatre of EU military operations, other Brussels institutions were keen to reassert their specific role and added-value in that region. A majority of European actors favoured other ways to achieve progress in Africa, through a more consensual agenda, based on human security rather than militarization through the CSDP.

First, with the enlarged membership of the Union in 2004, it was not obvious that Africa should represent a priority for the CSDP. As long as other missions, notably in the Balkans, were continued, few were ready to object, but fewer were ready to participate, and even less so after 2003–4, when Afghanistan started to emerge as a theatre of deployment of European troops, under the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and national mandates. And since Europeans have only one set of forces, the reserve to conduct operations in Africa became severely reduced.

Second, Brussels institutions, mostly the Commission, reasserted their authority on Africa by issuing a series of 'strategic' documents to contain the militarization of Europe's policies in Africa and to dilute it into broader objectives linked to poverty and development.⁵⁹ These documents called for 'a more comprehensive approach' than a narrow military quick-fixing; they also promoted a natural linkage with the UN and a reinforced partnership with the African Union. The First Action Plan for the Implementation of the Africa–EU Strategic Partnership led to a more streamlined support of the African Union, based on 'commitments to equality, partnership and ownership'. More crucially, it focused on the development of African capabilities through the Europeanization of the French Recamp initiative, whose objective was to help to build and train African troops. The EU was willing to help build up African capabilities with military, logistics and financial aid but the process was to be 'demand-driven'.⁶⁰ It was thus a firm reminder to France and others that the EU was not in the business of 'colonial' interventions, and that, if forces needed to be sent, they should be a small part of a larger political framework aimed at assistance, development, state-building and democracy. The Congo operation in 2006 illustrated the significant reduction in the use of the CSDP among the European instruments used in relation to Kinshasa. The mission, controversial from the start, caught the Germans in a classic entrapment dilemma, and was framed in such a way that 'nobody could test the European forces and nothing dangerous could happen during the mission', with the bulk of German forces outside the country, in neighbouring Gabon. After the French '*non*' and the Dutch '*nee*' to the European constitution, the Congo operation served the purpose of reaffirming that the EU still existed in foreign affairs.⁶¹

Third, this dilution of Europe's military policies on Africa was helped by the emergence among European security circles – some official, some private – of an agenda inspired by the concept of human security. Without addressing the ambiguity of the concept itself, human security offered, at least in theory, a convenient compromise between the traditional European civilian power and its military role. If the 'postmodern' identity of Europe has to include a place and a role for the armed forces, then issues of human rights, peacekeeping and state-building became the obvious areas for their involvement, however limited. The Barcelona report, commissioned by Javier Solana and presented at the end 2004, was a clear attempt to reconcile armed forces and Europe's 'ethical' or 'humanitarian' beliefs and values.⁶² The report laid out seven principles to inform and guide CSDP operations involving the use of armed forces: the primacy of human rights; clear political authority; multilateralism; a bottom-up approach; regional focus; the use of legal instruments; and the appropriate use of force. To that end, the report called for the creation of a human security response force, and emphasized its

police and civilian elements. This civilian component was very popular throughout Europe, for at least three reasons. First, it underlined again the difference between the venusian Europe and the martial United States, at the moment when the attempted regime change in Iraq had started to turn into a disaster. Second, it enhanced the position and influence of European small and medium powers in security and defence policies, where the modesty of their actual military capabilities would have reduced them to a marginal role.⁶³ It was an opportunity to Europeanize the CSDP and it was indeed duly seized. Lastly and most importantly, it led to the framing of CSDP operations in a postmodern manner, one that did not entail any risks of actual combat against an identified enemy, one that could not lead to potential casualties among European forces, one that domestic public opinion would support but one that reduced significantly the scope of the Petersberg tasks. It fitted the risk-averse preferences of most decision-makers and political parties in Europe, an aversion that goes well beyond the use of force.⁶⁴ Embraced by the Commission, supported by Solana and shared by a majority of European actors, human security as a security norm and as a guiding principle for actual operations became an extremely useful tool to avoid what might be deemed an excessive militarization of security policies in Africa. It became the consensual buzzword of the time. Following the same trajectory as its sister concept, normative power, it flooded official documents, and it was referred as the main, if not the unique, 'strategic' narrative for European external actions.⁶⁵

Put into practice, however, this 'European idea' did not translate into effective strategy. First, it was not used where it was needed most. Second, when actually implemented, it led to mixed results, at great cost. The first case referred to EU's inaction in Darfur. Despite repeatedly pressuring President Al-Bashir to ensure the protection of the civilian population, the EU made clear that it would not act without the consent and the collaboration of the government of Sudan and that the main instrument should be the African Union, although the refusal of the first and the weakness of the second were known to everyone. The EU expressed 'concerns' repeatedly but did nothing to address the crisis.⁶⁶ Yet it had the capability and the forward bases to police at least the refugee camps in Darfur but Peter Feith, a close advisor of Solana, after a short fact-finding mission, declared in the summer of 2004 that the crisis in Darfur did not amount to genocide and so did not justify an intervention, while France made it clear that the EU was not 'in the business of invading an Islamic country'.⁶⁷ Moreover, at the Council level it was assessed that the EU could not afford to antagonize the regime in Khartoum, for the sake of the peace agreement between north and south Sudan.⁶⁸ Britain at the same time was contemplating an intervention but, without a French contribution of forward bases and troops, London

realized that its military, already overstretched in Iraq, would not have the sufficient weight to make a difference on the ground. So Europe, despite a very public humanitarian and ethical agenda, went 'back to sponsoring peace talks and bankrolling other actors, back to applying measures [it] knew were ineffective'.⁶⁹ The inaction in Darfur was more than an embarrassing display of political cowardice and hypocrisy: it demonstrated the limits of the 'human security' concept, which presupposed a world without power and interests, a world made of consent and neutrality, a world that did not exist.

The second impediment is best illustrated by EUFOR Chad, the longest and most complex CSDP operation so far. Without reviewing the details of this mission, whose main objective was to create humanitarian corridors and safe havens where European peacekeepers and humanitarian relief workers could operate to protect and assist the estimated 460,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees from Darfur, the operation is illustrative of the strategic confusion that the human security concept as understood and implemented by the EU creates. Under the initiative of then French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, a leading figure among humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Council approved in October 2007 an operation based on the UN Security Council Resolution 1778. The UN Resolution framed the mission in its usual manner, whereby the EUFOR Chad/CAR mission would represent a bridging deployment, to be replaced by a UN follow-on force in March 2009.⁷⁰ All EU instruments, diplomatic, political and financial, were mobilized, including a €10 million programme to train and equip a special Chadian police/gendarmerie – the *Détachement Intégré de Sécurité* (DIS) – a force specially set up to provide security for refugee camps in the east. Europeans, by and large, were hesitant to be involved in such a demanding operation. Their reluctance was translated in a very long and painful force-generation process. France carried the bulk of the deployment, with 2,000 troops – some of which were part of the permanent French presence in Chad – while Ireland and Poland sent one battalion each.⁷¹ Given obvious logistical difficulties and the existing gaps in European strategic lift, the operation became fully operational only on 17 September 2008, ten months after its EU endorsement.

The environment was particularly challenging. The Déby regime in Chad lacked the ability to establish effective control over its entire territory and diverse ethnic groups and tribal clans contested its authority. Moreover, there was a proxy war between Chad and Sudan.⁷² In the Central African Republic (CAR), the situation was roughly the same, a failed state facing regular rebellions, often funded by Sudan. Overall, the deployment could face a mix of Janjaweed militias from Khartoum, different rebels groups in Chad and several bandit gangs, some of which were known to be well organized and heavily armed.⁷³ This balance of

forces on the ground was thus potentially very risky. And yet, this was not the main preoccupation among European countries and in Brussels. To reach a consensus, the conceptualization of the operation took great care to avoid any confusion with French heritage in Chad. Emphasis was repeatedly put on the 'neutral, impartial and independent manner' under which EUFOR would operate. With 1,500 troops – named *Opération Epervier* – permanently stationed in Chad since the mid-1980s, France was a king-maker, a role that the EU was keen not to be associated with. The CSDP was not designed to take over the traditional colonial role of saving or deposing troubled regimes in Africa. So the insistence on neutrality was an obvious political way to avoid any such confusion. Yet the EU operation was mainly French, and this ambiguity plagued the mission's initial phases.⁷⁴ Brussels was thus more preoccupied with distancing itself from France than with assessing the strategic situation on the ground. In France itself, the objective of protecting civilians did not seem to contradict the strengthening of the Déby regime against Sudan.

The painful birth of the Chad mission got worse as soon as it started. As early as September 2007, one important rebel group, the RFC (*Rassemblement des Forces pour le Changement*), had already warned EUFOR not to obstruct their struggle to topple President Déby, otherwise the group threatened to fight EUFOR. On the very day when the first elements of the mission were to be deployed, rebels ganged up and mounted a flash attack, leaving the Sudanese border on 28 January, to reach the capital, N'Djamena, four days later, after a 700 km dash across the desert. Paris spotted the manoeuvre with its satellites but did not stop the column as it did in similar circumstances in November 2006 by flying over French Mirages. But Paris did warn and help Déby to defend his regime and the attack was repelled. In Brussels, there were frantic discussions about the possible cancellation of the EU mission and further deployments were postponed. The pretence of neutrality made the mission far more difficult than it already was. Collective action is about aggregating power, not taming it. French leverage in the region was a crucial enabler to the mission, not an obstacle to it. To cling to a neutral posture when your potential adversaries have denied it amounts to strategic short-sightedness. The long-standing relationship between France and Chad was an asset, not a liability. That France eschewed crucial leverages of influence to please Brussels reveals the mission's ambiguity.⁷⁵ Sending troops to Chad was doomed to increase tensions with Sudan and change the security landscape in Chad itself. The 'hope' in Brussels was that the Sudanese government and the Chadian rebel groups would not confront European forces. That wishful thinking was denied by the reality on the ground, and it could have turned the EUFOR mission into a nightmare.⁷⁶ Even the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO) considered that the conditions for a successful

operation – a peace to keep, a firm commitment of troops and a clarity of mandate – were not met on the ground in Chad.

The mission's actual impact was debatable. Over 2,500 short-range patrols and 260 long-range patrols were conducted during the operation. But according to EU military officials, EUFOR spent too much time 'aimlessly patrolling the vast deserted lands along the Chad–Sudan border'.⁷⁷ Because of the limited number of troops, the operation could not intervene in trouble spots, and in October 2008 NGOs had to evacuate their operations in some cities. Overall, humanitarian agencies and NGOs acknowledged EUFOR's positive contribution, yet they all underlined that the humanitarian situation remained precarious and that relations between Chad and Sudan had deteriorated. Although the European troops made some civilians feel safer, 'the underlying security situation has not significantly improved'.⁷⁸ Criminality and banditry had continued unabated, refugee and IDP flows had increased and failed governance in Chad was left unaddressed. For the International Crisis Group, the operation 'has failed to achieve its main goal, the creation of an environment that would favour the return of displaced people and protect the civil population and humanitarian workers against attack'.⁷⁹ From a strategic culture point of view, however, this operation illustrated how the 'human security' umbrella remained prevalent in Brussels and how it led to serious strategic miscalculations and mistakes. More broadly, CSDP operations had more to do with Europe's own image, posturing and legitimacy than with Africa's or the Balkans' strategically relevant interests. They were more cosmetic than strategic.

The fall of the CSDP

Besides Atalanta, the EU naval operation off Somalia, EUFOR Chad was the last significant mission undertaken under the CSDP. The entire process is now in crisis and for several reasons. First, and most importantly, the security beliefs developed along the way led to a contradiction with the Saint-Malo initial objective. The human security concept as it was understood by Brussels is the opposite of strategic thinking. It denies *by definition* the possibility, and disregards the probability, of influencing a state or a sub-state actor, by deterrence, compellence or coercion. It presupposes a posture of neutrality and impartiality while it neglects the geopolitical environment. It ignores the very essence of what a soldier does and dismisses how his or her mere presence is perceived. It considers the EU as an NGO and conflates the rank of its armed forces with the status of Red Cross personnel. It contradicts the few lessons learned from humanitarian and peace-enforcing operations. As Michael Ignatieff, one of the main architects of the 'Responsibility to Protect', has

argued, 'an intervention strategy that takes sides, that uses force and that sticks around to rebuild is very different from one premised on neutrality, casualty avoidance and early exit strategies'.⁸⁰ The predominant 'security' culture in Europe today is one that favours minimal and low-risk operations, i.e. an obsolete type of humanitarian operation. As an alternative to 'early, rapid, and, when necessary, robust' interventions, human security is thus a dangerous illusion.⁸¹ Saint-Malo was about building capabilities that could be employed in a battle, preferably alongside the United States under a NATO framework. The Europeanization process has seriously downgraded this objective, both quantitatively – from the initial 60,000 troops, the number is now reduced to two battle groups on stand-by – and qualitatively – there is no battle to fight, and only peace to keep. The integration of armed forces into the post-modern framework was not what London and Paris had signed up for.

While London's confidence in the 'Brusselization' process in security and defence has always been very low, the dissatisfaction of France has also become obvious. France had been the main supporter of a European role in security and defence, mainly because it was a traditional political ambition to build an independent Europe from Washington. Paris has always endorsed the role of a would-be soft balancer. But France may not want to repeat the experience of taming its own interests and leverage in Africa for the sake of a minimal European consensus while Paris has to carry the bulk of such operations. The CSDP exercise in 'difference' may not be worth a candle if it means the deference of French interests and power to a Europe which seems so reluctant to be engaged in power politics. In other words, the current security culture framework has become a burden to the classic French ambition of a *Europe puissance* and, most importantly, an obstacle to French strategic interests and role. For Berlin, the translation of a Brussels security culture into deployments in Africa has also triggered a dissonance process, not based on the culture itself, but on the strategic stakes at hand. Germany's traditional European preference has led to an ontological security problem linked to activism in Africa that Berlin does not share. Moreover, the 'early and robust' deployment envisaged by Paris and London seemed contradictory to Germany's core pacifist culture.

When the three most powerful countries in Europe are dissatisfied with the CSDP process, this can only lead to a crisis of legitimacy for the institution itself. The level of dissonance is such that it has started to trigger emancipation options. Institutions may be disregarded if they do not offer meaningful and relevant added-value, if they do not respond to expectations and interests, or if they are instrumentalized towards strictly national purposes. They become obsolete if cheating or free-riding repeatedly occurs with impunity, if 'voice' remains unheard and 'loyalty' unrewarded. Then the 'exit' option becomes the preferred choice,

sometimes officially – as with Denmark – or more often implicitly – as with the Netherlands, Britain and, to some extent, Germany – while at the same time ‘loyalty’ is often hypocritically exercised by contributing only symbolically to the institution.⁸² France was the most loyal player, until it considered the burden-sharing too disproportionate, or, to put it in another way, until its own loyalty was not matched by others. Paris seems indeed to have reordered its relationship priorities outside Brussels, with strategically meaningful allies, especially Britain. The Lancaster House Defence Treaty of November 2010 was significant in this regard. It is striking how this defence agreement was about Paris and London’s respective power perceptions as declining world powers rather than as leaders of Europe. Indeed, Europe and the CSDP are barely mentioned in the Treaty.⁸³ In its current format, the CSDP is nearly dead and its life support rests either on institutions’ inertia or on small and medium powers in Europe that are just nursing it while the capable doctors – the big powers – have left the room. To put it differently, Europe as a legitimate framework has failed to mobilize and generate enough traction to have a significant role at the strategic level.⁸⁴ A concert of great powers outside Europe, shaping *ad hoc* coalitions of willing partners and associates, will increasingly become the favoured format for collective action, rather than the institutionalized minimal consensus of the EU. Only the concept of strategic culture helps us to understand why this estrangement process, for opposite reasons, took place. In other words, there is currently no sufficient consensus about a meaningful and strategic role for Europe. This lack of elite consensus is a crucial factor to understand Europe’s paralysis and irrelevance.⁸⁵

The emancipation option is all the more attractive for Paris and London because the United States has changed. The defensive realist and pragmatic presidency of Barrack Obama, with its original focus on re-positioning the image of Washington around the world, has deprived the CSDP of its posturing role. If Washington has become ‘appropriate’ again, then for London and Paris it becomes an indispensable partner, while for the rest of Europe free-riding becomes a comfortable default position. But Washington, in an emerging ‘heterogeneous’ multipolarity,⁸⁶ may not be ready, willing or able to listen to Europe’s pleas for collective action that answers strictly European concerns. The reluctant participation of Washington in the no-fly zone against Libya and its quick, if fake, buck-passing to NATO may prefigure future Europe’s strategic loneliness. Then, Europeans may be willing to reconsider a CSDP that would defend and protect their interests – like the Atalanta operation, the only CSDP strategic mission – a CSDP based on strategic calculations, not on idealistic chimera. But that would imply that Europe speaks with one voice. That would also mean a serious but probably contentious questioning of what Europe’s actual power means. Can Europe’s postmodern identity

and the 'security' beliefs that it entails escape 'the perpetual quadrille of the Balance of Power'?⁸⁷ Would a civilian Europe be ultimately compelled by world geopolitics to become a normal and strategic power?⁸⁸ And a neoclassical realist may add: would European decision-makers eventually recognize the relevance of power as a legitimate instrument of international relations and would they correctly assess the position of Europe in the emerging multipolar system? The development of the CSDP so far seems to indicate that the EU is reluctant to do so. And as Robert Jervis once commented, 'there certainly would be difficulties if crucial states did not recognize their place in the system'.⁸⁹

Notes

- 1 R. Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations* (New York: Praeger, 1967); A. Ahonen, 'The Contemporary Debate in International Relations Theory and Raymond Aron's Epistemology and Ontology', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 29:1 (1994), pp. 77–94; M. Hollis and S. Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). On Aron, see also chapter 7 of the present volume.
- 2 'Historical knowledge is the knowledge of what mind has done in the past, and at the same time it is the redoing of this, the perpetuation of past acts in the present. Its object is ... an activity of thought, which can be known only in so far as the knowing mind re-enacts it and knows itself as so doing. To the historian, the activities whose history he is studying are not spectacles to be watched, but experiences to be lived through in his own mind'. R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 218. See also R. Aron, *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986). The term 'synoptic judgement' is from P. Schroeder, 'History and International Relations Theory, Not Use or Abuse, But Fit or Misfit', *International Security*, 22:1 (1997), p. 68.
- 3 See: S. M. Walt, 'Rigor or Rigor Mortis, Rational Choice and Security Studies', *International Security*, 23:4 (1999), pp. 5–48; M. C. Desh, 'Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies', *International Security*, 23:1 (1998), pp. 141–70.
- 4 S. M. Walt, 'The Relationship Between Theory and Policy in International Relations', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 8 (2005), pp. 23–48; R. Sil and P. J. Katzenstein, 'Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics: Reconfiguring Problems and Mechanisms Across Research Traditions', *Perspectives on Politics*, 8:2 (2010), pp. 411–31.
- 5 See N. M. Ripsman, J. W. Taliaferro and S. E. Lobell, 'The State of Neoclassical Realism', in S. E. Lobell, N. M. Ripsman and J. W. Taliaferro (eds), *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 281.
- 6 'Analysis of the international system has something skeletal about it; we learn nothing about the muscles and blood and nerves'. S. Hoffmann, *Gulliver's*

Troubles; Or the Setting of American Foreign Policy (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968), p. 73.

