

# Beyond Realism: The Study of Grand Strategy

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## *Beyond Realism: The Study of Grand Strategy*

RICHARD ROSECRANCE AND ARTHUR A. STEIN

“Strategy” traditionally referred to the planning and employment of military resources to win major campaigns against a foe or to achieve victory in war itself.<sup>1</sup> Strongly influenced by the lessons of World War I, the British strategist Basil Liddell Hart broadened this conception when he recognized that military victory might be insufficient. If it left the nation weaker and vulnerable to a new conflict, success in war could not fulfill all the requirements of effective “strategy.”<sup>2</sup> He wrote: “It is essential to conduct war with constant regard to the peace you desire. This is the truth underlying Clausewitz’s definition of war as a ‘continuation of policy by other means’ – the prolongation of that policy through the war into the subsequent peace must always be borne in mind.”<sup>3</sup> American nuclear strategists after World War II generalized this insight to include “deterrence” or the prevention of war.<sup>4</sup> According to them, the mounting of a permanently mobilized and invulnerable nuclear force in peacetime could deter attack by even the strongest enemy power.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See particularly Karl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); Edward Mead Earle, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943); and B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2d rev. ed. (New York: Praeger, 1972).

<sup>2</sup>See particularly, B. H. Liddell Hart, *The British Way in Warfare* (New York: Penguin, 1942), chap. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, p. 366.

<sup>4</sup>Perhaps the signal works here are Bernard Brodie, *The Absolute Weapon* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1946), and Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939).

<sup>5</sup>This was not a simple and straightforward process, however. Albert Wohlstetter’s

“Grand strategy,” however, represented a still more inclusive notion: it went beyond mere generalship in war or deterrence in peacetime to include “the policy governing [the use of military force] and combining it with other weapons: economic, political, psychological.”<sup>6</sup> In modern terms, grand strategy came to mean the adaptation of domestic and international resources to achieve security for a state.<sup>7</sup> Thus, grand strategy considers all the resources at the disposal of the nation (not just military ones), and it attempts to array them effectively to achieve security in both peace and war.

After World War II, and particularly among U.S. strategists, this more encompassing definition became obscured as statesmen and policymakers became obsessed with the Soviet threat. Focusing narrowly on the military balance with the opponent,<sup>8</sup> they did not ask whether a Great Power could afford to maintain nuclear deterrence; they required it to do so, implicitly omitting other important variables in the grand strategic equation. A new group of realist thinkers in universities then joined nuclear strategists in this narrower conception. In addition to their endorsing deterrence, this second group were students and partisans of the traditional balance of power theory as it applied to relations among nations. Stressing the anarchic world in which states found themselves, realists held that nations must “balance” against their adversaries if they are to survive. In this process, states should act as the “international system” and the pattern of international threat dictates, and it is presumed that states initially balance internally via mobilization, irrespective of any political constraints.<sup>9</sup> In this respect, both nuclear strategists and realists tended to neglect patterns of domestic support and economic strength that might affect long term commitment to a deterrent, containment, or balance of power strategy.

Three recent critiques have questioned this narrowing of intellectual focus in the field of grand strategy. First, several analysts and his-

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“The Delicate Balance of Terror,” *Foreign Affairs* 37 (January 1939): 211-34; and Thomas Schelling’s “The Reciprocal Fear of Surprise Attack,” in his *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), make this abundantly clear.

<sup>6</sup>Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup>See particularly Michael Howard, *August 1941 – September 1943*, vol. 4 of James Ramsay Montagu, ed., *Grand Strategy* (London: HMSO, 1936-76); Edward Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century AD to the Third* (Baltimore:

Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Paul Kennedy, ed., *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

<sup>8</sup>It is perhaps suggestive that one of the most prestigious institutions dealing with nuclear strategy in the postwar period, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London, titled its annual publication *The Military Balance*.

<sup>9</sup>Great Powers especially respond this way. Only if internal mobilization proves insufficient do states balance externally by seeing allies.

torians have sought to show that victory in war or the maintenance of a successful far-flung empire in peace depends on a strong economic and industrial base that is not undermined by onerous military preparations. Nations should adopt a strategy that is economically efficient and does not produce “overstretch.”<sup>10</sup> Others have contended that success in statecraft or grand strategy depends upon the ability to “extract” resources from one’s own population. If the political opposition cannot be silenced, or if domestic groups demand a large slice of the resource pie, leaders may be tempted to adopt risky foreign policies to achieve cheap and easy victories in the short run. They may thereby precipitate foreign-policy disasters.<sup>11</sup> A third view is that the pattern of domestic politics involved in political and economic “logrolling” may help to account for territorial “overextension” and overcommitment in international relations.<sup>12</sup> Each of these contributions stresses the necessity of including domestic politics and economics in any broad calculus of grand strategy.

