

Power Politics and the Powerless

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A slide presented as part of a Washington security briefing captures the conventional wisdom of the age (Figure 11.1). The image is dominated by a centered triangle labeled, “21st Century Security Threats.” Above its apex are the words “Failed States”; at its the bottom left, “Terrorism”; and at its bottom right, “WMD.” The slide captures graphically the perception of threat as it exists in the United States and other countries.

This chapter argues that notions captured by the slide are perplexing, given the dominant conception of power politics and security. None of our models of international politics can explain why the totally powerless would attack the most powerful. Nor, for that matter, can those models explain why the most powerful country in the international system would be preoccupied with a threat supposedly posed by states so weak that they cannot even project power within their own borders. Put differently, the disjuncture between strength and security is a striking feature of contemporary international politics. The weak do not fear to attack the strong, and the strong feel threatened by the weak. Moreover, the foreign policies of the powerful have become focused on the virtually powerless. All of this seems inexplicable by standard theories of international politics.

This chapter argues that the vast asymmetry of power in the contemporary world generates dynamics that are missing in our conventional views of international politics. It characterizes the expectations about the current age derived by scholars of international relations and then discusses in more detail the puzzling tactics of terrorists who undertake extraterritorial attacks on a great power. It then treats the centrality of terrorism and failed states to the security concerns of the powerful. After presenting possible, but problematic, ways in which the behavior of terrorists and great powers might be explained, it develops an explanation for the strategies and concerns of the very weakest and the most powerful in an age of immense power asymmetry. It argues that vast disparities in power lead the weak to use force in unlikely efforts at political mobilization within their own communities. At the same time, the strong, who are made more secure with increasing disparity, expand their definition of security and respond with counter-political mobilization.