- 7 As Hans Morgenthau argued, new theories 'do not so much try to reflect reality as it actually is as to superimpose upon recalcitrant reality a theoretical scheme that satisfies the desire for thorough rationalization. Their practicality is specious since it substitutes what is desirable for what is possible.' H. J. Morgenthau, 'Common Sense and the Theories of International Relations', *Journal of International Affairs*, 2:2 (1967), p. 209. Or as a historian put it, 'Historians troubled by the political scientists' notion of history are even more troubled by their notion of science'. E. Ingram, 'The Wonderland of the Political Scientist', *International Security*, 22:1 (1997), p. 63. See also E. Adler, 'Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics', *European Journal of International Relations*, 3:3 (1997), pp. 319–63. It is a pity, however, that we have to live with this awful and absurd neologism, 'neoclassical realism'.
- 8 For a review of this debate, see: A. I. Johnston, 'Thinking About Strategic Culture', *International Security*, 19:4 (1995), pp. 32–64; C. S. Gray, 'Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back', *Review of International Studies*, 25:1 (1999), pp. 49–69; A. I. Johnston, 'Strategic Cultures Revisited: Reply to Colin Gray', *Review of International Studies*, 25:3 (1999), pp. 525–30; T. Farrel, 'Culture and Military Power', *Review of International Studies*, 24:3 (1998), pp. 407–16.
- 9 I use the term 'security' culture rather than 'strategic' culture for reasons explained below.
- 10 'The EU cannot have a proper security strategy as long as decisions on the use of force rest in the hands of its member governments.' F. Heisbourg, 'The "European Security Strategy" Is Not a Security Strategy', in S. Everts *et al.* (eds), *A European Way of War* (London: Centre for European Reform, 2004), p. 28. See also S. Rynning, 'The European Union: Towards a Strategic Culture?', *Security Dialogue*, 34:4 (2003), pp. 479–96.
- 11 For an excellent overview of international relations approaches to the EU, see T. Risse, 'Exploring the Nature of the Beast: International Relations Theory and Comparative Policy Analysis Meet the European Union', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 34:1 (1996), pp. 53–80.
- 12 On Lisbon and the CSFP, see A. Missiroli, 'The New EU "Foreign Policy" System After Lisbon: A Work in Progress', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 15:4 (2010), pp. 427–52.
- 13 As Colin Gray reminds us, 'Strategy is about influencing the will of an adversary'. C. S. Gray, 'Strategic Thoughts for Defence Planners', *Survival*, 52:3 (2010), p. 161.
- 14 For the first (strategic) dimension, see, among others: C. O. Meyer, 'Convergence Towards a European Strategic Culture? A Constructivist Framework for Explaining Changing Norms', *European Journal of International Relations*, 11:4 (2005), pp. 523–49; P. Cornish and G. Edwards, 'Beyond the EU/NATO Dichotomy: The Beginnings of a European Strategic Culture', *International Affairs*, 77:3 (2001), pp. 587–603. For the second (normative-power) dimension, see I. Mannes, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40:2 (2002), pp. 235–58; T. Diez,

- 'Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering "Normative Power Europe"', *Millennium: Journal of International Affairs*, 33:3 (2005), pp. 613–36.
- 15 B. Posen, 'European Union Security and Defense Policy: Response to Unipolarity?', *Security Studies*, 15:2 (2006), pp. 150–1. See also R. J. Art, 'Europe Hedges Its Security Bets', in T. V. Paul, J. J. Wirtz and M. Fortmann (eds), *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 179–213.
- 16 NATO did survive the Cold War. According to Kenneth Waltz, 'The Cold War's end represented a rousing victory. What does one then expect the war winning coalition to do? In one word: "collapse".' Yet this collapse may be slow in the making. 'This is so because the war was cold, not hot. The compulsion to think immediately about power redistribution was absent.' K. Waltz, 'The New World Order', *Millennium*, 22:2 (1993), p. 190. I have offered elsewhere an interpretation based on prospect theory, which showed there was no impetus to change the Atlantic 'winning team'. See J.-Y. Haine, 'The Winning Team and the Last Failure: American Preferences Vis-à-Vis NATO: Sign in 1949, Persist in 1989', in G. Schmidt (ed.), *A History of NATO: the First Fifty Years*, Vol. 2 (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 81–96.
- 17 R. Jervis, 'The Remaking of a Unipolar World', *Washington Quarterly*, 29:3 (2006), pp. 7–19; M. Williams, 'What Is the National Interest? The Neoconservative Challenge in IR Theory', *European Journal of International Relations*, 11:3 (2005), pp. 307–37. The revisionist/status quo dichotomy belongs to Arnold Wolfers.
- 18 'Neorealism overlooks the importance of revisionist goals as the driving force, indeed the *sine qua non*, behind most of its theoretical concepts.... Neorealist arguments about relative versus absolute gains, the security dilemma and balancing versus bandwagoning behavior are not only misleading but they cannot be logically deduced from the theory's assumption of security-seeking units. To redress this error, neorealists must bring the revisionist state back in.' R. L. Schweller, 'Neorealism's Status-Quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?', *Security Studies*, 5:3 (1996), p. 92.
- 19 P. H. Gordon and J. Shapiro, *Allies at War: America, Europe and the Crisis Over Iraq* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, McGraw-Hill, 2004), especially pp. 155–82; E. Pond, *Friendly Fire: The Near-Death of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2003).
- 20 On this, see: R. L. Schweller, 'Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In', *International Security*, 19:4 (1994), pp. 72–107; E. J. Labs, 'Do Weak States Bandwagon?', *Security Studies*, 1:3 (1992), pp. 383–416.
- 21 Neutrality, defection and buck-passing were already included in the definition of balancing. On this extended definition, which makes the balance-of-power theory unfalsifiable, see S. M. Walt, 'Alliances, Threats and U.S. Grand Strategy: A Reply to Kaufman and Labs', *Security Studies*, 1:3 (1992), pp. 448–82.
- 22 See: T. V. Paul, 'Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy', *International Security*, 30:1 (2005), pp. 46–71; S. G. Jones, *The Rise of European Security Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

- 23 President Bush refused the deal because British Prime Minister Tony Blair needed a second resolution, which never came. On this episode, see S. Hoffmann with F. Bozo, *Gulliver Unbound: America's Imperial Temptation and the War in Iraq* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), p. 15.
- 24 J. Howorth and A. Menon, 'Still Not Pushing Back: Why the European Union is Not Balancing the United States', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53:5 (2009), pp. 727–44; S. G. Brooks and W. C. Wohlforth, 'Hard Times for Soft Balancing', *International Security*, 30:1 (2005), pp. 72–108.
- 25 The seminal works are: S. M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); K. Knorr, 'Threat Perception', in K. Knorr (ed.), *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1976), pp. 78–120. See also A. Wivel, 'Balancing Against Threats or Bandwagoning With Power? Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship After the Cold War', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 21:3 (September 2008), pp. 289–305.
- 26 J. Solana, *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy* (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2003).
- 27 This initiative was premonitory: weeks later the Georgian conflict occurred. On the Eastern Partnership, see: S. Blockmans, 'EU–Russia Relations Through the Prism of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 13:2 (2008), pp. 167–87; R. Allison, 'Russia Resurgent? Moscow's Campaign to Coerce Georgia to Peace', *International Affairs*, 84:6 (2008), pp. 1145–71.
- 28 A. Toje, 'The EU Security Strategy Revised: Europe Hedging Its Bets', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 15:2 (2010), p. 186. See also: G. Press-Barnathan, 'Managing the Hegemon: NATO Under Unipolarity', *Security Studies*, 15:2 (2006), pp. 271–309; Z. Selden, 'Power Is Always in Fashion: State-Centric Realism and the European Security and Defence Policy', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 48:2 (2010), pp. 397–416.
- 29 Among many others, see: J. Howorth, 'Discourse, Ideas, and Epistemic Communities in European Security and Defence Policy', *West European Politics*, 27:2 (2004), pp. 211–34; F. Mérand, 'Social Representations in the European Security and Defence Policy', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 41:2 (2006), pp. 131–52; C. O. Meyer, 'Convergence Towards a European Strategic Culture? A Constructivist Framework for Explaining Changing Norms', *European Journal of International Relations*, 11:4 (2005), pp. 523–49.
- 30 See: A. I. Johnston, 'Treating International Institutions as Social Environments', *International Studies Quarterly*, 45:4 (2001), pp. 487–515; T. Flockhart, 'Complex Socialization: A Framework for the Study of State Socialization', *European Journal of International Relations*, 12:1 (2006), pp. 89–118.
- 31 On this point, see F. Berenskoetter and B. Giegerich, 'From NATO to ESDP: A Social Constructivist Analysis of German Strategic Adjustment After the End of the Cold War', *Security Studies*, 19:3 (2010), p. 420. See also B. J. Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2008).
- 32 Without using the constructivist jargon, Paul Schroeder had noted: 'The [US] administration's stand on Iraq flatly contravenes that basic requirement for

- a durable alliance. If this persists, it will not necessarily mean the formal end of NATO, but it will mean its hollowing out, as America's partners search for other combinations to defend their interests and find refuge from the likely consequences of America's actions.' P. W. Schroeder, 'Iraq: The Case Against Preemptive War', *American Conservative*, 21 October 2002, p. 12.
- 33 On this, see F. Bozo, 'Sarkozy's NATO Policy: Towards France's Atlantic Re-alignment?', *European Political Science*, 9:2 (2010), pp. 176–88. That June 2010 issue of *European Political Science* is entirely dedicated to Sarkozy's decision.
- 34 As a scholar of alliances noted a long time ago, 'The fact of entering into alliances does not transform national actors into coalition actors. The discrete members of the alliance retain all of their individuality, all of their separateness despite assumptions to the contrary.' E. H. Fedder, 'The Concept of Alliance', *International Studies Quarterly*, 12:1 (1968), p. 81. NATO scholars have often underlined this Atlantic weakness: 'Let us remind ourselves of some of NATO's relevant characteristics. It is extremely large for an alliance and extremely diversified as to the kind of states which belong.... Each state also bears marks of its unique history and unique geographical situation, both of which inhibit complete cooperation.' W. T. R. Fox and A. Baker, *NATO and the Range of American Choice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 6.
- 35 As realist scholars have long underlined, 'Alliances are against, and only derivatively for, someone or something'. G. Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), p. 12.
- 36 Indeed, to speak with one voice does not even seem to be an objective anymore. As EU President Herman van Rompuy stated, 'A common foreign policy is not about speaking with a single voice, but about giving the same key messages. Like we did the last week on Egypt: many voices, one coherent message.' Speech at the 47th Munich Security Conference, February 2011, www.securityconference.de/Van-Rompuy-Herman.697.0.html?&L=1.
- 37 'A policy cannot be branded "EU" unless backed by all 27. But 27 cooks in the kitchen is too many. On particular issues, the EU should encourage smaller groups of the most interested countries to draw up policy. It has done this already for Iran, where Britain, France and Germany take the lead' C. Grant, *Is Europe Doomed to Fail as a Power?* (London: CER, 2009), p. 25.
- 38 For example, the Nordic battle group, led by Sweden, has now been dismantled.
- 39 See: R. T. Foley, S. Griffin and H. McCartney, '"Transformation in Contact": Learning the Lessons of Modern War', *International Affairs*, 87:2 (2011), pp. 253–70; T. G. Farrell and T. Terriff, *The Sources of Military Change: Culture, Politics, Technology* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002).
- 40 There are of course many reasons why the conscription system was reconsidered in Germany, budgetary constraints being one of them. But the question of efficiency in engagement was the most important. Former Army Chief Klaus Naumann argued that 'I would like to hold on to [conscription]. If it still made sense, if you could still use it to form units in which the young man can say at the end of his service: "OK, I've learned how it works, I

have the confidence to go into battle with this company, with this battery and survive”, but you can’t do that in six months.’ *Der Spiegel*, 24 August 2010. According to a NATO official, ‘What’s really lacking in zu Guttenberg’s vision is the European dimension.’ Quoted in Q. Peel and J. Blitz, ‘Security: A German Military Overhaul’, *Financial Times*, 31 January 2011.

- 41 The following developments are based on J.-Y. Haine, ‘The Failure of a European Strategic Culture? EUFOR CHAD: The Last of Its Kind?’, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 32:3 (December 2011), pp. 582–603.
- 42 See: J. Howorth, ‘Britain, France and the European Defence Initiative’, *Survival*, 42:2 (2000), pp. 33–55; R. E. Hunter, *The European Security and Defense Policy: NATO’s Companion – Or Competitor?* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2002).
- 43 Beyond the three ‘d’s proposed by US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright – no decoupling, no discriminating, no duplicating – the American reaction to Saint-Malo was rather negative. As US Ambassador to NATO Alexander Vershbow had argued in May 2000, ‘The danger here is that, if autonomy becomes an end in itself, ESDP will be an ineffective tool for managing crises and transatlantic tensions will increase’. Quoted by B. R. Posen, ‘ESDP and the Structure of World Power’, *International Spectator*, 39:1 (2004), pp. 10–11.
- 44 W. Pfaff, ‘A Foreign Legion for the Pentagon’, *International Herald Tribune*, 7 November 2002, quoted in U. Ståle, ‘Requirements for Future European Military Strategies and Force Structures’, *International Peacekeeping*, 11:3 (2004), p. 461.
- 45 Former EU Military Staff Chief General Leakey used to tell the following anecdote: ‘When the EU took over in Bosnia, J. Solana came to visit, and he insisted that the EU should make a difference with former NATO operations. “We need to see the EU...” was his mantra. Needless to say, it was an impossible mandate to put into practice.’ Interview with General Leakey, European Strategic Forum, Berlin, 22 April 2008.
- 46 See: C. S. Chivvis, ‘Back to the Brink in Bosnia?’, *Survival*, 52:1 (2010), pp. 97–110; *Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Parallel Crisis*, Europe Report No. 209 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2010).
- 47 This less well known aspect of the Franco-British rapprochement to cooperate in Africa is sometimes called ‘Saint-Malo II’. See T. Chafer and G. Cumming, ‘Beyond Fashoda: Anglo-French Security Cooperation in Africa Since Saint-Malo’, *International Affairs*, 86:5 (2010), pp. 1129–47.
- 48 In Le Touquet on 4 February 2003, Paris and London declared that ‘Preventing conflict and keeping or re-establishing peace in Africa are our constant concern. Both countries would like to emphasize that primary responsibility falls on Africa in this matter. We will take joint initiatives to that end at the United Nations and within the European Union and G8, ensuring in particular that they support the efforts of the African Union and of the sub-regional organizations, and that they strengthen Africa’s peace-keeping capability.’ Franco-British Summit, Declaration on Franco-British Cooperation in Africa, Le Touquet, www.ambafrance-uk.org/Franco-British-summit-Declaration.4972.html.
- 49 As one scholar noted, ‘France badly wanted a mission to show the EU was capable of acting alone, where NATO would not be involved’. C. Gegout,