The purpose of this volume is to reinstate this broader conception of grand strategy and to indicate how it operates in specific historical and contemporary circumstances. The chapters all demonstrate that grand strategic assessments focusing only on the narrow constituents of realism – material power, changes in its distribution, and external threat – are radically incomplete and do not account for what nations actually do. Rather, domestic groups, social ideas, the character of constitutions, economic constraints (sometimes expressed through international interdependence), historical social tendencies, and domestic political pressures play an important, indeed, a pivotal, role in the selection of a grand strategy and, therefore, in the prospects for international conflict and cooperation. Under present international circumstances, such domestic forces may actually be increasing in scope and importance.

In contrast to realist theory, which places great stress on the “third image” in international politics – the level of the international system<sup>13</sup> – we want to illuminate the “second image” or the domestic

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<sup>10</sup>The term “overstretch” comes from Liddell Hart but is used to great effect by Paul Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy, 1870-1945* (London: Fontana, 1984), chap. 8, and also his *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987); and (as editor) *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*.

<sup>11</sup>The most important work here is Alan Lamborn’s *The Price of Power: Risk and Foreign Policy in Britain, France, and Germany* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1991), particularly chap. 12.

<sup>12</sup>Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

<sup>13</sup>For the original distinction between “first image” – the nature of man, “second image” – the nature of the state and domestic society, and “third image” – the nature of the international system, see Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York:

level. The particular nature of the domestic system in Japan, the United States, Britain, Imperial Germany, Eastern Europe, and even Soviet Russia has determined key decisions and national policies toward the outside world.

A central conclusion of the chapters that follow is that the presence or absence of symmetrical domestic conditions among the Great Powers is a major determinant of the viability of grand strategy. Countries that face unequal domestic constraints and pressures may not deter one another internationally. For example, long-run economic maximizers may not always deter short-term military maximizers. As another example, countries with a great deal of domestic support may need to mobilize less of their economic substance than a military regime that maintains only a shaky hold on public affection. As we shall see in a moment, the realist model presumes that the selection of grand strategies is unhampered by domestic constraints. Because realism represents the core approach to the study of international politics today and because arguments about the role of domestic politics are presented as deviations from realist theory, we begin with a discussion of the realist canon.

#### THE REALIST CANON

In the historical past, and particularly in the last ten years, the dominant approach to the study of international relations and also to grand strategy has been that of structural realism.<sup>14</sup> The structural

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Columbia University Press, 1959). Waltz's images are equated with levels of analysis in a review essay by J. David Singer, "International Conflict: Three Levels of Analysis," *World Politics* 12 (April 1960): 453-61. For further discussion see J. David Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations," *World Politics* 14 (October 1961): 77-92; and Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), chap. 1.

<sup>14</sup>The realist tradition is virtually as old as recorded history, tracing its origins to Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Given its long pedigree, the practitioners of realism have not always agreed on individual points, but generally see a tendency toward international conflict as the salient characteristic of the field. This tendency, however, may be disciplined through alliances and the balance of power. The signal recent realist work is Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979) and his sections in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). Also important are Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Stephen Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials, Investments, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978) and Krasner, *Structural Conflict: The Third World against Global Liberalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); and Joseph Grieco, *Cooperation among Nations: Europe, America, and Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade* (Ithaca: Cor-

realist approach contends that nations embedded in an anarchic international system must engage in “self-help”<sup>15</sup> to survive. The system constrains individual states, shaping their foreign and security policies, and thus determines the system’s stability. It does not, however, determine policy for each nation.<sup>16</sup>

In an anarchical system, states act to ensure their survival in the knowledge that no supranational institution or governing authority will protect them. Countries also cannot rely on other states to assist them even if they share a common ideology or political form. Each state, similarly insecure, has the liberty to think only of its own interests.

The key prediction of structural realism is that balances of power will form. Individual states may attempt to improve their position vis--vis others, but others will respond by reestablishing a balance of power. Realism thus presents an equilibrium theory, depicting the

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nell University Press, 1990). For an application to the realm of grand strategy see Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984). John Mearsheirner applies realist thinking to matters of current international politics in “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War,” *International Security* 15 (Summer 1990): 5-56. Arthur Stein discusses the differences between realism and liberalism in *Why Nations Cooperate: Circumstance and Choice in International Relations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>15</sup>It is possible to accept that the system of states (or the matrix in which states are embedded) determines state policy without thereby becoming a “realist.” Those who analyze conflict and cooperation from the standpoint of game theory such as Michael Taylor, Robert Axelrod, Russell Hardin, and Anatol Rapoport cannot be described as realists because the payoffs that actors confront will often stimulate cooperation as well as conflict. In cooperative games or mixed-motive games, it is possible that cooperation will emerge as a result of iteration. In the case of the Prisoners’ Dilemma this depends on the rate of discount for future gains and the indefiniteness of iteration. Moreover, these payoffs will not be determined only by the system. Rational choice analysts such as George Downs, Duncan Snidal, and Chris Achen cannot be described as “realists” because the cooperative or conflictual outcome depends on the particular pattern of cost and benefit for different courses of action, and these costs and benefits take into account a variety of national, international, individual, and perceptual factors- In short (and whether they recognize it or not), although all realists are implicitly rational choice theorists, the inverse is not true.