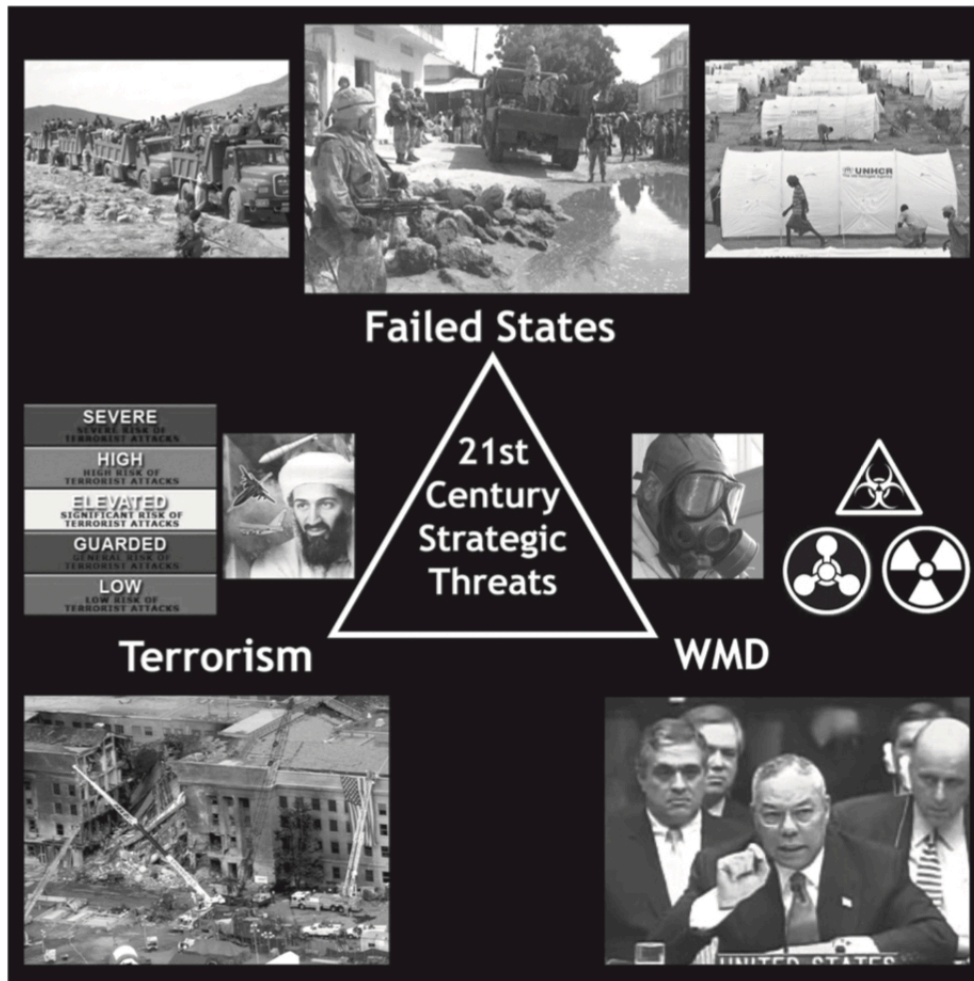


Figure 11.1 Figure by Joscelyn Stein.

Top row: Refugees travel by truck, DefenseImagery; US soldiers in Somalia, US Army; Tents for Somali refugees, UNHCR/B. Bannon

Middle row: Threat levels, US Navy; Osama Bin Laden propaganda poster, DefenseImagery; Gas mask, DoD / Staff Sgt. Fredrick P. Varney, 133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment; warning icons, WikiMedia Commons

Bottom row: Pentagon attack 9/11, DoD / Tech. Sgt. Cedric H. Rudisill; Secretary of State Powell at UN, White House

A Unipolar Age

Scholars of international relations, of whatever intellectual persuasion, accept the critical importance of power and the balance of power. Historically, states' security concerns have led policy makers and scholars alike to a preoccupation with relative power and a focus on the behavior of the great powers. The most powerful states dominate and protect small ones and pose the greatest threats to others, large and small. In this context, the weak are considered "the weak in the world of the strong."¹

Power as conceptualized in this chapter is the relative strategic ability to impose costs, bestow benefits, and structure choice when there is a conflict of interest. It is exercised to achieve one's objectives by getting others to do what they would not do otherwise.² In short, the choices and interactions of the great powers matter. The weak, on the other hand, face a much smaller range of options, operate under tight constraints, and do not affect the overall international system. Great powers are like the large firms characterized as price makers. These firms structure and dominate markets, deciding how much to produce and what prices to charge. Small firms, or price takers, have no such market power, must treat market forces as given, and have no choice but to respond to them. Analogously, great powers in international relations are security makers, and small states are security takers. The great powers structure the system, and small states are constrained by it.³

Recognition of this core reality is inherent in the standard characterization of international politics as a system with a particular distribution of power. During the Cold War (1945–1990), two superpowers confronted each other in a bipolar international system. Each superpower's national security concerns revolved around the other, and both of these hugely powerful rivals could threaten or protect small nations. Each superpower turned to increasing its own strength and securing formidable allies. Realists emphasized the superior position of the United States, given that it had allies with substantial wealth and, therefore, greater power or potential power. They pointed out that the United States desired, above all, that no opponent gain control of Western Europe or Japan, the two other centers of wealth and power.⁴ This view was captured in the article title "Why Europe Matters, Why the Third World Doesn't."⁵

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of military bipolarity ushered in an era of unquestioned US military preeminence.⁶ There are many terms for its current status—*hegemony*, *unipolarity*, *lone remaining superpower*, *hyperpower*, and *überpower*, among them. And although scholars agree on the importance of the distribution of power for international politics, there remain different assessments of unipolarity, its stability and durability, and the kinds of conflicts that can be expected in such an era. Yet none of them can adequately explain terrorist attacks on the global superpower by non-state actors.⁷ And none explain a superpower's preoccupation with weak states. If the Third World did not matter during the Cold War, in an era of US-Soviet rivalry, then the case for its importance became even weaker after the end of the Cold War.⁸

Most balance-of-power theorists predict that any unipolar system will be short-lived. Any single dominant power will be perceived as a threat to others, who will therefore strive to increase their own power and combine in alliances to balance the hegemon. Before long, the world will return to balance, and either bipolarity (even if one of the poles is a coalition) or multipolarity will prevail.⁹ After the Cold War, some predicted that balancing against the United

States would come in the form of Russian, Chinese, French, and even German and Japanese opposition. But there has been little evidence of classical balancing, either in the form of increased military mobilization to counter US power or in realignments that would create countervailing coalitions.¹⁰ And nobody forecast a direct attack against the United States by non-state actors, the very weakest entities on the planet.