- 'Causes and Consequences of the EU's Military Intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A Realist Explanation', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 10:3 (2005), pp. 437–8.
- 50 The French forces in Bunia interpreted the EU mandate extensively and some operations were carried outside it, that is, under strict French orders. Interview with Artemis Commander, General Neveux, Paris, October 2003.
- 51 See: UNDPKO, *Operation Artemis: The Lessons of the Interim Emergency Multinational Force* (New York: Peacekeeping Best Practice Unit, United Nations, 2004); S. Ulriksen, C. Gourlay and C. Mace, 'Operation Artemis: The Shape of Things to Come?', *International Peacekeeping*, 11:3 (2004), pp. 508–25; F. Faria, *Crisis Management in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Role of the European Union*, Occasional Paper No. 51 (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2004).
- 52 'We now propose that the EU should build on this [operation Artemis] precedent so that it is able to respond through ESDP to future similar requests from the UN, whether in Africa or elsewhere.' Franco-British Declaration, 'Strengthening European Cooperation in Security and Defence', 24 November 2003.
- 53 P. Kennedy, 'Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definition', in P. Kennedy (ed.), *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 5.
- 54 For good overviews of the usual deficiencies of a grand strategy, see: R. K. Betts, 'Is Strategy an Illusion?', *International Security*, 25:2 (2000), pp. 5–50; R. Jervis, 'U.S. Grand Strategy: Mission Impossible', *Naval War College Review*, 51:3 (1998), pp. 22–36.
- 55 B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (first published 1954) (New York: Meridian, 1991), p. 319.
- 56 U. C. Schroeder, 'Strategy by Stealth? The Development of EU Internal and External Security', *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 10:4 (2009), pp. 486–505. On the battle groups, see J.-Y. Haine, 'Battle Groups: Out of Necessity, Still a Virtue?', *European Security Review*, 39 (2008), pp. 1–5.
- 57 Under the Lisbon Treaty (article 43.1), member states have agreed on an extended definition of the Petersberg tasks, stating that they: 'shall include joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilization. All these tasks may contribute to the fight against terrorism, including by supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their territories.'
- 58 He added: 'Among practitioners, politicians often conflate strategy with policy objectives, focusing on what the desired outcomes should be, simply assuming that force will move the adversary toward it while soldiers often conflate strategy with operations focusing on how to destroy targets or defeat enemies tactically assuming that positive military effects mean positive policy effects'. Betts, 'Is Strategy an Illusion?', p. 7. This was underlined as soon as the ink on the Saint-Malo Agreement was dry, yet, more than ten years later, it is still missing. See for example: A. Van Staden *et al.*, *Towards a European Strategic Concept* (The Hague: Clingendael, 2000);

- S. Biscop and J. Coelmont, *A Strategy for CSDP: Europe's Ambitions as a Global Security Provider*, Egmont Paper No. 37 (Brussels: Egmont/Royal Institute for International Relations, 2010).
- 59 In December 2005, the European Council endorsed a document entitled 'The EU and Africa: Towards a Strategic Partnership', largely inspired by the Millennium Goals. This document was written by the Commission, hardly discussed by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) and barely overseen by the Political and Security Committee (PSC). This institutional imbalance triggered a brief statement by J. Solana, the High Representative for CFSP, to remind the Commission that the Council and the ESDP/CFSP framework could not be by-passed. See also N. Bagayoko and M. V. Gibert, 'The Linkage Between Security, Governance and Development: The European Union in Africa', *Journal of Development Studies*, 45:5 (2009), pp. 789–814.
- 60 EU, Council of the European Union, General Affairs and External Relations, 2760th Meeting, Brussels, 13 November 2006. See also T. Tardy, 'EU–UN Cooperation in Peacekeeping: A Promising Relationship in a Constrained Environment', in M. Ortega (ed.), *The European Union and the United Nations: Partners in Effective Multilateralism*, Chaillot Paper No. 78 (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2005).
- 61 G. R. Olsen, 'The EU and Military Conflict Management in Africa: For the Good of Africa or Europe?', *International Peacekeeping*, 16:2 (2009), p. 254; J.-Y. Haine and B. Giegerich, 'In Congo, a Cosmetic EU Operation', *International Herald Tribune*, 12 June 2006.
- 62 Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities, *A Human Security Doctrine for Europe* (Barcelona report) (2004), www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/solana/040915CapBar.pdf. See also J. H. Matlary, 'When Soft Power Turns Hard: Is an EU Strategic Culture Possible?', *Security Dialogue*, 37:1 (2006), pp. 105–21. One scholar uses the term 'humanitarian power Europe': C. O. Meyer, *The Quest for a European Strategic Culture: Changing Norms on Security and Defence in the European Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), p. 141. See also I. Manners, 'The Normative Ethics of the European Union', *International Affairs*, 84:1 (2008), pp. 45–60.
- 63 The civilian side of the CSDP has not been a great success either. See D. Korski and R. Gowan, *Can the EU Rebuild Failing States? A Review of Europe's Civilian Capacities* (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2009).
- 64 Z. Laïdi, 'Is Europe a Risk Averse Actor?', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 15:4 (2010), pp. 411–26. According to polls conducted by Transatlantic Trends in 2007, only 20 per cent of Europeans supported committing more troops for combat actions in general (see <http://trends.gmfus.org/>).
- 65 M. Kaldor, M. Martin and S. Selchow, 'Human Security: A New Strategic Narrative for Europe', *International Affairs*, 83:2 (2007), pp. 273–88.
- 66 As former Commissioner Chris Patten recorded, 'EU foreign ministers have since early 2004 issued 19 Darfur statements using phrases such as "serious concern" or "profound concern" a total of 53 times in a period that has seen some 200,000 slaughtered and 2.5 million displaced by government

- forces or government-backed militia, the Janjaweed. When something more than words is needed, the EU does not have much to boast about.' Quoted by A. Rettman, 'Ex-Commissioner Attacks EU Verbalism on Darfur', *EU Observer*, 20 March 2007.
- 67 Private conversation with French officials, Paris and Brussels, September 2004.
- 68 See P. Williams and A. Bellamy, 'The Responsibility to Protect and the Crisis in Darfur', *Security Dialogue*, 36:1 (2005), pp. 27–47.
- 69 EU diplomat quoted by A. Toje, *The European Union as a Small Power After the Post-Cold War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 106.
- 70 As always, the UN mandate was extensive. The EU 'multidimensional' force was 'to help create the security conditions conducive to a voluntary, secure and sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons, *inter alia* by contributing to the protection of refugees, displaced persons and civilians in danger, by facilitating the provision of humanitarian assistance in eastern Chad and the north-eastern Central African Republic and by creating favorable conditions for the reconstruction and economic and social development of those areas'. Security Council Resolution 1778. See UN Security Council press release, 'Security Council Authorizes Establishment of "Multidimensional Presence" in Chad, Central African Republic, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1778 (2007)', 25 September 2007, www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/sc9127.doc.htm.
- 71 The contributions were the following: France (2,000); Ireland (450); Poland (400); Austria (210); Sweden (200); Romania (120); Belgium (120); Spain (80); Netherlands (60); Finland (40); and Slovenia (15).
- 72 R. Marchal, 'Chad/Darfur: How Two Crises Merge', *Review of African Political Economy*, 33:109 (2006), pp. 467–82.
- 73 These groups, put together, totalled well over 10,000 people. Of course, they were uncoordinated. For a detailed account of these potential 'enemy' forces, see B. H. Seibert, *African Adventure? Assessing the European Union's Military Intervention in Chad and the Central African Republic*, MIT Security Studies Program Working Paper (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2007), pp. 11–15.
- 74 'France's intentions were unclear for many Europeans who feared Paris would use the European flag to mask a policy aimed at supporting an authoritarian regime. Many who had a genuine interest in acting on the margin in Darfur and in promoting CSDP feared being dragged into a mere regime protection measure.' D. Helly, 'EUFOR CHAD/CAR', in G. Grevi, D. Helly and D. Keohane (eds), *ESDP: The First 10 Years (1999–2009)* (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2009), p. 346.
- 75 Rebels were one element, banditry another. The 'lessons learned' report noted that 'de-linking' the security crisis in the east from internal Chadian politics was a deliberate decision made during the planning phase, and there was a 'debate' on whether or not this was appropriate. It also noted that 'NGOs regretted EUFOR's inadequate understanding of the context, particularly the security situation and the conditions needed to be created for long-term IDP returns'. See D. Helly, 'Lessons From EUFOR Chad/CAR', Seminar Report (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2010), p. 10.

- 76 As Colin Gray argued, 'adversity cannot cancel culture'. In the European case, the 'security' culture was far away from strategic realities. Colin S. Gray, 'Strategic culture as context: the first generation of theory strikes back', *Review of International Studies*, 25:1 (January 1999), p. 62.
- 77 Quoted in Toje, *The European Union as a Small Power*, p. 111.
- 78 Oxfam International press release, 'Insecurity Still Rampant in Chad as UN Takes Over From EU', 13 March 2009.
- 79 *Chad: Powder Keg in the East*, Africa Report No. 149 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2009), p. 19.
- 80 M. Ignatieff, 'Intervention and State Failure', *Dissent*, 49 (winter 2002), p. 121.
- 81 For a critique, see: R. Paris, 'Human Security. Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?', *International Security*, 26:2 (2001), pp. 87–102; J.-Y. Haine, 'The European Crisis of Liberal Internationalism', *International Journal*, 64:2 (2009), pp. 453–79; J. H. Matlary, 'Much Ado About Nothing: The EU and Human Security', *International Affairs*, 84:1 (2008), pp. 131–43. As one scholar nicely put it, the military ethos that it induces is: 'Pretend to be warlike but don't fight'. T. Koivula, 'Towards an EU Military Ethos', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 14:2 (2009), p. 171.
- 82 As Albert Hirschman has noted, 'Loyalty, far from being irrational, can serve the socially useful purpose of preventing deterioration from becoming cumulative, as it so often does when there is no barrier to exit.... While loyalty postpones exit, its very existence is predicated on the possibility of exit. That even the most loyal member can exit is often an important part of his bargaining power vis-à-vis the organization.' A. O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Declines in Firms, Organizations and States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 78, 80–1.
- 83 As a scholar argued, 'The real threat [to the CSDP], then, is not the Franco-British agreement, but the fact that the strengthening of Franco-British defence cooperation is taking place against a background of significant frustration in both London and Paris over EU defence efforts'. C. M. O'Donnell, 'Britain's Coalition Government and EU Defence Cooperation: Undermining British Interests', *International Affairs*, 87:2 (2011), p. 428.
- 84 For an eloquent summary on the importance of social mobilization in strategy, see: M. Howard, 'The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy', *Foreign Affairs*, 57:5 (1979), pp. 975–86; S. P. Rosen, 'Military Effectiveness: Why Society Matters', *International Security*, 19:4 (1995), pp. 5–31.
- 85 Or as Randall Schweller would have put it, Europe's underbalancing attitude. R. L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
- 86 This fundamental characteristic of the international system was first depicted by Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1984), pp. 108ff.
- 87 A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. xx.
- 88 Beyond the European case, the question becomes: 'If the principle of the balance of power was useful in the 18th century, it was likely to be valid in the 20th century as well, for its rationale never had anything to do with

the character of particular regimes. Is there not something which can be condensed from the experience of many centuries? Or are we to say that a new kind of regime must face the additional difficulty of inventing a new type of diplomacy? H. Butterfield, 'The New and Historical Diplomacy', in H. Butterfield and M. Wight (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), p. 183–6.

- 89 R. Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 104.

Hegemony by invitation: neoclassical realism, soft power and US–European relations

Felix Berenskoetter and Adam Quinn

This chapter explores the potential for neoclassical realist analysis to employ a concept of power which incorporates the influence of ideas across borders. It combines principles from contemporary realism with insights from classical realists E. H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau to offer a reading of international politics which takes into account the co-optive power of ideas in order to explain the phenomenon of bandwagoning. Complementing chapter 4, by Brian C. Schmidt and Thomas Juneau, we propose that a neoclassical realist approach would do well to examine power in relational terms rather than focusing exclusively on tangible resources. Within this perspective the chapter emphasizes the role of ideas not only in a ‘power over’ but also in a ‘power to’ sense, that is, not only as a dominating but also as an enabling force. It illustrates how such an approach offers fruitful avenues for explaining the success and, possibly, limits of US hegemony in Europe.

We start from the core premise of realist thinking, that ‘power is the fundamental feature of international politics’.¹ Part of this ‘feature’ is the assumption that states strive for power, or, as Morgenthau put it, that ‘power is always the immediate aim’.² It also underpins the prominent realist argument that states form balancing coalitions against a potential hegemon, that is, against the state considered the greatest power in the system. According to realists, the hegemon constitutes a potential threat, against which weaker states must protect themselves through domestic investment in ‘power’ resources or through alliances. While for some this is a law of history, a quasi-natural dynamic with little place for agency, others emphasize its normative, prescriptive character. As Ole Holsti writes, the balance-of-power proposition requires that statesmen ‘must form alliances to prevent any nation ... from achieving a position of hegemony. Failure to do so when the situation demands it is not merely irrational, it is also a serious dereliction of duty’.³

Over the years, the balance-of-power proposition, central to the neo-realist⁴ theory formulated by Kenneth Waltz, has been scrutinized on empirical and conceptual grounds.⁵ Arguably the greatest challenge is posed by the phenomenon of bandwagoning, that is, when states choose to actively cooperate with the apparent hegemon. A classic illustration is the continuing existence of the transatlantic alliance after the end of the Cold War, which has been a nagging source of discomfort for neo-realism. The submission of Western Europeans to a subordinate role within the US sphere of influence made sense in the reading of the Cold War as a bipolar structure, where small states sought protection from one superpower in exchange for a degree of subservience to the other. When the Soviet Union disbanded and the United States remained as the sole superpower, the logic of neorealism seemed to imply the emergence of balancing behaviour among Europeans.⁶ Yet twenty years later little movement towards such a destination has occurred. While there have been efforts among members of the European Union (EU) to generate some capacity for coordinated European military activity outside NATO, and notable disagreements between the United States and core allies over the 2003 invasion of Iraq, analysts have difficulty identifying any serious European attempts at the kind of hard balancing that neorealist logic would lead one to expect.⁷ Indeed, one could argue that, exceptions aside, Europeans have done quite the opposite and continued to invite the United States to play the role of a European hegemon.

Those who predict counter-hegemonic balancing behaviour may respond with an admonition of 'Just wait!' That is, they may argue that the timeframe for international systemic change is long and that a balancing trend will eventually become visible.⁸ Yet a theory which cannot account for two decades (and counting) of international politics clearly has its limits in terms of explanatory power. It also opens the ground for easy occupation by liberal and constructivist arguments highlighting the transatlantic 'glue' provided by compatible domestic political structures, shared liberal norms and values, common international institutions and shared identities. These factors are downplayed by neorealism, yet would explain the lack of European balancing by pointing to a deeper bond between the United States and European societies.⁹ The only realist argument offered in response is that the sheer scale of US pre-eminence in military capabilities has deterred Europeans from seriously contemplating balancing because the massive investment this would require is not deemed worth the cost.¹⁰ At this point, the debate devolves into a familiar division between those (realists) emphasizing material capabilities and those (non-realists) arguing that some ideational/normative 'x factor' imbues transatlantic relations with a depth and vigour that transcend the shifting distribution of material resources. As such, we are presented with a division between realist scholarship measuring power

in terms of 'hard' resources and others looking at influence obtained through 'soft' measures.

This divide is overstated. Just as constructivists like Alexander Wendt do not consider ideas as operating 'all the way down', it is safe to say that scholars who consider themselves realists would be prepared to admit that while the distribution of capabilities places hard parameters on international events, commonalities between US and European political values and the established nature of the alliance play some role in sustaining relations. It is on this unspoken common ground that neoclassical realism takes up its analytical residence. Keen to adopt the neorealist emphasis on the limits (and opportunities) given by material resources and willing to entertain a more complex understanding of motivations and to assess the role of ideas in shaping outcomes, the neoclassical perspective seeks to nudge realist scholarship a little further away from parsimonious but incomplete predictive theories and a little closer to an approach that accepts elements of contingency and multi-causal explanation in return for historical accuracy and insight. As such, the potential of neoclassical realism consists of more than 'filling in the gaps' of Waltzian neorealism and providing a neorealist theory of foreign policy.¹¹ While this may be the dominant concern of the US research community, as discussed in the introduction to this volume, the present chapter directs attention to the potential of integrating 'soft power' phenomena into a neoclassical realist theory of international politics. It is divided into three main parts. The first outlines some shortcomings of prominent realist explanations of bandwagoning. The second discusses how ideas may structure relations in terms of both domination and empowerment. The third illustrates this argument through the example of US–European relations. The conclusion notes some qualifications and challenges for this research agenda.

Bandwagoning for everything but power?