Not all realists accept that anarchy is the governing condition of international relations. Such hegemonic stability theorists as Robert Gilpin and Stephen Krasner note that a hegemonic stabilizer in effect substitutes its rule for an otherwise prevailing anarchy. When that stabilizer declines, however, the system returns to its antecedent anarchic state.

<sup>16</sup>It appears that the realist theory of international politics does not involve a theory of foreign-policy choice. But this theory necessarily depends on the responses of specific Great Powers to changes in the international distribution of power. Thus, for example, one Great Power in a bipolar world must respond to restore the balance of power when the other has taken steps to increase its own power. In this sense, the theory predicts systemically stabilizing actions in a small number system of Great Powers; it therefore also involves a theory of individual foreign policy for those same Great Powers.

forces that operate in order to return the system to balance. Outside the scope of the theory are such issues as how such a system came into being<sup>17</sup> and what disrupts any particular distribution of power. Changes in technology, an industrial revolution, migration, and population growth may all disturb an existing balance of power. The theory does not address these. But it does predict the consequences that flow from any shift in the balance of power.

In the realist view of the world, there is no division of labor among nations, and if there were, a country should not rely on it to safeguard its own wealth or security. Since the objective of each political unit is to be independent and sovereign, no state will readily accept a relationship in which it is dependent on others. Where interdependence exists, it will tend to provoke conflict between nations, for each will strive to lessen dependence and to reassert its own autonomy.

Domestic factors or pressures are also seen to be frictional forces that impede the operation of systemic and realist determinants. A country that allows its domestic political imperatives to chart grand strategy will soon find its international position undermined. If it undertakes to pursue moral causes in international relations, it will waste its national substance. If a nation spends money on domestic welfare and thereby neglects a fundamental challenge to its international position, it will not endure for very long. The recommended strategy of the school of structural realism is to maintain the balance of power. Countries that overlook this vital task fall out of the ranks of Great Powers or are eliminated altogether.<sup>18</sup>

Realists generally accept the view that the international (anarchic) order is static – it has not and probably will not be changed. But this does not mean that the expression of conflict or the amount of armed violence is always the same. Some methods of balancing are more productive than others. A bipolar system is more stable<sup>19</sup> than a mul-

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<sup>17</sup>This point is discussed by John Gerard Ruggie in “Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis,” *World Politics* 35 (January 1983): 261-83.

<sup>18</sup>A number of theorists accept that “second image” factors, such as offense-defense balances and the security dilemma, strongly affect systemic outcomes. Robert Jervis and Stephen Van Evera adhere to this view. Perceptual influences are also very important. See particularly Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*.

<sup>19</sup>For some realists a hegemonic system, while it lasts, is the most stable of all. See the work of Gilpin and Krasner. Among balance of power theorists there are those who argue that multipolarity is more stable. See Karl W. Deutsch and J. David Singer, “Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability,” *World Politics* 15 (April 1964): 390-406. For a different view see Richard Rosecrance, “Bipolarity, Multipolarity, and the Future,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 10 (September 1966): 314-27. For a recent collection see Alan Ned Sabrosky, ed., *Polarity and War: The Changing Structure of International Conflict* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1985). For a formal treatment

tipolar one because conflicts are focused directly between the two blocs, and the two parties reinforce their positions by maintaining a taut balance between them. In a multipolar system conflict is more diffuse, and the real structure of opposition may be concealed. As a result, countries “balance” less against threats, and one group of states may make great gains before its aggressive intentions become fully clear to others. The spread of nuclear capacities also deters conflict even when multipolarity is present.<sup>20</sup> States will not challenge the vital interests of other nations that possess nuclear weapons.

Finally, realists are likely to accept the notion that power is ranged along a single dimension and that it is “fungible”: that is, one form of power can be readily transformed into another, military power into economic power, and so on. The existence of multidimensional and nonfungible power would mean that there could be “hybrid states,” with great military power but little economic power and vice versa.<sup>21</sup> Realists reject such claims, although they recognize that there may be lags in the translation of power from one domain into another.<sup>22</sup> For strong states at least, realists contend that power is quite fungible. Such states possess an armory of diverse strengths. If they do not prevail in a given issue area, it is not because of the lack of fungible power but because they do not consider the issue to be vitally important.<sup>23</sup>

Essentially, the modern realist argument boils down to “power and number” – the amount and disparity in the power possessed by individual countries and the number of powerful states. If one state’s power increases, this will also augment its rivalry with other strong

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that suggests that presumed differences depend on assumptions about risk propensity, see Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, “Theories of International Conflict: An Analysis and an Appraisal,” in *Handbook of Political Conflict: Theory and Research*, ed. Ted Robert Gurr (New York: Free Press, 1980), pp. 361-98.