A competing perspective holds that unipolarity is not unusual, that the balance of power is not an equilibrium state of international politics, and that history has seen both hegemony and empire. One wide-ranging historical treatment concludes, “the ubiquity of some hegemonial authority in societies of independent or quasi-independent states, stands out so clearly from the evidence that the question arises why studies of state systems and political theory underestimate or even ignore it.”¹¹ In this view, international order is typically provided by a single great power, and war and instability result from the decline of hegemony and the rise of challengers. Peace and stability result from hegemony because the international hierarchy is clear and unambiguous. Prospective challengers do not oppose the hegemon because they will lose any resulting military conflict, and hegemons obtain their wishes without the use of force because no one challenges them.¹²

Although disagreeing about the long-term durability and short-term implications of a unipolar international system, all agreed that the world had entered a period of unrivaled US military hegemony. There was debate, however, about whether and when the United States would be challenged and over what US national security policy should be. Those who expected a return to multipolarity saw future challenges as coming from mid-range powers. They argued that the United States should act to prevent “peer competitors” (the Pentagon’s wording). Others expected an extended period of US hegemony characterized by the universal adoption or acceptance of US rules for global governance. No one expected a military challenge to the United States by the weakest military groups imaginable, bands of lightly armed individuals. And in neither perspective was there an expectation that the United States should be worried about threats from non-state actors and weak failed states. Thus the events of the last two decades have proved troublesome for both perspectives.

Theories of stable unipolarity predict that unparalleled US power should have resulted in a more peaceful global order in which there would be no challenges to US dominance. Yet there has been a challenge to the United States, and it has come neither from a coalition of states nor in the form of political opposition to US preferences. Rather, it appeared as a direct military attack by a non-state actor that did not have even the capability of a small state. The attacks on the hegemon have come from the very weakest actors on the global scene. It is most difficult to explain the declaration of war against the United States by a terrorist organization such as Al Qaeda. Moreover, the United States and other countries

have, in turn, focused primarily on the military threat posed by the very weakest, among them non-state actors in the form of terrorist groups.¹³

The Puzzling Tactics of Terrorists with Global Reach

Asymmetries of power are not new. Nor are strategies of asymmetric warfare. When insurgents have little ability to challenge the conventional military power of their own government or when nationalists cannot undertake conventional attacks on occupying powers, the strategy of the weak is to use guerrilla tactics to *hit and run* or *hit and die*.¹⁴ Often, terror becomes the primary strategy in asymmetric warfare.

The viability of these attacks by the weak depends critically on technology. During the nineteenth century, for example, dynamite was the most important development to empower terrorists. Revolutionaries looked to it as the great equalizer, since it allowed one person to kill many, thus leveraging the terrorists' small numbers. In the words of an anarchist journal, "One man armed with a dynamite bomb is equal to one regiment of militia."¹⁵ Dynamite was not difficult to obtain or to deliver against a target. It gave anarchists and nationalists the opportunity clandestinely to deploy explosive power sufficient not only to kill many people in one attack, but also to damage or destroy large buildings. A history we have largely forgotten is filled with what we would now call terrorist attacks, including bombings in New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris, Madrid, and elsewhere.¹⁶

The weak not only leverage the little strength they have; they also exploit the weaknesses of their targets. Without the means to degrade the military power of their enemies and finding it difficult to attack military targets, the weak have adopted the strategy of using explosives against soft targets, often civilians. And attacking civilians is not only easier—it has the added benefit, in the presumed calculus of terrorists, of terrifying the citizens of the state they oppose.