The simplest way for realists to deal with the phenomenon of bandwagoning is to treat it as a deviation from a historical pattern. This reading maintains that throughout history states have been more likely to balance, and classifies instances in which a weaker state aligns with the strongest state in the system as misguided, anomalous and 'irrational' decision-making, contrary to the core interest of the state.¹² One reason for such ostensibly 'irrational' behaviour may be lack of awareness of the actual distribution of power. Indeed, the difficulty practitioners may have in recognizing shifts in the balance of power has long been noted, with Morgenthau quoting Lord Bolingbroke to the effect that 'the precise point at which the scales of power turn ... is imperceptible to

common observation' and that even after the balance has shifted it is often misjudged.¹³

Although a coherent explanation as far as it goes, declaring all bandwagoning to be the result of misjudgement, or 'misperception', among decision-makers is intellectually unsatisfying, because it implies a (mis)reading of power as an objectively measurable property. Whereas a neorealist approach relies on tangible resources for substantiating its portrait of the 'international system', its understanding of the distribution of 'power' as equivalent to the distribution of military capabilities is problematic.¹⁴ As classical realists from Hans Morgenthau to Raymond Aron knew well, the possession of 'power' is characterized not simply by the accumulation of resources (of whatever kind) but by one's ability to further one's goals, leveraging those resources at one's disposal, in a social setting. More precisely, the measure of A's power requires an understanding of how A's presence, decisions and actions affect others. It looks at streams of influence within a relationship and holds that increase in A's (control over) resources does not amount to a shift in the distribution of power unless it is capable of affecting B's behaviour in some desired way.¹⁵ Thus, if we assume that the (potential) hegemon A would wish to prevent B from counterbalancing, then a decision on the part of B to bandwagon would indicate that A wields greater power over B than in a case where the latter decided to balance. However, we still do not know whether this decision rests on coercion (A forcing B to align against B's interests) or on persuasion (A convincing B that alignment serves a mutual interest). This important qualitative distinction directs our attention to a broader and quite crucial point: as theorists of power have long pointed out, we cannot identify, let alone specify, the exercise of power without knowing the interests of the parties involved and, hence, the context in which such interests are formulated.¹⁶

The weakness of the neorealist argument when it comes to bandwagoning can be traced to its narrow understanding of interests. Waltz's argument that bandwagoning goes against the weaker state's basic interest is grounded in his move to subsume the classical realist assumption of states driven by a 'will to power' under the assumption that the primary motivation is survival. His argument that the latter is best served by balancing as a precautionary measure in an anarchical environment narrows the meaning of 'power' to possession of the means to attack (or defend oneself) successfully in a military sense. This reading may be sensible from within neorealist logic and satisfies the demand for parsimony, yet it ignores the fact that power is not only a relational phenomenon but also has many facets, as reflected in the writings of Morgenthau and Carr.¹⁷ By bypassing its relational and multifaceted nature, Waltz and his followers close off the possibility for realists to understand bandwagoning as consistent with states' concern to increase

their 'power'. The claim that a core task of neoclassical realist scholarship is to 'fill out Kenneth Waltz's sparse understanding of power' raises expectations of a fruitful re-engagement with this possibility.¹⁸ However, a brief look at some prominent attempts to explain bandwagoning phenomena illustrates that, despite offering useful pointers, the new generation of realists still tends to neglect the task of (re)conceptualizing power, or has done so in a rather narrow fashion.

In their recent work examining US unipolarity since the end of the Cold War, Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth assess possible systemic constraints faced by the United States. Their finding that there are no significant constraints and that there has been no counter-balancing dynamic is instructive in a number of ways. Although the aim of Brooks and Wohlforth is to clarify the extent of US power, they explicitly discard the relational conceptualization and adopt the simpler reading of power as material resources.¹⁹ This not only excludes the role of ideas as a possible resource but also neglects the mechanisms by which resources are translated into influence and, hence, does not provide an analysis of US *hegemony*, which Brooks and Wohlforth openly admit.²⁰ In turn, their focus on material resources allows them to set up the argument that the gap between the resources controlled by the United States and those available to other states is so large that it makes balancing 'prohibitively costly'.²¹ This seems a compelling argument, yet it ignores the effect that US resources have on other states and bypasses the question of why others might be drawn into the US orbit and choose alignment. By acknowledging only the costs of balancing and not the benefits of bandwagoning, Brooks and Wohlforth tell only half the story.

Works by Stephen Walt and Randall Schweller offer useful steps towards integrating the role of ideas and the motive of expected benefits into an explanation of bandwagoning. Seeking to explain cooperative dynamics in the Middle East, which appear to defy balance-of-power logic, Walt recognizes the need to conceptualize power more carefully. However, he decides to sidestep this recognition by arguing that states do not balance power but threats. Rather than offering a bandwagoning argument through a different reading of power, he opts to reformulate the balancing proposition through a more nuanced understanding of threat. His suggestion that states feel threatened not simply by relative military capabilities but by a combination of aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities and aggressive intentions corrects, but does not depart from, the neorealist understanding of power as military capabilities/threat. It brings in a relational dimension by shifting attention to how states perceive each other's capabilities and the likelihood that they are used against them, yet it does not present a reconceptualization of power. This neglect is clearly visible in Walt's key argument that ideology affects how policy-makers judge others' intentions: instead of

grounding this in a discussion on the power of ideologies, Walt keeps the argument vague.²²

Walt's tentative suggestion that states may bandwagon because they hope to benefit from the spoils of victory is taken up by Randall Schweller, who calls it 'strategic surrender'.²³ According to Schweller, 'the primary motivation' for bandwagoning is 'the expectation of profit and easy gains'.²⁴ This re-enacts a core argument from hegemonic stability theory, which suggests that small states align with a potential hegemon because they expect to benefit from it.²⁵ Drawing on George Kennan, Schweller captures this by noting that states calculate it is better to join the 'winning side' because it represents the 'wave of the future'. This supposes that states view the potential hegemon as a 'winner', with goods at (or soon to be at) its disposal which can be shared. Although Schweller does not discuss this in detail, he suggests that such expectations about future benefits can be traced to 'dynamic ideologies, especially when buoyed by massive propaganda campaigns and demonstration of superiority on the battlefield'.²⁶ Unfortunately, Schweller does not take this argument further and also neglects to rethink the matter of power. Instead of grounding the 'bandwagoning for profit' motive in a (re)conceptualization of power relations between the hegemon and the bandwagoning state, his subsequent work focuses on explaining 'under-balancing' through a 'theory of mistakes', emphasizing the influence of domestic cohesion/fragmentation on threat (mis)perception, with ideology playing only a minor role.²⁷

This neglect is also apparent in Brian Rathbun's discussion following his claim that one of the major contributions of neoclassical realism is that it 'uses domestic politics and ideas to flesh out the concept of power'.²⁸ The fleshing-out, however, is limited to the recognition that military resources have to be 'mobilized' before they can have effect. More precisely, it revolves around the classical realist insight that domestic institutions or nationalist sentiment can enhance or constrain the state's 'extractive' and 'inspirational' ability and, hence, its ability to fight wars.²⁹ This argument introduces the relational dimension and could be used to argue that bandwagoning occurs due to the inability of a potential balancing coalition to convert resources. The limitation of such an argument is that it continues to employ a narrow reading of power as the ability to defend, attack and conquer, that is, win wars. Yet, as noted in the introduction to this volume, a distinguishing feature of neoclassical realism is to be more nuanced in assuming what states want. Following this call, we adopt the view of Schmidt and Juneau, set out in chapter 4, that states seek to maximize influence. This assumption returns to the classical realist view that states are driven by the 'will to power', though without reducing it to a 'will to dominate', that is, to an offensive urge within human nature.³⁰ Rather, we pick up the

suggestion also found in the writings of Morgenthau, Carr and Aron that individuals and collectives strive for prestige, or status/standing. As George Liska points out, this desire is not limited to great powers but also motivates small states joining an alliance.³¹ Taking up this cue, the following section outlines an explanation for bandwagoning that takes into account the power of ideas promising a future of gains and improved standing.

Recognizing the power of ideas

Integrating the power of ideas into the realist paradigm is a conceptual challenge because it appears to be at odds with the realist emphasis on the constraining force of material factors and the warning against the use of ideology as a guide for foreign policy. Attacks on the deceptive function of idealistic language, traceable to the historical materialism of Marx and Engels, are common among realists, from E. H. Carr to John Mearsheimer.³² Yet it is important to note that the realist critique of ideas masquerading as ‘reality’ is itself a normative stance necessarily based on awareness that policies/decisions often are informed, if not motivated, by ideas. The realist point is that policy-makers seduced by ideas still cannot escape the fact of value pluralism and the logic of material consequences. Thus, as Carr’s critique of the ‘harmony of interest’ assumption illustrates, realists are particularly critical of ideas with universalist features promising a world ruled by international law and moving towards ‘perpetual peace’. While the normative stance of realism rejects ideas claiming universal validity, analytically speaking, ideas nonetheless play a central role in its argumentative framework, whether as deceptive devices or as inspiration for policies doomed to fail. Seen from this angle, ideas can be safely incorporated into realist arguments so long as one remains faithful to the principle that the distribution of material resources determines the framework of possibilities within which ideational phenomena operate.³³

As Rathbun notes, neoclassical realists have hitherto limited their attention to the domestic level, to assessing how ideas affect state–society relations and providing cognitive frameworks for policy-makers.³⁴ Despite academic debates over the nature of US hegemony, or ‘empire’, and practical concerns over the strategic use of ‘public diplomacy’, an evaluation of how ideas serve as an instrument of power projected outwards is missing from realist analyses. As Rathbun observes, ‘there is no notion of ideas being used to co-opt ... in the form of “soft power”’.³⁵ This apparent reluctance to trace the role of ideas in interstate relations does not seem justified. If one accepts that ideas (can) ‘interact’ with material factors, then the analytical scope can surely be expanded further

to include assessing the power of ideas across borders, particularly if doing so offers a useful explanation for bandwagoning. A logical extension of the argument that ideas provide policy-makers with cognitive frames affecting the processing of information would be that such ideas might be shared among states and generate similar perceptions.³⁶ And what prevents neoclassical realists from arguing that the mobilizing force of ideas operates not only domestically, as in the case of nationalism, but also internationally? Rathbun's passing observation that such an argument would go 'beyond the neorealist boundary'³⁷ suggests that that boundary may be drawn too strictly. Elevating Waltzian theory to the status where it sets the standard for what makes an acceptable neoclassical realist argument seems counterproductive if it prevents engaging classical thinkers who recognize the power ideas may have on an international level.

When Joseph Nye coined the notion of 'soft power' in the 1990s, the phenomenon behind the label had been discussed previously not only by neo-Gramscian scholars like Richard Ashley and Robert Cox but also by Morgenthau and Carr. For Morgenthau, power is a psychological phenomenon involving 'man's control over the minds of other men'. He warns against the equation of power with military strength and stresses its 'immaterial aspects, especially in the form of charismatic power, and ... political ideologies'.³⁸ Thus, despite his warning against ideologies (mis)guiding foreign policy, Morgenthau notes that alliances may well be held together by an 'ideological factor'. Although he maintains that 'a purely ideological alliance ... cannot but be stillborn', shared ideological commitments and concerns about subversion by a rival/hostile ideology are not uncommon among allies, and supplement material interests, perhaps even leading to 'ideological solidarity transcending the limitations of material interests'. He notes that the ideological factor can 'lend strength to the alliance by marshalling moral convictions and emotional preferences for its support'.³⁹ Morgenthau does not explicitly discuss ideologies as an instrument of power, but he does so indirectly when noting how they can be used to 'disguise' imperial policies.⁴⁰

Morgenthau's observations are complemented by Carr's discussion of the 'power over opinion', which, according to Carr, is 'not less essential for political purposes than military and economic power, and has always been closely associated with them. The art of persuasion has always been a necessary part of the equipment of the political leader.'⁴¹ In addition to his discussion of the manipulation of domestic public opinion, Carr highlights the frequent use of propaganda instruments in foreign policy, most obviously in the psychological dimension of warfare, with the aim of influencing the thinking of the adversary. He also reminds us that in Europe revolutionary ideas have had significant mobilizing power across borders. This demonstrates that populations may be won over not merely

by promises about military protection and economic profit, but also by offering them some form of ideational 'payoff', an association with an idea that satisfies their desire for standing. Carr even suggests that all material power is infused with the power of an idea, and that economic and military resources alone cannot impose power over opinion.⁴² This argument can be fruitfully linked with his emphasis on the role that utopias – visions of a future promising a better life – play in politics. As has been pointed out, contrary to the line taken by many realists, Carr stresses the 'inherent utopianism of human nature' and concedes that political thinking is always based on elements of both utopia and reality.⁴³ Taking this on board suggests that exercising power over opinion rests to an important degree on the successful propagation of an idea with promise, a credible utopia, though Carr is careful to note that for any idea to be effective it needs to take on a 'national colour'. The ideas of the French and Russian revolutions may have had a universal character, but it would be misleading to see them as genuinely 'international' and disconnected from national context. In his words, 'propaganda is ineffective as a political force until it acquires a national home and becomes linked with military and economic power'.⁴⁴ Carr suggests that the instrumental use of ideas is real but limited: power over opinion can be exercised effectively only if an idea is adopted by the receivers as part of their own story, and is sustainable only if the expectations raised by the idea are met by subsequent experiences, that is, if promises are considered fulfilled on the receiving end.

Closer examination of this logic leads to an important insight: paying attention to the influence of ideas does not merely add another resource to the analytical toolkit but opens up a different way of thinking about power. Whereas Carr's discussion highlights the role of ideology in holding *power over* opinion, if ideas tap into and satisfy certain desires and raise expectations then their power can, indeed must, also be read from the angle of *power to*, or empowerment. To be sure, the choice to bandwagon implies an acceptance of being dominated to some extent, and an argument which recognizes ideas as a mechanism for power could hold that ideas simply mediate military superiority by making it acceptable, or legitimate. But an exclusive focus on acceptability/legitimacy risks ignoring the desire for 'power' as a motive on the part of the bandwagoning state and, hence, neglects Liska's insight that small states also strive for status/standing, as well as Schweller's point that states bandwagon for expected profit. Bringing these desires into the picture allows for the ascription of a power motive to the small state, except that here the 'will to power' is understood to be satisfied not through domination but through being empowered by siding with the hegemon: the small state follows because it sees itself joining on a progressive journey towards some 'better life'. By subscribing to the 'winning formula' propagated by

the hegemon, the weak state is surfing, as Schweller puts it, the 'wave of the future'. Such a reading adds not only that states decide to cooperate *for* rather than simply *against* something, it also requires neoclassical realists to address a core liberal theme, namely belief on the part of actors in 'progress' of some kind. Satisfying this belief is not a zero-sum game, that is, *pace* Schweller, gaining status by joining a hegemon's world does not necessarily reduce the ability of others to obtain the same.⁴⁵ At the same time, neither should it be assumed that surfing the wave of the future can be done without cost, as the hegemon is likely to expect a contribution of some useful sort.

Ask first about capabilities, then about desires. But ask about both

The frame outlined above offers a plausible realist explanation for how the United States was able to build and sustain its hegemony in Europe and why Europeans 'invited' US domination. It asks realists to explore the phenomenon of bandwagoning as a power relationship by looking at both sides, addressing: first, the fact that exercising 'power over opinion' was part of the US strategy to maintain America's superior position in Europe; and second, how and why the ideas emitted were found to be promising by Europeans and satisfied their desire to improve their own status. The resulting picture is not one of simple domination (power over) but mutual empowerment (power to).⁴⁶ While the following discussion does not pretend to offer novel historical insights, its aim is to delineate what a neoclassical realist perspective that takes into account the power of promising ideas might look like and, thus, make a case for the analytical potential of such an approach.

Inviting hegemony

Arguably, US hegemony in (parts of) Europe was established following the end of World War II and, hence, it can be said that the European decision to bandwagon began not in 1990 but in 1945. As Stephen Walt notes, 'the United States was overwhelmingly the world's most powerful country immediately after World War II, yet was able to bring most of the industrial powers into an alliance'.⁴⁷ Whereas Walt explains this phenomenon with the Soviet threat perceived by American and Western European leaders, the neoclassical realist frame outlined above also emphasizes shared expected benefits.