<sup>20</sup>See Waltz, “The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better,” Adelphi Paper no. 171, IISS, 1981; and Waltz, “Nuclear Myths and Political Realities,” *American Political Science Review* 84 (September 1990): 731-45.

<sup>21</sup>See Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

<sup>22</sup>Waltz argues, for example, that Japan will inevitably become a major military power and not just a “trading state” because it will naturally be drawn into transforming its economic power into military power. Waltz, UCLA talk, November 30, 1989.

<sup>23</sup>In “Reflections on Theory of International Politics: A Response to My Critics,” Waltz writes: “On the fungibility of power. Keohane and I differ. Obviously, power is not as fungible as money. Not much is. But power is much more fungible than Keohane allows. As ever, the distinction between strong and weak states is important. The stronger the state, the greater the variety of its capabilities. Power may be only slightly fungible for weak states, but it is highly so for strong ones” (in *Neorealism*, ed. Keohane, p. 333).



states and perhaps with the members of the system as a whole. If a state's power declines, it becomes less competitive and engages in fewer conflicts with others. Restricted cooperation (at least to avoid war) is possible among powers neatly balanced against one another. It is less likely when no balance exists. A marked difference in power always presents a temptation to aggressive action.

While this general realist conspectus can in principle be refuted, the dice are loaded in favor of its confirmation. It would appear that only very specific system transformation events could possibly offer disconfirming cases. If nations generally and persistently failed to balance in a balance of power system or to deter and balance in a system of bipolarity, realism would come into question, though even here realists would retort that individual nations could adopt such policies without questioning the mandates of the system as a whole. In short, even such outcomes could be reinterpreted by realists as conforming with the theory. If nations behave in accordance with realist prescriptions, the theory is supported. If they do not, somehow they may be expected to suffer; if not now, then in the future. States that accept the interdependence which is thrust on them by the international economy may be expected to pay the price in their ability to make and execute national decisions, free from foreign influence and control.<sup>24</sup> States that wish to remain economic or trading powers<sup>25</sup> and that do not wish to assert the military and territorial prerogatives which their economic power would appear to authorize will find their national priorities overridden in some future conflict with other states.<sup>26</sup> Nations that respond to ideological or moral incentives by assisting or opposing other nations will waste their national substance.<sup>27</sup> But these are not fully disconfirming cases.

In a properly constituted international system, nations will chart their courses according to systemic determinants represented by power differences and the need to find a balance between states. Yet unit-level factors, such as evolutions in weaponry and the development of nuclear weapons, also can play a decisive role.<sup>28</sup> Some unit-

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<sup>24</sup>Decisional independence can readily coexist with strategic interdependence. Autonomy to make decisions does not mean that those decisions are not contingent on the choices of others. See the discussion in Stein, *Why Nations Cooperate*.

<sup>25</sup>See Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State*.

<sup>26</sup>Kenneth Waltz, Berkeley talk, April 26, 1991.

<sup>27</sup>For this point see also the work of Hans J. Morgenthau, particularly *In Defense of the National Interest* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952).

<sup>28</sup>Although Waltz apparently regards nuclear weapons as a "unit-level" innovation, an argument could be made that their effect is dependent on the pattern and depth of nuclear proliferation: in other words, that their advent and effect, like power differences, are systemic in character.

level factors can strongly influence systemic ones, and there is a constant interaction between systemic and domestic-level forces.<sup>29</sup>

It thus turns out that while in principle realism remains “falsifiable,” it is difficult in practice to identify an evolution in real international politics that would disconfirm the theory: if states do not balance, they should. If they pay more attention to economic restraints and incentives and neglect the military constraints, they will suffer.<sup>30</sup> If they overreact to threats or become too supportive of friendly, democratic allies, they will waste resources. If they individually and collectively resign their national sovereignties in the creation of a world government, conflict is merely displaced to a new level – it now becomes vertical and civil instead of horizontal and international in character. In addition, a failure to balance power does not disconfirm the theory, for the theory only expects “the recurrent formation of balances of power”;<sup>31</sup> it does not specify that a balance operates everywhere and at all times.

Enormous changes in a bipolar system that might be involved if one side did not hold up its end in balancing against the other also do not refute the theory. If, as in fact happened in 1989 and after, Russia dismantled all or most of its offensive military threat to Western powers, freed the satellite countries, opened up its economy and society to Western influences and democratic pressures, and sought to associate itself with the European Community and join the International Monetary Fund, this would still not disconfirm the central realist contentions. The Soviet Union or its Russian residuary legatee was merely regrouping in order to get its economy functioning again and needed a breathing space in which to regain its energies.<sup>32</sup> As Russian strength mounts, so, according to realists, will its opposition to Western centers of power.