None of this is difficult to understand or explain. The puzzling element is that insurgents and national liberation movements have also come to target extraterritorial actors. The attackers are not, that is, native insurgents hoping to mobilize the population against a local government or a foreign occupier. It is much harder to explain why they declare war on a foreign power they cannot possibly defeat. It is not enough to argue that they will be satisfied simply by their ability to terrorize that state's population.¹⁷

The 9/11 attack constituted an important shift in the strategy of terrorist groups in that the target was not in the terrorists' homeland. In response, President Bush, in his initial address to a joint session of Congress, declared that the United States was now at war with Al Qaeda and "every terrorist group of global reach."¹⁸ Local, native terrorists were not the same, in his view, as those targeting extraterritorial powers.¹⁹

Even granting that terrorism is practically the only option for the relatively powerless unwilling simply to accept their fate, the assault on the United States is difficult to fathom, because the overwhelming imbalance of power makes it difficult to imagine what the strategy entertained by the weak could possibly be.²⁰ Sustained military campaigns waged by purposive actors presume some theory of victory, some blueprint and strategy for achieving one's objectives. Traditionally, victory is achieved by destroying an opponent's capacity to wage war. The inability to defeat an opponent militarily requires the introduction of other factors into the standard calculus. Terrorism does have the advantage of making use of little power, exploiting the main weakness of an adversary, and signaling resolve. But why do revolutionaries expect terror to result in capitulation rather than retribution? Put differently, what theory of victory is associated with this strategy?²¹

How, in other words, do we explain why terrorist groups have declared war and mounted assaults against countries with immense military power? Unlike native insurgents, they have targeted states they do not hope to supplant. They have no chance to defeat these states militarily and even have difficulty attacking military targets, and not surprisingly have assaulted civilians and soft targets.

Security Concerns in a Unipolar Age: Terrorism and Failed States

The response of great powers to the small groups of individuals who make war on them is also puzzling. Terrorists and failed states have become the core security concerns of the United States and its allies. The United States spends more on its military than all the other countries in the world combined, and yet its security policy is largely focused on states that are weak and on bands of individuals who have no military capability or ability to project power in the usual sense. They have no tanks and no planes. What weapons they have, they have not produced, and the weapons they can produce are quite crude.²² Indeed, the ability to produce weapons of greater sophistication than a rifle requires a technological base available in only a small number of countries, and so it is one of the ironies of modern international politics that states fear non-state actors who have little training and at best fight with whatever other countries are willing to provide them. But even with what the weak do have in the way of weaponry, they cannot defeat the powerful countries they threaten and attack.

The emphasis on terrorism has become conjoined with one on failed states, places in which terrorists congregate and train.²³ But this, too, is inexplicable in standard arguments of power politics—how do we explain that much of the powerful hegemon's national security policy addresses the weakest states in the international system? Our standard expectation would be for great powers to concentrate

on the problem of rising challengers, on prospective peer competitors, even on middle states pursuing a nuclear weapons capability, which would be a deterrent counter to the great power's capacity. We do not expect a focus on failing states.²⁴

This emphasis of great-power foreign policy constitutes a substantial shift in assessments of the consequences of political instability. During the Cold War and into the 1990s, the security concerns stemming from political instability in the Third World revolved around two quite different issues. Where internal instability was most severe, the concern was that the resultant vacuum would draw in outside forces supporting different warring factions. The other fear involved less stable governments that might nonetheless start foreign conflict to increase their domestic legitimacy. No study focused on the weakness of states as a source of or launching point for exported terrorism.²⁵

The contemporary concern with fragile states has generated a substantial literature that offers subtle distinctions between weak, fragile, and failed states.²⁶ Unfortunately governments and officials use the terms in ways driven by politics.²⁷ The Dutch Foreign Ministry, for example, uses the term "weak states" because, in the words of Wepke Kingma, the head of the ministry's Africa Division, "it's not very polite to go to a president and say hello, president of a failed state or a fragile state. We've come to help you."²⁸ Others have adopted "fragile" in preference to "weak," "failed," or "failing."

This focus on weak states and what might be done to prevent their internal political collapse has also generated debates within the United States about what its defense policy should be. Some complain that focusing on weak and failed states has meant emphasizing "the social, political, and economic conditions within borders." This notion of "foreign policy as social work" stemmed in part from an initial concern with failed states in the early 1990s that simply reflected an expanded international agenda contemplating humanitarian intervention and the regional implications of political instability.²⁹ Indeed, during the 2000 presidential campaign, Republicans distinguished their foreign policy from the Democrats' on precisely these grounds. But 9/11 led to a dramatic shift for everyone by creating a consensus on the centrality of the threat that failed states posed to US security.³⁰ This consensus was affirmed in the report of a task-force co-chaired by Sandy Berger, President Clinton's second national security adviser, and Brent Scowcroft, President George H. W. Bush's national security adviser, which argued that "action to stabilize and rebuild states marked by conflict is not foreign policy as social work,' a favorite quip of the 1990s. It is equally a humanitarian concern and a national security priority."³¹ In short, the United States has come to emphasize a security threat emanating from states that do not have enough power to impose internal order, much less to undertake a bellicose foreign policy.