To begin with, US policy followed the tendency, common among states with growing resources, to expand the horizon of their strategic concerns and seek to project power accordingly.⁴⁸ As Donald White has

shown, in the decade following the end of the World War II the political elite and the majority of the American public agreed on their country's new status as the most powerful nation.⁴⁹ And the societies of Europe provided an important base of operations for the emergent US military behemoth and a vital component in the establishment of the post-war 'American system' of states favouring (relatively) open-door economics and liberal politics. As John Ikenberry and many others have noted, the US motive for maintaining its presence in Europe was not simple territorial control, but securing the dominance of those economic and ideological principles conducive to the sustenance of the United States' status as leader of a prosperous West.⁵⁰

In line with the reading of the Cold War as an ideological struggle, key strategic documents such as NSC-68, Kennan's 'long telegram' and the Clifford–Elsey report show that US leaders considered the threat from the Soviet Union to be not only military but also ideological.⁵¹ Aggressive Soviet policy was seen as an outward manifestation of pathologies in the national psyche and Marxist–Leninist ideas a challenge to the stability of capitalist societies. Beyond the possibility of a military assault, the key concern was the subversion of the political process in European societies weakened by war and the encroachment of Soviet power through the spread of its model of government. Under the declared goal of preserving the 'free' societies and countering ('containing') the potential of Soviet material and ideological resources, the United States pursued a strategy aimed at attaining power over opinion in Europe, which took various forms: direct material support for resistance to communist forces in Greece under the Truman doctrine; the use of financial resources to re-establish a narrative of prosperity around capitalist economies in the West through the Marshall Plan; and the encouragement of European integration, economic and military, as a means of 'locking in' the liberal social model and the mutual cooperation needed to make it function.⁵² With regard to the Eastern bloc, the perceived universal character of liberal ideas meant a continued appeal to the 'peoples' of other nations, whose interests and rights were understood to be in line with US liberal ideals. The rhetoric of freedom as a universal good transmitted through tools such as Radio Free Europe was intended to foster political discontent in societies under Soviet rule, as a source of advantage for the United States.⁵³ In short, the vital security and economic interests of the United States in Europe were bound up inextricably with the ideological value attached to a wider liberal international order. Separating this US project out into neatly defined parcels representing material self-interest and the pursuit of ideological goals is a fool's errand.⁵⁴

American ideas of order and their political upholders were not simply imposed on Europeans. Rather, as Ikenberry has argued, governments in Britain, France and other parts of Western Europe invited the US

presence.⁵⁵ Soviet military capabilities arguably played an important part in motivating these countries to band together in subordinate roles within an American-led military alliance. Yet even if we read the post-war decade as one of military bipolarity between the United States and the Soviet Union, neorealism provides no automatic answer to the question of which side Europeans ought to have embraced. A neoclassical analysis shifts the focus from the neorealist preoccupation with threats onto the need for physical and ideational reconstruction, and the fact that both emerging 'superpowers' wrapped their respective victories over Nazi Germany in an idea of order promising a better life for suffering European societies.

Material factors spilling over from wartime collaboration, such as financial debt owed to the United States, the distribution of armies and *ad hoc* administrative structures gave pragmatic incentives for the choice on the part of Western Europeans to prefer US 'leadership' to incorporation within the Soviet sphere of influence. An essential part of this choice was the conviction that liberal democracy and capitalism were superior forms of social organization compared with the Soviet model. This conviction was intertwined with the view that embracing US tutelage represented the best means of maximizing the status of their respective nations in the post-war order. Of course, the specific narrative varied in each national case: Britain wished to maintain its empire, or at least its great-power status as its grip on empire weakened; France sought rehabilitation of its status as a grand nation; and German leaders aimed fundamentally to redefine the country's position in Europe as a pacific and responsible nation. In each case the view prevailed that these varying concerns could best be satisfied by seeking a role in a US-led Western order. In this context, the founding idea of NATO was not merely military deterrence but the creation of an alliance fostering the idea of a 'Western civilization'.⁵⁶ Factions sympathetic to the communist promise were in a difficult position, not least because of the US strategy of actively rewarding those politicians supporting liberal ideas and giving them a place as active participants in constructing the post-war system.⁵⁷ American investments, most notably the Marshall Plan, gave credibility to the US commitment to supporting European reconstruction, and when economic recovery validated the promise of this system, Europeans willingly submitted to a degree of subordination. Although over the following four decades this degree was gradually reduced and some, like France, sought to establish their status outside American structures, overall, American hegemony remained the accepted condition in Western Europe. This, we argue, was not simply the product of a sentimental fondness for shared values but the expectation that such an arrangement would provide material and ideational benefits, and the subsequent belief that this expectation was paying off.

Extending the invitation

If the US–European alliance was created and sustained by a sense of mutual benefit from investing in liberal ideas of order, then there was no obvious reason to expect this incentive to disappear with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Indeed, the fact that the United States could claim to have ‘won’ the Cold War, its swift military victory in Iraq in 1991 and its impressive economic growth in the 1990s appeared to validate the promise of the capitalist-democratic model as the ‘wave of the future’. US administrations thus could claim quasi-natural American leadership premised upon both military superiority and liberalism as the victorious ideology, tempting a view of the United States as ‘bound to lead’.⁵⁸ Although throughout the 1990s US administrations avoided triumphalist rhetoric, they still actively propagated Western ideals. In Europe, an important aspect of the strategy of sustaining and expanding US hegemony focused on the post-Soviet space. The desire to integrate Eastern Europe into the liberal order took concrete form through the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act of 1989, which channelled significant resources and attention to nations in that region for the purpose of ‘enabling them to overcome their past and become reliable, productive members of the Euro-Atlantic community of Western democracies’.⁵⁹

After 1993, this agenda was advanced most explicitly through NATO enlargement. US leaders continued to see the Atlantic Alliance as a useful vehicle for projecting power and sought to maintain it as the primary security institution in Europe.⁶⁰ Most obviously US military preponderance ensured its dominance in NATO’s planning and command structure and in deciding when and how the organization was to be used. Viewing NATO as an alliance enhancing Western ideas of order, US commitment to the first round of enlargement was significantly driven by a mixture of ‘neo-Wilsonian ambitions with residual realpolitik about European stability’, topped off with the idea that democracies would make natural friends.⁶¹ The strong desire among Central European states to join NATO, noted below, meant that the United States merely had to issue the invitation and rhetorically confirm the benefits of the capitalist democratic system. The expected main benefit in doing so did not lie in the military realm but in enhancing the United States’ status as the leader of the ‘free world’ in Europe. Similar calculations motivated the George W. Bush administration to push for a second round of enlargement. The expectation that states from ‘new Europe’ would support the US liberal agenda compensated for the insufficient enthusiasm some ‘old’ European allies, such as Germany, showed for the Manichaean framework in which the United States cast the ‘war on terror’.⁶²

The US strategy was largely successful because Western European states had no reason to seriously question the benefits of the ‘winning

formula' contained in the American model. They had internalized the body of ideas shared with the United States and had become successful co-architects of the Western liberal order, a role which had brought benefits and empowerment, not least by emerging on the 'winning side' of the Cold War. Close trade links across the Atlantic and the promises of 'globalization' were evaluated positively on both sides, and acceptance of continued US military dominance among West European societies was coupled with expectations that the United States would continue to underwrite a stable and prosperous European order. Promises such as those given by President Bush, Sr, to create a Europe 'whole and free' seemed to confirm that America would muster its resources towards this goal.⁶³ There was thus a general sense that the United States would continue not only to lend credibility to NATO's function as a deterrent, but also to support the integration of Europe along liberal ideas of order. Europeans also continued to be content with relying on the United States to deal with larger strategic questions and to carry the responsibility for military engagements. When in the wake of the Maastricht Treaty some Europeans played up the idea of the EU as sufficiently competent to solve conflict on the Balkans without American help, they soon backtracked and called for US military assistance, thereby affirming the latter's status as Europe's pacifier.⁶⁴

American hegemony was particularly welcomed in Central Europe, where the desire was strong to escape the Russian sphere of influence and join 'the West'. The eagerness of these countries to obtain the status of NATO membership was in part driven by the deterrent quality of US military assets constraining a possibly resurgent Russia and a unified Germany. An equally strong motivation was the desire to be part of the 'winning club' and to benefit from the order of political and economic liberalism. Hence, from the perspective of states like Poland, the willing submission to US tutelage was understood not so much as catering to a hegemon – a condition from which these states had, after all, just escaped – but as benefiting from its protective and supportive umbrella. The promise of NATO membership was a powerful vision which prompted governments in Central Europe to pursue domestic reforms and adopt Western ideas of 'good governance'.⁶⁵ European support for US hegemony was also demonstrated in the months following the attacks of 11 September 2001, when the US interpretation of what occurred as an assault on the values of Western civilization was accepted and prompted Europeans to invoke NATO's article 5 for the first time and to follow the United States into Afghanistan and, in most cases, Iraq.

In sum, US hegemony in Europe emerged and endured not simply because the United States had vast material resources but because the visions it propagated – that is, the ideas of order it promised – were considered attractive by Europeans. To be sure, European motives for

inviting the American presence were varied and require more careful analysis than offered here, yet the broader point is that they often met in the assessment that cooperation within a US-dominated alliance was beneficial. In other words, they saw US hegemony not so much as a constraining, let alone threatening condition but, rather, as one that guarded appreciated values and improved their status.

Conclusion: disillusion is always around the corner

This chapter has suggested that neoclassical realism is well equipped to take account of 'the power of promising ideas' as part of an explanation for bandwagoning, and more generally as a component in understanding the relationship between hegemonic and subordinate states. The case of US-European relations illustrates that, while material conditions set the scene, the way in which actors interpreted potential rewards and defined their alliance preferences was entwined with ideology and a sense of mutual empowerment achieved through its shared pursuit. In conclusion, having made the case for a 'soft power' perspective, it is necessary to direct attention to one important qualification of this argument. To retain realist credentials, it needs to maintain that if a relationship is held together primarily by the mutual belief in a promising future, and not also supported by structural pressures stemming from material capabilities and interests, it will ultimately prove to be a source of disillusionment. This can be traced back to Carr's point on the limits of propagating ideas across borders and to Morgenthau's argument about the necessary connection between ideologies and material interests. As Morgenthau warns, ideologies may also weaken alliances by 'obscuring the nature and limits of the common interests ... and by raising expectations, bound to be disappointed, for the extent of concerted policies and actions'.⁶⁶ In other words, the realist emphasis on material conditions holds that, eventually, they will trump even the most promising idea and generate disillusion among the parties.

Exactly when disillusion occurs is a question that is difficult to answer in the abstract. In the case of transatlantic relations one can find a number of examples for such 'reality checks' on both sides, brought about by over-reliance on supposedly shared ideas. Just a few examples from the post-Cold War period are mentioned here. First, US hesitancy to get involved in Bosnia sowed doubts among Western Europeans regarding the American commitment to a shared idea of European security. Conversely, the trials of cooperative military operations over Kosovo undermined American faith in the usefulness of Europeans as effective allies in a shooting war. Franco-German opposition to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, despite their expressions of solidarity with the United

States in the wake of '9/11', caused great disappointment in Washington. Meanwhile, the Iraq experience and American backtracking on the promise to include them in the construction of a missile defence shield generated the feeling among Central Europeans that Washington was taking their support for granted. Such reality checks do not mean that the United States and Europeans have ceased to share ideas.⁶⁷ However, they remind us that for strategies of hegemony and of bandwagoning to be sustainable they need to rely on more than well meant promises – they need to sustain a sense of mutual empowerment for the attainment of desired goals, including sustaining or improving national status. At the same time, in order to recognize disillusionment as an important political phenomenon, we must start by recognizing the power of promising ideas have in generating expectations and their effect on behaviour.

Thus, to return to this chapter's central argument, neoclassical realism should be more sensitive to the role ideas can play in determining policy and shaping relationships, as a means of both domination and empowerment. Exploring these complex dynamics requires a sophisticated understanding of power on the part of realists. Rather than treating hegemony as a natural outcome of unipolarity, defined by military capabilities, neoclassical realists may benefit from engaging the original Gramscian understanding and its emphasis on ideology. In particular, analysts need to pay attention to the desires of small states and understand how these states sometimes expect to benefit from aligning with a potential hegemon. The most obvious difficulty to be addressed by anyone taking this analytical approach forward lies in identifying what ideas, or types of ideas, appeal across borders and how they attract. Simultaneously, there is the challenge of identifying the limits set by material factors upon the way ideas may structure relations between states. Scholars wanting to remain classifiable as realists must systematically incorporate the conviction that states will be punished for placing too much faith in the transnational glue of ideas and for losing sight of the need for material capacity to achieve objectives. A 'reality check' need not play out as a dead end for ideas, however. As Carr suggested, the relationship between idealism and materialism can be viewed as a dialectical one, in which overly idealistic policies will eventually be reined in by material forces, and material reality challenged in turn by new ideas.⁶⁸

Notes

- 1 R. L. Schweller, 'New Research on Alliances: Refining, Not Refuting, Waltz's Balancing Proposition', *American Political Science Review*, 91:4 (1997), p. 927; W. C. Wohlforth, 'Realism', in C. Reus-Smit and D. Snidal (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 131–49.

- 2 H. J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, fourth edition (New York: Albert Knopf, 1967), p. 13.
- 3 O. R. Holsti, T. P. Hopmann and J. D. Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1973), p. 6.
- 4 This chapter uses the term 'neorealism' instead of 'structural realism'.
- 5 J. A. Vasquez, 'The Realist Paradigm and Degenerative Versus Progressive Research Programs: An Appraisal of Neotraditional Research on Waltz's Balancing Proposition', *American Political Science Review*, 91:4 (1997), pp. 899–912; J. S. Levy, 'Balances and Balancing: Concepts, Propositions, and Research Design', in J. A. Vasquez and C. Elman (eds), *Realism and the Balancing of Power* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 2002), pp. 128–53.
- 6 J. Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War', *International Security*, 15:1 (1990), pp. 5–56.
- 7 K. A. Lieber and G. Alexander, 'Waiting for Balancing: Why the World Is Not Pushing Back', *International Security*, 30:1 (2005), pp. 109–39.
- 8 K. Waltz, 'Structural Realism After the Cold War', in G. J. Ikenberry (ed.), *America Unrivaled* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 29–67.
- 9 J. M. Owen IV, 'Transnational Liberalism and American Primacy', in Ikenberry (ed.), *America Unrivaled*, pp. 239–59; T. Risse, 'US Power in a Liberal Security Community', in Ikenberry (ed.), *America Unrivaled*, pp. 260–83; G. J. Ikenberry, *After Victory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); G. J. Ikenberry, 'Democracy, Institutions and Strategic Restraint', in Ikenberry (ed.), *America Unrivaled*, pp. 213–38.
- 10 S. G. Brooks and W. C. Wohlforth, 'American Primacy in Perspective', *Foreign Affairs*, 81:4 (2002), pp. 20–33; W. C. Wohlforth, 'The Stability of a Unipolar World', *International Security*, 29:1 (1999), pp. 5–41.
- 11 For such a view, see B. Rathbun, 'A Rose By Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism', *Security Studies*, 17:2 (2008), pp. 294–321.
- 12 K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 126–7; S. M. Walt, 'Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power', *International Security*, 9:4 (1985), pp. 3–43; G. H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).
- 13 Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 206. See also M. Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 'The End of Balance-of-Power Theory? A Comment on Wohlforth *et al.*'s "Testing Balance-of-Power Theory in World History"', *European Journal of International Relations*, 15:2 (2009), pp. 347–80.
- 14 Waltz employs a rather opaque 'lump concept' of power, encompassing all kinds of capabilities, but ultimately what counts are military capabilities.
- 15 The argument that power must be understood in relational terms and through its effects is prominent among theorists of power, at least from Max Weber onwards; see F. Berenskoetter 'Thinking About Power', in F. Berenskoetter and M. J. Williams (eds), *Power in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 3.
- 16 S. Lukes, 'Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds', in F. Berenskoetter and M. J. Williams (eds), *Power in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 87.
- 17 Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, parts III, IV; E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years'*

- Crisis, 1919–1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001 [1946]), ch. 8. For a critique of Waltz's conceptualization of power, see D. A. Baldwin, 'Neoliberalism, Neorealism, and World Politics', in D. A. Baldwin (ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 15–22.
- 18 Rathbun, 'A Rose By Any Other Name', p. 296.
- 19 S. G. Brooks and W. C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 11. They justify this reading by suggesting it is common practice.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 22 This has not changed; see S. M. Walt, 'Keeping the World "Off Balance": Self-Restraint and U.S. Foreign Policy', in Ikenberry (ed.), *America Unrivaled*, pp. 121–54. For a substantial argument of how ideology influences threat perception and balancing behaviour, see M. L. Haas, 'Ideology and Alliances: British and French External Balancing Decisions in the 1930s', *Security Studies*, 12:4 (2003), pp. 34–79.
- 23 Walt, 'Alliance Formation', pp. 8, 18; R. L. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 68.
- 24 Schweller, 'New Research on Alliances', p. 928.
- 25 See also Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 27.
- 26 Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances*, pp. 79–81.
- 27 His original argument ducks the question of threat by suggesting that the orientation towards gains is particularly visible among 'unthreatened' states. Schweller, 'New Research on Alliances'.
- 28 Rathbun, 'A Rose By Any Other Name', p. 301.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 303.
- 30 Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 33.
- 31 G. Liska, *Alliances and the Third World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), pp. 28ff.
- 32 Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, pp. 6, 86–96; Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*; J. J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), pp. 25–6.
- 33 See also Nicholas Kitchen in this volume, chapter 5.
- 34 Rathbun, 'A Rose By Any Other Name', p. 303.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 304. Walt notes the ability to project 'soft power' as one strategy for the United States to prevent others from counterbalancing. Walt, 'Keeping the World "Off Balance"', p. 152. However, his discussion is brief and preliminary. For a deeper discussion on exercising hegemonic power through socialization, see G. J. Ikenberry and C. A. Kupchan, 'Socialization and Hegemonic Power', *International Organization*, 44:3 (1990), pp. 283–315.
- 36 Of course, this argument is not new; see Haas, 'Ideology and Alliances'.
- 37 Rathbun, 'A Rose By Any Other Name', p. 304.
- 38 Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, pp. 26, xi. See also M. C. Williams, 'Why Ideas Matter in International Relations: Hans Morgenthau, Classical Realism, and the Moral Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization*, 58:4 (2004), pp. 633–65.
- 39 Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, pp. 177ff.
- 40 *Ibid.*, pp. 88ff.