#### THE ARGUMENT OF THE VOLUME

The authors of this work accept that the theory of “realism” formally remains intact. Yet they are persuaded that the events of recent year

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<sup>29</sup>Waltz writes: “The structure is not independent of the parts, the states as actors, but constantly interacts with them. Neither the structure nor the units determine ...” (“Reflections,” in *Neorealism*, ed. Keohane, p. 338).

<sup>30</sup>Waltz writes for example: “A self-help system is one in which those who do not help themselves, or who do so less effectively than others, will fail to prosper, will lay themselves open to dangers, will suffer.” (In *ibid.*, p. 117.)

<sup>31</sup>Waltz, “Anarchic Orders and Balances of Power,” in *ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>32</sup>Waltz seminar, UCLA, November 30, 1989.

are not moving in the direction of typical realist predictions, but rather away from them. Looking at the past, they are impressed by the number of occasions in which other than strictly “realist” determinants appear to have influenced or even decided national policy. Collectively, they believe that domestic factors have been neglected as determinants of grand strategy and that ideas, institutions, or interdependence play important roles in shaping national policy.<sup>33</sup>

The study of grand strategy, which deals with what influences and determines national policy choices for war and peace, is an ideal arena in which to examine “realist” approaches. It is, after all, the realm in which countries should be most expected to follow realist imperatives, to neglect domestic pressures, to overcome economic limitations, to restrain ideological tendencies. States, forged in a crucible of conflict, should likely pursue defense preparations as their most central activity.<sup>34</sup> To do less than is needed to protect themselves would be foolhardy; to do more would be inefficient. And yet the findings of this volume suggest that this smooth marginalist response to security stimuli does not always and may not even usually occur.

Departures from realist expectations are in fact essential to an understanding of the dynamics of peace and war. If balances of power were readily restored, we should expect the world to be constantly adjusting to small perturbations in power while remaining generally peaceful. Indeed, we might even expect that far-sighted rational states concerned with their own survival would not overexpand and threaten others, for this would only bring about their own encirclement and downfall.<sup>35</sup> The balance of power equilibrium in international politics would operate like the market equilibrium in economics in which prices constantly change in response to supply and demand. Wars would be as characteristically unexpected in international relations as involuntary unemployment in economics. Yet, as we know,

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<sup>33</sup>See particularly the work of Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane, *Power and Interdependence* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977); and Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

<sup>34</sup>See Charles Tilly, “Reflections on the History of European State-Making,” in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, ed. Charles Tilly (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 3-83; Richard Bean, “War and the Birth of the Nation State,” *Journal of Economic History* 33 (March 1973): 203-21. See also Elman R. Service, “Classical and Modern Theories of the Origins of Government,” in *Origins of the State: The Anthropology of Political Evolution*, ed. Ronald Cohen and Elman R. Service (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978), pp. 21-34; and Frederic C. Lane, “Economic Consequences of Organized Violence,” *Journal of Economic History* 18 (December 1958): 401-17.

<sup>35</sup>Instead, John Arquilla shows that in Great Power wars initiators typically lose. See Arquilla, *Dubious Battles: Aggression, Defeat, and the International System* (Washington, D.C.: Crane Russak, 1992).

such unemployment occurs, and so do wars. The ruling model in each discipline explains neither.<sup>36</sup>

The title of this work suggests precisely the direction that we propose to follow. We are interested in exploring the factors and events that proceed beyond realism and illuminate *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy*. This book does not confute traditional theory, but it does seek to stress the developments in past and present national decisions that would be consonant with a different approach. In fact, it appears that nations in ordinary situations have behaved much more cooperatively than the theory of structural realism would have dictated, most of the time without suffering as a result.<sup>37</sup> Occasionally, they have behaved more aggressively or have balanced more strongly than they needed to do. Trading nations have fashioned a strategy of international politics that meets anarchy with an acceptance of interdependence, a response that realists would not predict.

It is, after all, an elementary observation that domestic factors help to explain departures from systemic equilibrium. Grand strategy is public policy and reflects a nation's mechanisms for arriving at social choices. Moreover, such strategies typically require the commitment, extraction, and mobilization of societal resources. That domestic, institutional, political, and economic constraints should matter should hardly be surprising. Realists stress unitary decisions by rational leaders that maximize, or at least seek to enhance, security. But grand strategies have been formulated in the absence of unitary decision makers, when not national security but the survival of a particular regime was in question and when the groups that made important decisions affecting the national interest were not national leaders but parties (subnational groups).