This shift to a concern with weak states constitutes a fundamental change in world politics more broadly, as recognized in one conclusion of the *2002 U.S.*

National Security Strategy: “America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones. We are menaced less by fleets and armies than by catastrophic technologies in the hands of the embittered few.”³² It was also recognized by Secretary of State and international relations scholar Condoleezza Rice, who argued that centuries of international politics had been transformed:

For the first time since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the prospect of violent conflict between great powers is becoming ever more unthinkable. . . . the greatest threats to our security are defined more by the dynamics within weak and failing states than by the borders between strong and aggressive ones. . . . Our experience of this new world leads us to conclude that the fundamental character of regimes matters more today than the international distribution of power.”³³

This view is held widely:

- “There is no doubt that failed and failing states present an international threat and require international intervention.”³⁴
- “Weak and failed governments generate instability, which . . . ultimately threatens US interests in . . . protecting Americans from external threats to our security.”³⁵
- “Weak and failing states pose as great a danger to the American people and international stability as do potential conflicts among the great powers.”³⁶
- “As a superpower with a global presence and global interests the United States does have a stake in remedying failed states.”³⁷
- “In the past, governments have been concerned by the concentration of too much power in one state, as in Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and the Soviet Union. But today it is failing states that provide the greatest threat to global order and stability.”³⁸
- “Weak and failed states pose an acute risk to U.S. and global security.”³⁹

The US position is mirrored in the views of its allies.⁴⁰ Following the end of the Cold War, NATO had reassessed its strategic focus and adopted new strategic statements in 1991, 1999, and 2010. It included terrorism in its list of “alliance security interests.”⁴¹ Following the 9/11 attack on the United States, the European members of NATO invoked article 5 of the organization’s structuring treaty, which defines an attack on any of its members as an attack on all. Under that umbrella, it provided assistance to the United States as a NATO member that had come under attack and extended that logic in order to involve NATO in Afghanistan because of that nation’s hosting of Al Qaeda. This was a mission totally beyond NATO’s historic and presumed area of geographic operation. In the UK, which has a long history of aligning itself with the United States, the same assessment

of security prevails. Shortly after the UK joined the United States in toppling the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw spoke of “the many threats posed by a failed state.”⁴² More recently, a report by the Commission on National Security in the 21st Century, a group sponsored by a UK think tank, makes the same point as does the US national security strategy: “Weak, corrupt, and failing states have become bigger security risks than strong states,” and for the same reasons, they could become “jumping-off points for direct threats to the UK via terrorism or transnational crime.”⁴³ Similar language can be found in documents from other nations, including Canada and Australia.⁴⁴

Great powers have not only shifted their military strategies toward dealing with failed states, but have also made such states central to their development aid policies. National and international development agencies now concentrate their efforts on such states. Fragile states have become a “structuring notion for the OECD and the World Bank’s aid policies.”⁴⁵ Development has, in effect, become securitized.

Conundrums: Of Protective Belts and Auxiliary Hypotheses

Here then are two puzzles of modern power politics. Incredibly weak, non-state actors with little more than improvised or commandeered explosives are deemed a threat by the most powerful country on earth. The first mystery is why they directly challenge a global superpower militarily when it cannot be militarily defeated. In fact, directly targeting the great power’s homeland expands the attacked nation’s capacity for military mobilization and reduces its presumed casualty aversion.⁴⁶ But the reaction of the United States and other countries is equally puzzling. They expend resources analyzing and assisting states too weak to threaten their own neighbors and, in many cases, too weak to control their own territories. They have mobilized vast resources to hunt down individual terrorists possessing no more than rifles and dynamite. The reaction of some scholars has been to argue that the weak are, actually, powerful, but that is not a real way out of this conundrum. It does not solve the puzzle.

Could Terrorists Be More Powerful Than Great Powers?