- 41 Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, p. 120.
- 42 *Ibid.*, pp. 129–30.
- 43 *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 129.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 126.
- 45 Schweller, 'New Research on Alliances', p. 928.
- 46 Of course, this applies not only to ideas. There is also material empowerment and the two may well go together (not least through an idea promising material gain).
- 47 S. M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 275–6. See also G. J. Ikenberry, 'Rethinking the Origins of American Hegemony', *Political Science Quarterly*, 104:3 (1989), pp. 375–400.
- 48 F. Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); C. Layne, *The Peace of Illusions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); C. Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
- 49 D. W. White, 'The Nature of American Power in American History: An Evaluation After the End of World War II', *Diplomatic History*, 11:3 (1987), pp. 181–201.
- 50 Ikenberry, 'Rethinking the Origins of American Hegemony'.
- 51 Report to the National Security Council – NSC-68, 12 April 1950; Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall (the 'long telegram'), 22 February 1946; Report, 'American Relations with the Soviet Union', Clark Clifford, 24 September 1946.
- 52 On the process of post-war Western European cooperation and mutual support carried out under US urging, see: A.W. DePorte, *Europe Between the Superpowers* (Chelsea: Yale University Press, 1979); G. Lundestad, *'Empire' by Integration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- 53 For a discussion of the ideological quality of US policy in the early Cold War and its liberal universality core, see A. Quinn, *US Foreign Policy in Context* (London: Routledge, 2010), ch. 6.
- 54 J. L. Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); W. Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: Dell, 1972); W. LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945–2000*, ninth edition (London: McGraw-Hill, 2002); M. P. Leffler, 'The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War', *American Historical Review*, 89:2 (1984), pp. 346–81.
- 55 Ikenberry, 'American Hegemony'.
- 56 See T. Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation Among Democracies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); C. Coker, *Twilight of the West* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998); P. T. Jackson, 'Defending the West: Occidentalism and the Formation of NATO', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 11:3 (2003), pp. 223–52.
- 57 This included support for the idea of a federal Europe and the structures which laid the foundation of the European Community. Lundestad, *'Empire' by Integration*.
- 58 J. S. Nye, Jr, *Bound To Lead* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).
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Towards neoclassical realist thinking in Russia?

Tatiana Romanova and Elena Pavlova

Even given the relatively recent emergence of international relations (IR) as a discipline, it is still at a young age in Russia. Its development there started in the Soviet Union in the 1970s but it was confined to Marxist critiques of other (bourgeois) schools, and most studies took place in Moscow, which made it easier to control their content. With the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia saw a rapid increase in IR studies. The discipline became much more pluralistic. However, it has stayed empirical rather than oriented towards the construction of distinct theoretical concepts. Various theoretical paradigms have been borrowed from the West to explain events or developments in Russia or elsewhere. For that very reason, there are limits to how far we can talk about the development of IR theoretical studies in contemporary Russia.

Realism swiftly acquired a central role in Russian IR studies, for reasons explored below. Its application to empirical cases has ensured its firm link with official documents and speeches. Still, Russian realists have been quite heterogeneous, and in the course of the chapter we will identify historical, structuralist, geopolitical and politico-economic currents before coming to neoclassical realism. At the same time, Marxism was rejected due to the historical failure of communism in the Soviet Union, liberalism was judged to be too naive, and constructivism and post-structuralism were considered to be too specific and lacking real-world explanations. Studies of these paradigms in Russia were much more theoretical than empirical and their influence on the IR discipline in Russia has so far been marginal.

In Russia, neoclassical realism has only recently gained ground; in a nutshell, it is about 'bringing the state back in' to the debates about the international system and the pressure it exerts on national interests. At the same time, it has followed the Russian tradition, in that neoclassical realism has mostly been used for empirical purposes rather than for any sort of theoretical advance. Even those who are not neoclassical realists

sometimes have to apply its categories and lines of reasoning because this is the only paradigm that enjoys public support and that is reflected in the basic Russian foreign-policy documents.

In what follows we first explore in more detail the theoretical context of realist and neoclassical realist studies in Russia. We then turn to the ontology of (neoclassical) realism in Russia. We start with the three key filters that are pivotal for Russian neoclassical realists: the strong authority of the President; debates about Russian identity and about Russia belonging – or not – to the West/Europe; and the collision of hard security interests with the wish to maximize profit. We then examine how these ‘filters’ influence Russian debates on three categories, pivotal for Russian IR studies: polarity, national interest and neighbourhood/coalitions. This is different from the conventional approach, which traces methodology and the evolution of the discipline rather than following the subject of research. However, our logic is determined by the nature of Russian realism; only through changes in the context of the three categories can we trace developments in Russian realist thinking. In doing so, we address both theoretical work and key Russian foreign-policy documents.

Realist studies in Russia in methodological context

In the Soviet Union IR studies started in the 1970s but were limited to the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) and the Moscow Institute of International Relations (MGIMO). However, even these institutions produced – instead of their own theoretical research – only summaries and compilations of Western works, adding at the end a Marxist-Leninist critique. This was due to the specificity of humanities in the Soviet Union, the essence of which was that everything had already been formulated by the Communist Party and its ideology and there was no need to advance this knowledge. Thus the approach taken by these institutes was the only way to introduce at least some Soviet readers to Western thinking and trends in IR studies.

This ideological approach to world politics led to the prevalence of empirical studies over solid theoretical research and conceptualization. The approach had a serious impact on post-Soviet IR studies. The transformation of the humanities in Russia started from the revision of history, from the effort to understand what *really* happened. As a result, it strengthened the development of IR from historical rather than philosophical roots.¹

Certainly, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the liberalization of research. Andrey Tsygankov and Pavel Tsygankov astutely identify three key tendencies of that time: pluralization, Westernization and isolation.² Pluralization emerged when Marxism lost its centrality in the Russian

social sciences and IR studies spread beyond Moscow establishments. Westernization and isolation are two poles of the same phenomenon. The former was due to the fact that knowledge-hungry Russian specialists addressed fundamental Western IR works, although this meant a lack of independent Russian studies; indeed, Alexei Bogaturov³ concluded in 2000 that Russian IR studies had for ten years concentrated only on mastering and absorbing Western works instead of producing original works. Isolation became a reaction to this Westernization and manifested itself in a refusal to learn from sources outside Russia (and so any learning in the field was mostly empirical).

Whether the development of IR studies is attributed to the period in which Russia aspired to break with the Soviet legacy,⁴ or to the experience accumulated precisely in the Soviet period,⁵ (neo)realism promptly became the dominant IR theory in the new Russia. Various factors contributed to the strength of realist paradigms. First, Russia has been characterized by a powerful state machine in all periods, but especially in modern times. The post-Soviet decades of Russian history reconfirmed this trend. After a brief period of weak statehood in the 1990s, the centrality of federal institutions, particularly that of the presidency, was re-established, and the ability of subnational entities and companies to design their policies was curtailed. The growing influence of powerful ministries reinforced this centrality of the state. Hence, the IR paradigm, which gives primacy to the state (i.e. primarily executive power), fits neatly in studies of Russia.

Second, and linked to the first factor, foreign policy became an instrument to mobilize the support of the Russian population, and realism, which provides a simplistic explanation of state motives, became an attractive methodology. This tendency was exacerbated by the fact that throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium the emphasis was on the empirical application of IR, while non-applied research was not properly supported and the development of more theoretical IR thinking (which one Russian scholar famously called textbooks for senior students) was not encouraged.

Third and last, all strands of realism provided the basis for consensus among the political elite. Most analysts, especially those who were close to the Kremlin and other parts of the executive branch, were ardent supporters of this paradigm. This, in turn, led to the all-permeating presence of realist thinking in numerous documents and statements related to Russian foreign policy. This, however, does not mean that other schools (liberalism, neo-Marxism, constructivism) did not develop. However, they have thus far been much less influential in Russian social sciences and marginal to the discussions of the political elite.

Andrei Tsygankov and Pavel Tsygankov⁶ as well as Alexander Sergounin⁷ have called Russian realists *derzhavniki* (i.e. those who

support the great statehood of Russia). More recently, however, Sergounin⁸ recognized two currents in Russian realist thinking, *realpolitik* and *geopolitics/Eurasianism*, a typology that emphasizes the importance of the identity debate in Russia.

Tatiana Shakleina and Alexei Bogaturov⁹ describe six approaches to Russian realism: systemic-historic, which dates back to 1970s Soviet research; structural,¹⁰ which emphasizes Russia's relations with the West; geopolitical, which conceptualizes the specificity of the Russian position in both Europe and Asia; political sociological; political psychological; and, finally, political economic. These classifications certainly remain important, as they demonstrate the dividing lines in Russian (neo)realism and its pluralization. Moreover, they reveal some of the features of Russian neoclassical realism, which is developing on this basis and which certainly exploits the arguments about Russian identity and, to a lesser extent, the specificity of Russian interests abroad (security and politics but also economics). There is also more than a hint of the nascent interest in psychology and sociology, for example in relation to how the Russian polity perceives the pressure of the world system.

Although these studies certainly provide early signs of neoclassical realism in Russia, it is hardly possible to talk about well defined realist schools in Russia. This is mainly due to the lack of fundamental, non-applied studies and the plethora of analytical papers and applied research that make use of various ideas. Moreover, which concepts and approaches are borrowed depends on the goal pursued rather than on methodological clarity and consistency. Therefore, we use the differentiation between various strands of realism below mainly for analytical purposes.

Neoclassical realism is relatively new to Russian researchers and consequently many recent works do not differentiate between neorealism and neoclassical realism. Valery Konyshev, for example, analyses neoclassical realism as one of the trends in contemporary US neorealism.¹¹ Moreover, the term 'neoclassical realism' has been used in Russia to describe neorealism.¹²

The recent popularity of neoclassical realism among Russian scholars is largely due to the writings of Fareed Zakaria, whose analysis of US politics immediately attracted attention. Zakaria's appeal in turn was due to *Newsweek* (he was editor of *Newsweek International* and he wrote a column for *Newsweek* itself), his use of fairly simplistic realist categories, and his critique of the United States and thoughts about its decreasing influence in some spheres.¹³ However, we have witnessed a gradual shift in the approach to Zakaria's works, from an emphasis on empirical materials to a greater stress on theory. An increasing number of Russian scholars now use his ideas to rethink Russian politics and Russia's interactions in the international arena.

From around 2009 we have therefore seen a more specific interest in neoclassical realism. On the one hand, some summaries and critiques of the basic categories of neoclassical realism have appeared. On the other hand, Russian scholars have tried to construct an alternative picture of world politics with the help of the neoclassical realism. Neither approach has been without flaws. For instance, Ivan Chikharev tried to marry neo-liberalism and neoclassical realism in developing his vision of a 'smart power'.¹⁴ Timofei Bordachev interpreted neoclassical realism as a departure from a traditional approach to the vision that ascribes a primary, definitive role to various sets of internal politics within the international system.¹⁵ He concluded that the rise of neoclassical realism is due to the weakening of (crude military) power.

Three specific Russian filters have shaped the development of Russian neoclassical realism: the political system, with the dominance of the all-powerful President; an unresolved identity question, with national identity oscillating between belonging to Europe and becoming a Eurasian power; and conflict between economic interests (profit maximization) and an improvement in political status as well as hard security preoccupations. These filters are examined below before we get to the debates about polarity, the national interest and neighbours/coalitions.

Filters in question: what determines the specificity of Russian neoclassical realism?

The particularity of the political system

The Russian polity is distinct from that of many other countries because it was constructed around one post (or even one person), namely the President of Russia. The roots of this phenomenon go back to the charismatic Russian tsars. The tsar was substituted by the Communist Party after the October 1917 revolution, thus interrupting the construction of civil society. After 1990 the President and administration ('the Kremlin') replaced the Political Bureau of the Communist Party, which had been responsible for the design of the internal and external policies of the Soviet Union.¹⁶

Foreign policy had always been regarded as the domain of the tsar, the Politburo or the President, with little space reserved for interest groups or civil society. The early 1990s were a slight exception but Vladimir Putin's reaffirmation of the centrality of the state re-established this tradition. The influence of the Russian parliament, interest groups or civil society on foreign policy remains marginal. Putin's statement in 2010 (when the former President was Prime Minister) that he was 'fed up with making foreign policy' and that this was currently the domain

of President Dmitry Medvedev, who was 'doing his work with high quality',¹⁷ is illustrative.

Debates on the particular interests and options open to Russia within the international system are deprived of any meaning by the absence of domestic players capable of challenging the authority of the President. It also logically restricts the scope of neoclassical realism in Russia. Jeffrey Taliaferro, Steven Lobell and Norrin Ripsman rightly argue that

neoclassical realists ... expect policy to deviate from the requirements of systemic imperatives when the state has limited authority to conduct foreign policy, when there are many domestic veto players in the policy process, when domestic opposition to the government's policy is high, or under other domestic political circumstances that impede policy flexibility.¹⁸

At the same time, the specificity of Russian foreign and domestic policy is that it presupposes rationality and intelligence on the part of political leaders. On the one hand, it strengthens the realist tradition with its belief in the rationality of all decisions. On the other hand, it deprives political deliberation over policy choices of any meaning. Simplistic political analysis, therefore, makes neoclassical realism marginal.

The only exception to have surfaced so far was the widening debate about the (plausible) competition between the charismatic and extremely popular Putin, who in 2008 moved to the position of Prime Minister, and the President, Medvedev, whose political and leadership ambitions were said to be on the rise, and who was viewed as gradually emancipating himself from Putin.

In a sense, the fake respect for democracy and the constitution in 2008, when Putin was ineligible to run for a further term as President, led to the return of some power to the government and at the time even provoked tension between the President and the government/Prime Minister (evident in their debates about the appropriate reaction to the events in Libya). If competition between the two became overt, neo-classical realism could get a more prominent position in Russia. However, the prospects for this became dim by the end of 2011, when it became evident that Putin was going to stand in the presidential elections again.

Between Europe and Eurasia? The issue of identity

The debate about Russia's (non-)belonging to the West/Europe¹⁹ dates back to the eighteenth century and to the transformation initiated by Peter the Great, who sought to bring Russia closer to Europe, thus making it an essential part of European politics. (Some authors trace it to an earlier period, when Russia, emerging from the Mongol yoke, came into

contact with European countries and monarchies.²⁰) In summary, due to its geographical position, history and culture, Russia can be examined as a part of Europe, as 'another Europe' (on a par with Western Europe), as a non-Europe (a Eurasia entity), or, more recently, as part of the West but not part of Europe.²¹ The idea of Russia belonging to Europe has always been a stumbling block for realists. Being socially constructed, this category of belongingness conflicted with efforts to define Russia's *real* role in the region, to understand Russia's objective and material interests.

The debates about Russia belonging to Europe (or not) presuppose that Moscow should (or should not) follow the European path of development and imitate all its political, bureaucratic and economic institutions; or whether it has to stand by itself, reaffirming its Eurasian identity and grouping other countries around itself. Internal interpretations of this dilemma have been the basis for various external initiatives. Moreover, throughout its history Russia has tried to reconcile the two options (being in Europe and being by itself) without actually choosing one. This debate has so far been the most important and the most speculative filter in Russia and, hence, has the largest potential to shape the specificity of Russian neoclassical realism.

What interests? Between enhancing political power and maximizing economic benefits

The third factor specific to Russia today is that it oscillates between two different tendencies. On the one hand, the security services prevail. Most of these are successors to the all-powerful Soviet KGB and they have fully recovered their position after experiencing a downgrading in the 1990s. Today, all events are believed to have security implications and are, therefore, analysed through that prism. Moreover, the role of the security services has been enhanced because they have always been viewed by Putin as the only source of objective and unbiased information. Furthermore, scarce resources are used to enhance the standing of Russia in the world, to return it a great-power status. This is one explanation why, for example, Moscow strives to access the World Trade Organization as a developed country, or seeks to develop a new regime for energy exploration and supply (instead of the Energy Charter, for example).

On the other hand, Russia strives to maximize its profit from the sale of oil and natural gas, or from the export of nuclear technologies or space exploration. Both Putin and Medvedev have stressed the need to create all the conditions necessary for Russian companies to succeed abroad. It has been argued on a number of occasions that Putin is much more aware of oil and gas prices than of the number of warheads in a particular location.²²

These Russian external interests are frequently associated with the liberal approach to markets and economic relations but not necessarily free markets, at least in the way they are generally understood in the West. The logic of profit maximization has, for example, determined the non-liberalization of the Russian gas market as well as the closing of forty-two sectors of the Russian economy to foreign investors seeking majority shares.

Profit maximization frequently competes with security considerations and the outcome of this competition is not always easy to predict. This competition between political/security and profit-maximization logics is the third filter that is of interest to neoclassical realists in Russia.

Towards neoclassical realist thinking in Russia: three issues in focus

Polarity and Russia

Polarity has so far been the most important issue for both (neo)realists and those who apply neoclassical realist paradigms in Russia. The largest part of Russian IR writing is devoted to this problem. It is also well documented in various foreign-policy documents. The question of polarity entered the Russian agenda in the mid-1990s, when Russia became disillusioned with unrestrained cooperation with the West.