The second image is not only important because of domestic institutions or economic orientations but also because of ruling domestic ideas, a point underscored in a famous statement of John Maynard Keynes:

The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence,

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<sup>36</sup>A solution proffered in economics that has counterparts in international relations is that "stickiness" retards the return to equilibrium. This does not explain, however, but merely redefines the problem.

<sup>37</sup>Consider, for example, the policy of Canada. For more than one hundred years Canada has not been supported by England, and yet it has not balanced against the United States. It has prospered from this far-sighted policy.

are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribblers of a few years back. I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachments of ideas.<sup>38</sup>

In the development of grand strategy, and especially of military doctrine, ideas have played an important role. In recent years, experts have begun to recognize the role of ideas embedded in military doctrine as an influence on national foreign policy even when they could not necessarily be fully justified on realist grounds.<sup>39</sup> Although states' military doctrines frequently reflect real changes in technology and weaponry, they may also diverge from that reality, as they did immediately before World War I. Then European powers expected the "offense" to dominate the "defense," but the war turned into a defensive stalemate.

In fact, countries often follow intellectual fashion in devising their policies. It is impossible, for example, to understand Kaiser Wilhelm II's ill-founded belief in the necessity of a powerful high seas fleet without considering the influence of Alfred Thayer Mahan.<sup>40</sup> It would be difficult to comprehend why the United States spent so much of its valued economic resources on competition with lesser powers like the Soviet Union and China had it not been for their Communist

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<sup>38</sup>J. M. Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (London: Macmillan, 1936), p. 383.

<sup>39</sup>A seminal article was Robert Jervis's "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30 (January 1978): 167-214. Additional important works include studies by Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security* 9 (Summer 1984): 58-107; John Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision-Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.); and Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*. For an early review see Jack Levy, "The Offensive/Defensive Balance of Military Technology: A Theoretical and Historical Analysis," *International Studies Quarterly* 28 (June 1984): 219-38.

<sup>40</sup>An emphasis on domestic political institutions and ideas can also lead to emphasizing the role of a Great Power's chief executive. The verdict is far from in, but some initial accounts of the Gulf War stress the role that President Bush himself played in dictating a U.S. military response, which was not the consensus outcome of discussions among his senior advisers. See Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991). Others have argued that Churchill played a similarly decisive role in preventing an English collapse after the fall of France. See particularly David Reynolds, "Churchill and the British 'Decision' to Fight on in 1940: Right Policy, Wrong Reasons," in *Diplomacy and Intelligence during the Second World War*, ed. Richard Langhorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 147-67, and Eliot Cohen, "Churchill and Coalition Strategy in World War II," in Kennedy, *Grand Strategies*, pp. 43-67.

ideological orientations. The ideological dispute determined a rivalry that was far less grounded in power realities.

The nature of a domestic society will also affect the ability of a state to persuade others of its point of view. Strong states have sometimes generated little balancing activity against themselves, while weaker but more aggressive powers have attracted considerable animosity. Status quo or declining states, equally, can sometimes exert an influence in the system that is disproportionate to their power – if their domestic institutions command general respect or admiration. Then the “soft power” of co-optation may take precedence over the “hard power” of command.<sup>41</sup>

In other respects, domestic societies also play a central role in influencing grand strategic policies. A particular level of economic development does not entail a similar level of political development. One of the difficulties in dealing with contemporary Japan is that Japan emerges out of a Meiji-Bismarckian historical context in which “soft authoritarianism” can work covertly within a formal system of legality and popular sovereignty to ensure the preservation of mercantilist policies.

In Germany, domestic factors conditioned not only the choice of grand strategies but also the means of implementing them. Once the German challenge to the British navy had emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century, England’s flexible constitutional system facilitated spending on the naval race, whereas Germany lacked such a system. British constitutional practice contained taxation and borrowing powers that Germany did not enjoy. In certain respects, German decision making was not rational at all: the regime embarked on a naval challenge to Britain that, because of constitutional limitations, it could not fully carry out.

In democratic political systems, domestic imperatives influence and frequently determine the nation’s response to the outside world. In 1937-40 the United States neglected the German challenge on the Continent not because it did not have the economic resources to render an overpowering response, but because of domestic isolationist sentiment. In 1938-39 Britain finally mustered a response to the German threat even though economic factors would have dictated hesitation. And even in 1939, the Cabinet decision to resist Germany under certain conditions was determined not by a sudden change in international pressures (which had remained at a high level since Munich in 1938), but by changes in domestic and official opinion.

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<sup>41</sup>See Joseph Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1.990), chap. 6.

Soon after World War II, the United States came to believe that Soviet communism was an ideological foe that had to be stopped, but having reached that decision the administration of Harry S. Truman waffled in carrying it out. Unlike the situation Franklin D. Roosevelt faced in the late 1930s, however, the postwar problem was not one of isolation or deficient popular support, but an erroneous view of what level of defense expenditure the U.S. economy could stand. In all these cases, domestic constraints or imperatives (not systemic ones) governed the outcome.