Few writers, however, have attempted to define what polarity means. Bogaturov's writings²³ provide a rare exception. He argued that a multipolar world is composed of several *comparable* poles, while a unipolar or bipolar system is characterized by the contrast between one or two centres of power and the rest of the system. On this basis, Bogaturov, in a structuralist way, argued that the world was characterized by unipolarity, with the United States being placed at the centre of the system. However, he maintained that this unipolarity had a pluralistic nature;²⁴ in other words, the United States cooperated with the major powers in directing global development. Moreover, the United States and its allies used non-global (NATO) or informal (G8) institutions to further its leadership.²⁵

Supporters of the systemic-historic approach argued for more simplistic models. One is that the world is unipolar, with the United States exploiting a decrease in the power of multilateral forums such as the United Nations.²⁶ They would also maintain that today's system, due to unipolarity and the asymmetrical leadership of the United States, is less democratic than it was during the Cold War.²⁷ Moreover, it has also incorporated negative imperial patterns²⁸ reminiscent of the Soviet Union.²⁹

Other systemic-historic realists would maintain that the world is multipolar. One variation is to interpret multipolarity as a competition of ideas and values, of civilizations, of the ability to challenge the dominant discourse.³⁰ Another interpretation of multipolarity is to say that the United States is counterbalanced each time by a different actor (i.e., China or the European Union when it comes to the economy, or Russia in the military field).³¹ Finally, Russia (as well as some other actors) can aspire to become a pole due to their geopolitical position, energy resources, intellectual potential, membership of particular international organizations, or nuclear power.³² In this vision, Russian influence in the post-Soviet space contributed to it becoming a pole.

Some systemic-historic realists argue that the multipolar world can actually be quite dangerous for Russia, because too many potential poles are located within the immediate proximity of Russia and can, therefore, lead to centrifugal processes.³³

Researchers who are close to the structuralist paradigm have recently argued that it would be useful to recreate a nineteenth-century concert of powers which govern the world on the basis of shared views, 'with the participation of the USA, Europe, Russia, Japan, India, most probably China'.³⁴ This view is close to the idea of pluralist unipolarity but presupposes a further decline in US influence. Yet another modification of the pluralist unipolarity is a model according to which the future of the world is essentially determined by four players: the United States, Europe, China and India.³⁵

A more recent systemic-historian version of polarity argues that US influence is decreasing but is not being compensated by the growth of any one power, which might lead, in fact, to the absence of any pole in the near future.³⁶ Russia has to adapt to this situation internally through economic restructuring, modernization, improvement of its demographic situation and upgrading of its resources in order to meet its international ambitions.³⁷ Although multipolarity does not catch the headlines, the geopolitical assumption is that Russia has the potential to be an independent pole in IR due to its history and traditions.

Finally, Serguei Afontsev approaches the 'polarity' problem from the political economy perspective. He argues that Russia and China can make today's world multipolar. Moscow draws its strength from energy, investment capabilities and military power, while China's advantage lies in the increase of its share in the International Monetary Fund and in its effort to establish a free trade area with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).³⁸

Three preliminary conclusions can be drawn. First, Russian discussions have drifted towards the concept of the 'entropy of power'³⁹ (although without using this term). At the same time, the idea of 'balancing' the United States through various means has played a prominent part.

Second, two domestic filters have grown in importance in these debates. One is Russian identity, with clear differentiation of Russia from the West, while preserving the claims of being a European country. Another one is the competition of politics/security versus profit-making agendas. Third, structuralist and historic realists have been most influential in developing elements of a neoclassical realist vision of polarity in Russia. The peculiarity of the debates on polarity in Russia is that they have always been in line with the official discourse on international relations. The appointment of Eugeny Primakov (a vehement proponent of multipolarity) to the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1996 coincided with the intensification of the debates on multipolarity and with criticism of unipolarity.

The current trend is for an encouragement of multipolarity, reaffirming its presence through various means. Both Putin, while President,⁴⁰ and Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs,⁴¹ have emphasized cultural pluralism and acceptance of various civilizations as the basic norms for international relations. This means that multipolarity is mostly conceptualized today as having an ideational and civilizational basis (with Russia being a distinct part of the European civilization).

The 2008 Russian Foreign Policy Concept⁴² mentions nascent multipolarity only once, as an undisputed fact, substituting it mostly with multilateralism and civilizational pluralism. Similarly, the 2009 National Security Concept mentions a cooperative multipolar world as a key strategic interest of Russia, while stressing multivector diplomacy. This might be a way to bypass the notion of balancing, which underlies multipolarity, in favour of the entropy of power. A relatively new notion of a polycentric world, introduced by Lavrov and based on multivector diplomacy and non-confrontation in the pursuit of national interests,⁴³ should also be viewed through the 'entropy of power' perspective. Promoting a transfer from undemocratic unipolarity to multipolarity (with cooperation rather than balancing; with Russia being accorded one of the key roles) Russia clearly adopts a revisionist strategy to today's IR. Furthermore, the Foreign Policy Concept stresses 'equality, mutual respect and mutually beneficial cooperation as well as the norms of international law'.⁴⁴ It therefore implies that Russia no longer seeks to be recognized as a part of the West but rather views itself as an equal participant in international relations, hence the dilemma of whether Russia is European or Eurasian is solved at present in favour of being a part of both, while needing the recognition of neither.

National interests: security versus business

'National interest' is a category of prime importance for realists. However, its study remains relatively new within Russia. Even 'national security'

was notoriously absent from the discourse of politicians and political scientists⁴⁵ until the 1990s. Debates on the national interest in the Soviet period were circumscribed by the need to see international security as achievable only through the transformation of the whole system of international relations. The concept of soft security (as opposed to crude military security) was introduced in Russia in the 1990s.⁴⁶ Since then, concerns over economic challenges, financial (in)stability, information security and, increasingly, sustainable development and climate change have gained centrality. Globalization has similarly become a central concern that requires a transformation of national security and an adjustment of national interests.

Growing attention has been paid to the internal stability of Russia, to the strength of its institutions and policy processes as well as to the needs for its internal modernization and market development. These ideas have also gradually worked their way into the official documents of the Russian Federation. At the same time, hard security issues (including military aspects and counter-intelligence) were not abandoned. Security thinking permeated all spheres, and the security implications of virtually all activities have come under close scrutiny. They naturally were reflected in the basic foreign-policy documents of Russia as well. All these trends required a conceptual basis.

Systemic-historic analysts came to associate the national interest with Russia's ability to respond to the challenges of globalization and the transformation of the international order. In their view, Russia has little choice as regards the process of globalization, which is objective and independent. What choice there is, however, is between entering the process of globalization consciously (i.e. keeping in mind its interests and goals as well as its strong and weak points) and passive drifting. Therefore, Russia's key task, according to this view, is not only to maintain its territory but also to use it rationally.⁴⁷ For some conservative systemic-historic analysts, Russian national interests are also linked with the recognition of its specificity, of its peculiar history and the traditions of the Russian empire (i.e., the refusal of Westernization or Europeanization).⁴⁸

Russian structuralists, on the other hand, hold that globalization is managed and directed by the United States. Therefore, key challenges to Russian national security and to its interests will emerge from unipolarity and more specifically from an aggressive Washington.⁴⁹ The alternative is to further its own vision of global governance.⁵⁰

Representatives of the geopolitical school would argue along similar lines, insisting that Russia capitalize on its capabilities and potential to get 'a stable position in the world system'.⁵¹ Its most recent branch (geo-economic) would insist that Russian national interests should increasingly coincide with the interests of its key financial and industrial groups (i.e., leading companies, which can restructure the space

and accumulate resources, knowledge and wealth and thus further the interests of the state).⁵²

Last but not least, realists assess what qualities a state needs to remain competitive in the globalizing environment. Nearly all realists would admit the importance of energy resources. They therefore recommend that Russia pay particular attention to this sphere, guaranteeing its energy security through close links between the state and companies,⁵³ on the one hand, and through a cautious policy of agreements with third countries, on the other.⁵⁴ At the same time, they rightly argue that Russia should diversify its economy instead of relying on the export of energy resources to the developed world.⁵⁵ In particular, they stress the need to borrow technologies from the West to catch up with it and to guarantee drastic renovation of production capacities. Otherwise, Russia will lose its economic competitiveness, based on knowledge and innovation.⁵⁶ They therefore encourage the development of Russian science and research⁵⁷ and the enhancement of a Russian role in relation to the Internet.⁵⁸

For representatives of all strands of Russian realism, national interests are ensured in all spheres through a strong state (i.e. the executive branch of the government, President and Prime Minister). They differ, however, on the priorities which this strong executive power is to pursue. Hence, two filters are of particular importance for national interests and national security and the nascent neoclassical realism debates on it: one is the strength of the executive power; the other one is a nearly overt conflict between economic interests/profit-making and hard security. Interestingly, the identity filter is of less importance for debates on national interest, which can be explained by the growing confidence of the Moscow leadership that Russia is an entity on its own, a European one, and with no need to fight for the recognition of its Europeaness.

The neoclassical realist thinking on national interest will grow out of the systemic-historic analysts' ideas on globalization and the Russian role in it. Its second source will be provided by political economists and geopolitical thinking on the nature of *real* interests in today's world (where the economy and profit-making will be overtaking the previously exclusively hard security domain).

The Russian National Security Concept⁵⁹ stresses the need to guarantee the interests of the individual, society and the state. It then continues that Russia has enough resources to manage globalization and to become one of the leaders thereof. The Concept also argues that the national interests of Russia will be negatively affected by the unilateral power politics of other states. Therefore, the Concept structures Russian national interests in line with the logics of the systemic-historic and structuralist-realist currents. At the same time, the Concept is not coherent in defining how Russia plans to harness globalization. Instead, having mentioned globalization, it concentrates on either traditional

elements of security (national defence, state security, the security of Russian society more generally, non-interference in domestic affairs and equality of countries), for example energy security, which constitutes a source of strength but certainly does not make it a leader in globalization. Science, technology and education appear only briefly, towards the end of the document.

The document seems to be patchy, drafted by several interest groups, and reflects the conflict between an orientation towards modernization and the market economy, on the one hand, and an orientation to hard security, on the other hand. Moreover, the hard security and old-fashioned definition of national interest clearly prevail, which essentially over-securitizes all spheres of life and justifies further enforcement of the power ministries. Finally, despite the emphasis on the interests of the individual and society, the interests and security of the state are all-permeating. This is a further illustration of the specificity of the Russian political system, with its emphasis on the all-powerful executive branch.

All these inconsistencies, however, reflect that the state is not as monolithic as it used to be and the pressure of the international environment is perceived differently by various actors. It could be said that today's Russia represents a useful empirical test of neoclassical realism.

The 2008 conflict with Georgia over South Osetia and Abkhazia provides yet another excellent illustration of how national interests are increasingly expressed in neoclassical realist terms. Russia's military intervention in another state would have been much easier to justify in terms of peace-keeping and humanitarian reasons. Yet Russia preferred to stress the sufferings of *Russian* civilians.⁶⁰ Moscow, therefore, emphasized that its reaction to the conflict was a result of an interaction with civil society. In doing so, Russia also once again emerged as a revisionist state.

It was further reaffirmed in the statements of Putin,⁶¹ who then, interestingly, continued that Russian companies should invest in Abkhazia because it is in their interests to do so and the state would encourage and support them. By doing this he appeased not only hard security but also economic interests within Russia, ensuring the balance between the two competing sets of interests.

Neighbourhood, temporary coalitions and the search for unity

The final element of realist thinking which permeates Russian writings is that of coalition-building and a search for unity. It is firmly linked with Russian debates about belonging to the West/Europe or being by itself and thus looking to design a coalition of its own.

Most representatives of the systemic-historic school of Russian realism argue that Russia must consider the conditions with which it can

and should join Europe/the West to maximize its power in the world. They would remind us, however, that efforts to integrate Russia with the West without due attention to national interests led to attempts on the part of the West to establish control over Russian territory, to push it out of its sphere of influence (i.e. post-Soviet space) and to exploit its national resources.⁶²

The pragmatic turn towards cooperation with the West strengthened in this millennium. The idea is to resolve shared problems but on conditions which are acceptable to Russia and minimizing any dependence on the West. The likelihood of Russian 'emancipation' will depend on developments in the world and in such (potential) partners as the European Union and China,⁶³ which present alternative sources of innovation.

For some representatives of structural realism, Russia is a part of a single global system and for them, therefore, the whole discussion is meaningless.⁶⁴ Russian political economists would support this point of view. Other representatives of structuralist realism would maintain that Russia, the West and the East can coexist indefinitely without actual integration.⁶⁵ The specificity of Russian history, its size and structure of interests will, in their view, prevent it from becoming a part of the West within the next ten years.⁶⁶

Russian geopolitical realists also present a wide spectrum of views. Some of them imply that the West is not (yet) ready to embrace Russia, owing to historical stereotypes. For this reason, they argue, Russia should not integrate with the West/Europe.⁶⁷ For other geopoliticians, it is not a question of the West's readiness; rather, staying outside and combining specific Western features with oriental and Russian traditions, Russia can preserve its specificity and become a new power in international relations.⁶⁸

In summary, the identity filter has been key in Russian policy towards its partners and towards the construction of coalitions. At the same time, the competition between economic interests and the hard security agenda is gaining strength. In adopting a pragmatic, cooperative approach while paying attention to the identity debates, neoclassical realism will, on the issue of neighbourhood and temporary coalitions, draw on the systemic and geopolitical (neo)realist approaches.

Three further things are to be noted. One is that the cherished European identity is not the driving force in Moscow's coalitions. Secondly, being confident, Russia no longer needs proof of its European credentials and reserves the right to decide on its coalitions pragmatically. In other words, economically motivated behaviour and strategic security interests will in future prevail over further affirmation of a European identity. Finally, most writers are cautious about any sort of reconstruction of the Russian empire. They therefore challenge the thesis

of William Wohlforth that there is 'a bias towards expansion',⁶⁹ which is central to Russian history. The inherent belief is that – to use neoclassical realist terminology – when the 'entropy of power' prevails, the regional level becomes more important and has to be (re)constructed but on the basis of pragmatic involvement as opposed to over-stretch.

Russia's Foreign Policy Concept⁷⁰ maintains that the West has tried to contain Russia, but Moscow insists on equality and a multilateral approach to international relations. Moreover, Sergey Lavrov bluntly states that current developments are characterized by the synthesis of various civilization models and also by their dynamic competition.⁷¹ This statement implies that Russia does not intend to integrate itself with the West but would prefer to cooperate with it if the parties have shared interests in doing so.

Furthermore, the Russian attitude towards the European Union has become pragmatic to the point of being cynical. Instead of treating it as a single bloc, Russia opts for cooperation with those individual member states that are willing to cooperate and stand up for their promises. In other words, economic and security pragmatism clearly rules over ideational preferences.

The recent document about how foreign relations are to further Russian modernization is an excellent illustration of this approach.⁷² While the European Union is the first specific partner to be discussed, it is not mentioned in the key goal-oriented introductory paragraphs. Moreover, a brief enumeration of cooperation points with the European Union is followed by a more extensive elaboration of dialogues with various states. This very document also elaborates along similar lines Russian cooperation with Asia (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, ASEAN) and individual countries.

The importance of various structures on the post-Soviet space has been stressed in every single foreign-policy document (Concepts, National Security Strategy, various speeches, etc.). However, pragmatism again is gaining ground and the wish of Russia to integrate at any cost has receded. Instead, common challenges such as modernization and soft and hard security issues are stressed.

All these coalitions can obviously be conceptualized as the belief of Russia in the gradual entropy of power and in the regionalization of international relations at a time of weakening unipolarity.⁷³ A new Russian term for this process is 'deglobalization', which is caused by both financial crisis and fundamental systemic shifts. It was coined by Lavrov in September 2010.⁷⁴ As a result of deglobalization, according to his vision, regional structures volunteer to take more responsibility for governance, and Russia has to participate in them and – where possible – shape them. Thus, current Russian practice is an embodiment of nascent neoclassical realist ideas.

Conclusion

Analysing the early development of Russian realism, Sergounin⁷⁵ argued that it has thus far been a powerful school of thought. Moreover, he argued that realist writings also led to at least three positive results: greater predictability of Russian foreign policy; help in overcoming the divide between Eurasianism/Westernization; and the articulation of Russian interests.⁷⁶

This chapter has demonstrated the evolution of the three key realist notions (polarity, national interest and neighbourhood/coalitions) in today's Russian IR thinking and political practice. We have claimed that neoclassical realism has so far mostly developed in Russia on the basis of systemic-historic realism, which further strengthened its empirical bias. However, neoclassical realism in Russia has the potential to borrow creatively from structural, political economic and geopolitical currents, depending on the issue in focus. We also introduced three filters that determine the specificity of Russia's neoclassical realism. They are the overpowerful executive branch, identity debates, and the clash of the economic and security agendas. We believe that identity and the competition between the economic and political agendas condition the current outcome of the discussion on polarity, national interests and neighbourhood/coalitions. Strong executive power, concentrated in the hands of the President and the Prime Minister, however, limit the immediate prospects for neoclassical realism in Russia.

Another reason for the growing popularity of neoclassical realist thinking in Russia is provided by foreign-policy practice. Most conceptual foreign-policy documents as well as visionary speeches stress the need for a national, pragmatic, specifically Russian approach to world politics. The aspiration to design a specific place for Russia in the international system serves as an additional stimulus. The dynamics between political and economic interests is key here, while identity debates are being sidelined due to the growing self-confidence of Moscow.

Finally, an essential element that will contribute to the specificity of neoclassical realism in Russia is its very limited normative dimension. Borrowing ideas from neo-institutionalism and constructivism will allow Russian realist scholars and politicians to upgrade their approaches and methodological tools, to claim that they are in line with methodological developments while not challenging their cynical attitude to the role of norms and ideas.

Notes

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Conclusion: the future of neoclassical realism in Europe

Asle Toje and Barbara Kunz

The post-Cold War decade saw a profound shift in the academic approach to international relations. In Europe the shift was towards a near-singular focus on structures as social constructs and on patterns of cooperation (as opposed to conflict) in courses on international relations and European integration. The intellectual climate was conducive to idealism, moralism and legalism. This was coupled with notions regarding the benign influence of mass public opinion on foreign policy. The prevalent view was that if not the international system as a whole, then surely European politics had turned a corner and that the future would be determined by supranational governance and 'global values'. The European experience dovetailed with American debates on the 'end of history'.¹ These views were accompanied by ceaseless summiteering, institution-building and a belief shared in Europe and the United States alike that liberal states had an obligation to further economic liberalism and democracy on a global scale.

In the first decade of the 2000s several of these assumptions were challenged. The interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan if anything highlighted the limitations of military power, the travails of nation-building and the lack of unity in European foreign policy. And the notion that interstate wars was a thing of the past was proven wrong by the 2008 Georgian–Russian conflict. European and Western institutions proved unable to prevent or address the global economic crisis that started in the autumn of 2008. The debt crisis that spilled into Europe in September 2009 appears to have changed the dynamics of European politics. The grandiose failure of the attempts to introduce a European constitution certainly contributed to the erosion of the belief in integration as an unstoppable force of history.

Since then, Europe has been experiencing a creeping renationalization of politics. Country after country is now attempting to take back the sovereignty they once willingly sacrificed in pursuit of a collective

ideal, often pressured by domestic public opinion. In a new economic reality, the 'enlightened self-interest' that allowed European states to cede powers to Brussels appears to have been replaced by policies derived from narrowly defined national interest, where the one country's rescue package is considered the other country's lost pensions. Similarly, opinion polls across Europe confirm that electorates are increasingly hostile to globalization and integration. It seems common solutions have lost their appeal for many Europeans. They wonder what the Union does for them, and they ask themselves whether it is all worth the trouble. In any case, the on-going crisis in (or, as some would argue, of) the eurozone is there to prove one of neoclassical realism's key points: domestic (budget) constraints definitely do shape state behaviour, as practitioners of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) constantly repeat these days, irrespective of any perceptions about the system held in Paris, Berlin or London.

At the time of writing (January 2012) European writers are increasingly questioning the analytical assumptions prevalent in Europe's most recent past. The European constructivist schools in international affairs have been predominantly idealist. Wishful thinking has often prevailed over critical analysis, discourse analysis over actual patterns of behaviour and especially external constraints, and few attempts have been made at a quantitative analysis of existing facts or available means. It is particularly for this reason that, sorting through the remains of the post-Cold War interlude, neoclassical realism will be a relevant, indeed indispensable tool for analysis. And it appears that this school of thought is gaining ground. In November 2011 there were 858 publications on 'neoclassical realism', regionally and internationally, if we are to believe Google Scholar. One year previously the figure was little more than half, 467. No citation index is entirely reliable, but Google Scholar has been shown to correlate well with other scholarly indexes. In any case, and contrary to how things were just a couple of years ago, European scholars of international relations are now aware of neoclassical realism.

And neoclassical realism is becoming an increasingly rich intellectual tradition. Indeed, Shiping Tang claims that neoclassical realism 'is where the action is', because, for those with a realist inclination, as Randall Schweller puts it, the alternative is that of 'highly abstract, purely structural-systemic theories'.² As a result, an increasing number of scholars today identify themselves as neoclassical realists. These have sought to counter Stephen Walt's critique that neoclassical realism 'tends to incorporate domestic variables in an ad hoc manner'.³ The more neoclassical realism moves beyond being a mere extension of neorealism designed to compensate for the latter's lacunae – that is, the more 'European' it gets in terms of emphasizing the 'classical' in its label – the broader its intellectual foundation. And the broader the intellectual

foundation, the more interesting it is to apply this new analytical framework, in order to explain and understand international politics.

The points made in the book

The chapters in this book cover a number of countries and a host of theoretical dilemmas. Each scholar is, of course, worth studying in his and her own right but, collectively, do they help us answer the question of the budding neoclassical realist tradition's relevance in the new conditions in international relations as the post-Cold War era is drawing to an end? What this book suggests is that the domestic perspective is an essential element when analysing how competing ideational forces help explain foreign-policy formation in response to the incentives offered by the international system. Taking in detailed accounts of contextual factors in foreign-policy decisions is a prerequisite to appreciating the nation-state as the nexus of both the political and the cultural forces that make up the identity of the state and the practices of its foreign policies.

Neoclassical realism employs as intervening variables both the incentives provided by the international system and the internal proclivities facing states, and through this generates more nuanced explanations of the making of foreign policy. The case studies illustrate that national interests – also when they are conducted in concert – arise to no small degree from exactly these kinds of particularism. One might perhaps say the much debated American exceptionalism is less unique than some scholars tend to assume. Every state to some extent sees itself as exceptional. Acknowledging the role of intervening variables as an influence on national foreign policy is now possible with the rise of neoclassical realism.

In Torbjørn Knutsen's introductory essay – chapter 2 – the question of how neoclassical realism communicates with the past is addressed: neoclassical realism represents an attempt to recapture the classic tradition of realism. What is meant by 'realism' in this context? What kind of 'tradition' is the realist tradition? And what does 'classic' mean? These are the questions that guide the reader through Knutsen's essay. He establishes the 'family resemblances' between neoclassical realism and realism as such: state-centric, with a focus on capabilities and the idea that states coexist and compete under conditions of uncertainty. But Knutsen also describes the new school as a reaction to neorealism: 'It represents a distancing from the American concept of reason and, more particularly, a US tendency to interpret reason as rational choice. But neoclassical realism is a reaction that reaches back to Europe's own tradition of classic realism to design its many-levelled perspective.'

Chapter 3, by Alexander Reichwein, provides an overview of realist theories of foreign policy and discusses neoclassical realism as a

challenge to both liberal and neorealist theories of foreign policy. He argues that neoclassical realism is a new multi-level framework of realist foreign-policy analysis, albeit fusing and integrating elements of both Hans J. Morgenthau's European classical realist and Kenneth N. Waltz's neorealist school of thought, and supplemented by liberal and constructivist ideas about the state, its institutions and its perceptions. In other words, neoclassical realism is the most competent strand of realism in terms of its ability to bridge the methodological and analytical gap between state-centred classical realism and systemic neorealism. Since neoclassical realists also overcome the separation of liberal '*Innenpolitik*' and neorealist foreign-policy theories, neoclassical realism is an enhanced theory available on the theory market.

Chapter 4, by Brian C. Schmidt and Thomas Juneau, examines the manner in which neoclassical realists conceptualize and understand power. They begin by introducing the two dominant traditions of power analysis – the elements of national power and the relational power approaches – and describe the break that neoclassical realists make with Waltzian structural realists and emphasize the differences with respect to how each understands power. They then move on to discussing the relationship that exists between classical and neoclassical realism, once again by focusing on their respective understandings of power and by linking this to the debate between the two dominant traditions of power analysis. Schmidt and Juneau conclude that neoclassical realism indeed 'proposes a number of innovations in its conceptualizations of power', both in introducing a distinction between national power and state power and in measuring power as the perceptions of statesmen regarding the distribution of power; these conceptualizations are introduced as a key intervening variable.

Nicholas Kitchen's chapter 5 is a contribution to the debate on the intervening variables neoclassical realists rely upon as a 'transmission belt' between systemic factors and state behaviour. He attempts to show how 'non-material variables eschewed by neorealist analyses can be incorporated into a genuinely neoclassical realist approach'. He concludes that, by emphasizing the reintegration of non-material aspects of classical realist thought within neoclassical realist theory, European scholars have the opportunity to establish a distinct and worthwhile approach, not least with regard to the power of ideas, thereby following Gideon's Rose observation that incorporating appropriate constructivist elements adds to the strength of neoclassical realism.

In chapter 6, Barbara Kunz and Ilai Z. Saltzman look at what neoclassical realism identifies as determinants of state behaviour. Looking into recent neoclassical realist works, they describe the external (international) and state-level factors – leaders' perceptions of the international system and domestic constraints – that neoclassical realism

identifies as the most important in determining state behaviour. The chapter then moves on to portray how these elements interact and under what conditions some play a more central role than the others, following Brian Rathbun's notion that neoclassical realism and its attempts at integrating domestic and ideational variables is a 'logical extension and necessary part of advancing neorealism', while incorporating elements of classical realism. Kunz and Saltzman conclude that neoclassical realism certainly has made progress towards becoming a full-fledged realist research framework. Yet, there clearly is work left for future research on a number of highly important issues, such as defining intervening variables and establishing a hierarchy among them, and developing a neoclassical realist theory of state objectives.

In chapter 7 Dario Battistella puts the French scholar Raymond Aron as the intellectual forefather of European neoclassical realism. Despite British inter-war idealism, the intellectual enterprise of international relations theory is little more than sixty years old. It is the product of a particular historical context – the 1950s – and part of a wider effort to come to terms with a new international system sown in the ashes of two world wars. In different places, theorizing took different forms. In Britain it became a historical exercise of recovering lost 'traditions' of international thought. In the United States, by contrast, doing theory meant building something new, a means to guide the policies of what was already the world's most powerful nation. Raymond Aron bridges these two traditions while adding a distinctly French twentieth-century scepticism towards trusting reason as an 'invisible hand' in the international system. As Battistella demonstrates, Aron refused to discriminate systematically between exogenous and endogenous variables, but merely noted that many of the same mechanisms that affect the making of *Innenpolitik* are in play also when conducting foreign policy; this helps explain what Battistella calls the 'basically undetermined nature of international politics'.

Catherine Gegout's chapter 8 takes a rather different approach to the subject matter in tackling a policy field generally thought to be the realm of pure idealism: the European Union's interventions in Africa. Taking seriously the constructivist dictum that 'anarchy is what you make of it', Gegout finds that the idealistic public discourse usually taken at face value by constructivists veils a range of member states' national interests clad in the EU flag, chief among them the quest for prestige. In addition to this come the 'national' interests of the EU itself. She finds that two types of prestige are important: the prestige of individual EU member states, and the prestige of the EU. This conforms to the realist assumption that it is in the nature of power to conceal itself, a point made, *inter alia*, by Raymond Aron.⁴ Gegout concludes that neoclassical realism seems the most appropriate theory for explaining European policy on military intervention in

Africa: geostrategic interests are crucial for European states, which are concerned with their relative power, and humanitarianism is a factor for intervention only when intervention benefits European states.

Patrick Holden examines the same question, albeit from a different angle, in chapter 9. Holden assesses the apparent paradox of an EU discourse on Africa dominated by altruism, but this coexists with behaviour geared towards expanding its own economic and political power in the region. This is somewhat surprising as, beyond the political rhetoric, European society is greatly concerned with poverty alleviation and development in Africa. Holden takes an innovative approach to this question: he brings together neoclassical realism with international political economy (IPE) in order to look for opportunities caused by changes in the international distribution of power to study the internal dynamics of the EU, to understand how it has reacted to these. Having examined the EU's engagement in Africa, Holden finds liberal understandings of this question to be 'patently inadequate', but he also finds that neoclassical realism in itself can offer only 'a rough panoramic model' of the EU's engagement in Africa in particular and of the EU's foreign policies in general. Holden argues that the precision of neoclassical realism can be increased by allowing itself to be informed by what he calls 'critical IPE' – with a greater emphasis on economic motivations.

Raymond Aron also provides the point of departure for chapter 10, where Jean-Yves Haine further explores the question of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), ploughing deeper into the question of intra-union politics, national sensitivities and institutional illusions. Haine offers an understanding of the limited strategic policy output more than ten years after Saint-Malo. Neorealist and constructivist assumptions are of limited use to understand the rise and fall of the EU's CSDP, and instead Haine concludes that the CSDP should be properly understood through behavioural patterns, historical context, elite consensus, shared beliefs and actual practices. The neoclassical realist term 'strategic culture' best encapsulates his analytical lens. Based on cases from Congo, Chad or Libya, Haine reaches a damning assessment of the EU's CSDP, which he finds to be essentially a non-strategic endeavour and a poor and temporary rallying expedient against the United States. Haine reaches no doubt provocative conclusions when he questions whether Europe's postmodern identity and the 'security' beliefs that it entails can indeed escape 'the perpetual quadrille of the Balance of Power' that A. J. P. Taylor identified as a grand theme of European history.⁵

Felix Berenskoetter and Adam Quinn's chapter explores a much-contested question in realism, namely how the power dynamics in international relations are best understood, to explain the success and limits of US hegemony in Europe. The authors draw on Morgenthau

and Carr to note that neoclassical realists should understand power in relational terms (as some already implicitly do, at least to some extent), rather than focusing exclusively on tangible resources, and take into account the influence of ideas across borders. Thus, instead of treating hegemony as a natural result of overwhelming material capabilities, they suggest that neoclassical realists would benefit from engaging the Gramscian understanding and its emphasis on ideology, with a twist. Berenskoetter and Quinn argue that ideas operate not only in a 'power over' but also in a 'power to' sense, that is, not only as a dominating but also as an enabling force in which small states bandwagon because they expect to be empowered by the hegemon. Moreover, they remind readers of Carr's suggestion to view the relationship between idealism and materialism as a dialectical one, in which overly idealistic policies will eventually be reined in by material forces, and material reality challenged in turn by new ideas.⁶

In the last substantive chapter of this volume, Tatiana Romanova and Elena Pavlova bring a Russian perspective on neoclassical realism. The country largely missed out on the first five decades of international relations theory, due to a doctrinal focus on Marxist explanations. But since the fall of communism, realism has, according to the authors, swiftly acquired a central role in Russian international relations studies. The authors argue that neoclassical realism is less used as a theory than as a tool to guide policy – and that, in this sense, neoclassical realism will be strengthening its position. In what to many (at least Western) readers will be genuinely new insights, the authors point out three issues that, according to them, shape realist thinking in Russia: the authority of the state, personified in the strong President; geopolitical and identity orientation; and the peculiarities of the articulation of Russian interests. They examine how these three categories manifest themselves in various realist discussions on the three key issues for Russia (polarity, national interest and neighbourhood). Romanova and Pavlova conclude that the popularity of neoclassical realist thinking and its potential in Russia is provided by foreign-policy practice, not by academic studies.

Conclusion

One might say there are four primary debates within the family of classical realists, neorealists and neoclassical realists.⁷ One is the debate among offensive and defensive realists. A second is among 'second image' realists and 'third image' realists, that is, those who emphasize the determining role of the system in shaping state behaviours and those who give primacy to domestic politics, institutions and the role of interpretation and bias. A third binary opposition pits neorealists against

classical realists over the question of the relevance of human nature. Some classical realists point to the sinful nature of people as the source of systemic anarchy, while neorealist scholars point to rational self-interest. A fourth, and final, pairing juxtaposes moral realists and amoral realists. The former see no inherent contradiction between the pursuit of the national interest and the maintenance of moral standards, while the latter see little room for ethical considerations except as a smokescreen to conceal the 'real' *raison d'état* motivations.

The chapters collected in this volume echo these debates. As we discussed in chapter 1, neoclassical realists share a set of basic assumptions, but not all neoclassical realists share each assumption with equal conviction. There are debates among realists, as this volume has shown, that are the result of different interpretations and readings of these assumptions. There are even neoclassical realists who refute or qualify one or several of the key tenets of realism (but then again, some may not even regard them as neoclassical realists). Yet, it is also evident that, including among European scholars, neoclassical realism has today become an identifiable framework, clearly distinct from other realist approaches. Further fleshing out the characteristics of neoclassical realist work is what lies ahead for scholars on both sides of the Atlantic, and beyond. This book represents a step in that direction.

The twin goals of this volume have been to affirm neoclassical realism as a European school of thought and to bring a distinctly European voice into the debate over the ways in which neoclassical realism may be gainfully used as a tool for analysis and as a means to gain insights into the workings and outcomes of foreign policy. It is this combination of sound assumptions at the base and richness of debate at the superstructure that lends neoclassical realism both weight and flexibility as a robust international relations theory.

Notes

- 1 F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).
- 2 S. Tang, 'Taking Stock of Neoclassical Realism', *International Studies Review*, 11:4 (2009), p. 799; R. L. Schweller, 'The Progressiveness of Neoclassical Realism', in C. Elman and M. Fendius Elman (eds), *Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p. 347.
- 3 S. M. Walt, 'The Enduring Relevance of the Realist Tradition', in I. Katznelson and H. V. Milner (eds), *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), p. 211.
- 4 R. Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 616–19.

- 5 A. J. P Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. xx.
- 6 E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001 [1946]), ch. 8.
- 7 The following is loosely based on S. Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

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