Although a unitary political system such as that of the former Soviet Union does not contain the same constraints and imperatives found in a democratic one, divisions within the political elite (between hard-liners and moderates, for example) can be extremely important. Indeed, some Sovietologists argue that the foreign-policy positions of members of the elite can be driven by their domestic-policy preferences. Following World War II, from the standpoint of relative power, the Soviets were perhaps more pressed to balance against the United States than the United States was to contain them. But ideological factors also played a role in charting Russian hostility toward capitalist nations. When Soviet economic decline became palpable in the late 1970s, the regime obviously had to act. But in the 1980s it could have chosen preemptive war – a “cornered bear” response – instead of the “conciliation” toward the West that it actually followed.<sup>42</sup> The cooperative Soviet reaction of 1985 and after was not determined simply by U.S. and Western pressure but by the outcome of domestic disagreements between hard-liners and moderates.

In Eastern Europe the domestic complex of forces has also been historically important. In the first decade of the twentieth century, refractory nations in the Balkans, the “cockpit of Europe,” proved that they were capable of igniting a war among Great Powers. This suggests that systemic stability after 1993 requires that the hypernationalism of the successor states of Yugoslavia and elsewhere be damped down to prevent a new fire. Yet there is no realist strategy to deal with domestic social forces in other countries. In such a setting, a strategy that combines a relaxation of international tensions, the spread of liberal political and economic ideas, and Western rejection of ultranationalist regimes may be more relevant than one focused on balancing relative military power. Once again, policymakers may find that reshaping a domestic order is a necessary prerequisite to

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<sup>42</sup>Mearsheimer argues, correctly, in *Conventional Deterrence* that a blitzkrieg strategy is an instrument of a power that cannot afford the costs and casualties involved in a “war of attrition.”

Table 1.1. Grand strategic outcome

		International factors	
		International stimuli	International constraints
Domestic factors	Political constraints	U.K. (1938) no action	
	Economic constraints	USSR (1985) no action	
	Political constraints	U.S.A. (1940) no action	Germany (1897) action
	Economic capabilities		
	Political stimuli	U.K. (1939) action	
	Economic constraints	U.S.A. (1947) mixed	Japan (1940-41) action
	Political stimuli	U.K. (1910) action	
	Economic capabilities		

international peace. The unit-level influence determines the systemic one.

A central conclusion drawn from the chapters that follow, then, is that domestic constraints are sufficient to prevent or retard the policy response apparently dictated by international pressures. International stimuli generate a response when the domestic political and economic factors are conducive to it. Conversely, domestic imperatives can sometimes generate aggressive policies that should be precluded by the restraints of the external environment.

One way of portraying some of our results is to compare the influence of international and domestic factors in causing change in grand strategic policy. From a realist perspective, maintaining the balance of power should take precedence over domestic factors or restraints. The imperative should also override economic limitations. Yet the surprising outcome is that even a single constraining factor may be sufficient to prevent a change in policy in response to international security pressures. We distinguish here between international stimuli, which lend incentives or require a state to do something, and international constraints, which inhibit or prevent a state from doing something.

Table 1.1 portrays the cases discussed in the chapters that follow. In it we note that in three of the five cases in which international



pressures or stimuli might have been expected to bring forth a firm national response, that response did not occur. In one of those cases a single domestic constraint was sufficient to bar the way to such a reaction. The three cases, the United Kingdom in 1938,<sup>43</sup> the USSR in 1985, and the United States in 1940, appear to demonstrate that powerful international challenges do not always generate a strong rejoinder. In two cases international pressures brought forth a response, but even then at least one domestic factor also favored or sanctioned action to improve the country's international position. In the United Kingdom in 1939 domestic politics demanded action. Earlier, in 1910, Britain found that both politics and economics were favorable to taking up the German challenge.

Conversely, there are two cases in which the international system did not dictate a response and may even have inhibited it, and yet resolute national action still occurred. Imperial Germany had no pressing international reason to challenge Britain and Britain's naval position, but it did so anyway and broke the logjam in domestic politics. Even more egregiously, Japan faced powerful economic and international constraints and went to war anyway in 1940-41. A more mixed case is that of the United States in 1947-50. In this period, especially prior to the Korean War, the United States joined NATO, made extensive military commitments, and adopted containment as a strategy even when the USSR's own power projection capabilities were lacking. Yet the United States never funded the commitments it made. Ideological factors underlay grand strategy and military planning. The Korean War, occurring in a peripheral region of the world from which fiscal pressures had forced U.S. withdrawal, only marginally increased the international threat to the United States. But even if the war did not justify the large-scale conventional rearmament in which the United States then engaged, its outbreak made this possible.

Domestic conditions do not just matter: indeed, the chapters in this work lead to the conclusion that the absence or presence of symmetrical domestic conditions among the Great Powers is a critical determinant of grand strategic success. The realist model of international politics, which argues that states respond to changes in international circumstances, presumes the existence of permissive or stimulative domestic conditions within the Great Powers. That is, realism presumes that the selection of grand strategies is unencum-

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<sup>43</sup>See particularly Williamson Murray, *The Change in the European Balance of Power, 1938-39: The Path to Ruin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

Table 1.2. Symmetrical and asymmetrical domestic condition

		Domestic condition of revisionist power	
		Constrained	Permissive or stimulative
Domestic condition of status quo state	Constrained	Peace from mutual restraint	War/Deterrence failure
	Permissive or stimulative	Peace from self-deterrence/ Unnecessary deterrence	Realist world balance of power

bered by domestic constraints. Table 1.2 summarizes the possibilities that exist in the interaction between a potentially revisionist power and the status quo state that it would threaten. One situation represents the realist model: both powers are domestically unconstrained in their adoption of grand strategies. In this world, states are free to challenge others, and challenges generate a countervailing response.

As a second possibility, a revisionist power is unconstrained while the status quo state finds its alternatives restricted: this leads to deterrence failure and war. While the status quo state should balance, its domestic constraints are likely to generate appeasement, with disastrous consequences. In short, deterrence failure is rooted in the asymmetry of political economy and strategy. This is the lesson of the 1930s. Appeasement in this context provides little more than time.

In a third case, asymmetrical conditions can also lead to a peaceful world if challengers are constrained while status quo powers are not. Revisionist challengers are then self-deterred. Status quo powers do not need the extensive military preparations in which they have indulged. Alternatively, appeasement can work under such conditions. One interpretation suggests that this may have been the case in the early years of the Cold War.

Finally, peace and stability can derive from mutual restraint caused not by deterrence and threats but by the existence of symmetrical domestic constraints. Here, policies of accommodation and conciliation will be reciprocated. This case characterizes the current world, in which Russia and the United States each face enormous domestic constraints on their ability to pursue expansive and expensive grand strategy. The mutual retrenchment forced by domestic conditions helped to bury the Cold War.

The essays in this book also assess the implications of different types of domestic constraints within a Great Power. Table 1.3 suggests the range of outcomes that can arise. Here the realist world corresponds to the situation in which a Great Power's political and economic conditions are either permissive or stimulative. If we add the

Table 1.3. Symmetry of domestic political and economic conditions

		Political conditions	
		Constrained	Permissive or stimulative
Economic conditions	Constrained	States cannot respond/ dangerous for status quo power unless revisionist similarly	States may respond without economic wherewithal/ dangerous for both
	Permissive or stimulative	No challenge or response, despite economic capabilities	Both respond/the realist world

realist assumption that this applies to all states, then the realist conclusion also follows: that grand strategy is driven by international factors unfettered by domestic considerations.

But as the chapters that follow suggest, there can be asymmetries in political and economic conditions. If both are constrained, revisionists do not act and status quo actors do not respond. If only status quo states are constrained, revisionists will advance. If economic factors permit commitment but political constraints forbid it, on the one hand, status quo states will possess residual capacities against revisionists who are not so limited. On the other hand, if revisionists face similar restraints, they will not act. The most dangerous situation, of course, occurs when domestic factors either permit or require action but economic capabilities are insufficient to support them. This was true of Britain in 1939. Britain was not a revisionist nation, but it was emboldened by domestic pressure to take a strong stand against Germany when its economic circumstances were shaky, to say the least. In retrospect, Germany's economy was also too small to encounter the enemies that its leaders attacked both in 1914 and in 1939. In these instances, national behavior is not predicted by the tenets of realist doctrine: nations expanded or launched a preemptory challenge when they should not have been able to do so.

In war and peace grand strategy charts a nation's response to the uncertainties of an anarchic world. It takes into account the challenges of the international system as well as the constraints and pressures of domestic society. As we have seen, both realist theory and much of the writing on national security policy analyze grand strategy as if it simply represented an optimal response to international military pressures, unaffected by domestic constraints. In our correction of the

incomplete realist emphasis on the external environment, in this volume we develop the implications of domestic and economic factors for a positive theory of the causes and consequences of grand strategy.

In sum, the “balance” between countries may be as much determined by their domestic orientations as by their international power. Instead of symmetrically adjusting to international threat, nations will sometimes under- or overbalance. Successful grand strategy for a particular nation, then, will depend on its ability to take into account respective domestic conditions at home and within the enemy country as well as on its ability to consider assessments of power. Since wars frequently (but certainly not always) represent the failure of national strategy, the existence of asymmetry in domestic and economic positions within opposing countries sometimes helps to explain why war breaks out.