Power depends on capability. The greater an actor’s resources, the more powerful the actor. In international politics, force is the core capability, and power achieved through force is coercive.⁴⁷ It achieves objectives through the credible threat of inflicting pain or by actually doing so. In this sense of capability, terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda are clearly militarily weaker than the great powers they have attacked. In fact, they recognize that they cannot win militarily.

The Power of Cost Tolerance

Yet a greater physical ability to inflict suffering is neither sufficient nor necessary to make one actor more powerful than another. There are, after all, two dimensions of power: the ability to inflict hurt and the ability to tolerate it. In a contest in which two rivals seek to hurt each other, the relative ability to tolerate pain becomes equally important. A party with less ability to impose costs than its opponent can still believe itself to be more powerful because it has a higher cost-tolerance. The militarily weaker can still be more powerful if its ability to punish is greater than its opponent's ability to tolerate that punishment and as long as the militarily weaker has the ability to tolerate more pain than its opponent can inflict.⁴⁸

Big states have lost small wars in part because of differential cost tolerances.⁴⁹ The US experience in Vietnam, for example, reinforced the perception of the United States as casualty averse, as incapable of absorbing much pain.⁵⁰ Although the United States could inflict substantial casualties and destroy armaments and industries, North Vietnam was able to achieve a military victory by inflicting more casualties than the United States would tolerate. US departures from Lebanon in the wake of an attack on a Marine barracks in 1984 and from Somalia in 1994 after a deadly battle in the capital city of Mogadishu have become commonly proffered examples of this phenomenon. Although low cost-tolerance can emerge from a variety of sources, a key root is the asymmetry of motivation.⁵¹ War, like deterrence, is a combination of will and capability, and the will of a militarily powerful state is weaker when it wages war far from home, over objectives somewhat removed from an immediate military threat.⁵²

Yet problems exist for any analysis suggesting that the militarily weaker party relies on such a logic to achieve victory against the United States. First, the United States has demonstrated in two Gulf wars, two cases of conventional warfare, that it is able to defeat an opponent quickly and with few casualties of its own.⁵³ Second, the attack of 9/11 was on US soil and reduced this constraint on bearing costs substantially. Indeed, rather than raising as an issue the perceived cost of a foreign military involvement, the attack had the impact of cementing a link between events overseas and a direct threat to the homeland.⁵⁴ Attacking the US homeland only increased American cost tolerance vis--vis Al Qaeda.

The Power of Strategy

Relative power is not just about the existence of capability but also about how it is wielded, the strategy and tactics used in its deployment. The Greeks and Trojans fought for a decade before the Trojan horse allowed the Greeks

to triumph. A modern example would be the use of military tactics such as blitzkrieg, which allow a party weaker in capability to defeat a militarily more capable adversary.⁵⁵ And as argued above, power can derive from technology conjoined to a strategy. In the biblical story of David and Goliath, Goliath is understood to have greater physical strength. David turns out to be more powerful, however, because he uses a weapon that compensates for his smaller size and lesser strength.⁵⁶ Power thus entails the deployment of intellectual resources as well as natural and physical ones. David wins by outwitting Goliath. But the puzzle remains if we argue that power combines capability and strategy in a relational exercise to affect another's behavior, for Al Qaeda does not have a strategy that will enable it to defeat the United States militarily.

Marginal Calculation

All these examples demonstrate that power inheres in a relationship between an actor who has it or wields it and another who is affected by it.⁵⁷ Robert Dahl's modern definition of power is the ability of one actor to get another to do something it would not otherwise do.⁵⁸ Such dominance relies on the existence of the influencing actor's capability and strategy relative to that of the actor who is influenced. Yet there are times in which the weaker party can influence the other's behavior. An ability to affect another's behavior does not necessarily imply greater power. This is so because behavioral change is contextual. In some situations, an actor with less capability, with a lower cost tolerance, and without a superior strategy can still affect another's actions. This occurs when the affected actor's decision point is close to its indifference point. Although the end of US involvement in Somalia is seen as an example of casualty aversion and low US cost-tolerance, I would suggest an alternative interpretation. The United States certainly had greater military capability than the forces it faced. And, I would posit, the United States had a substantial ability to accept casualties. There were no strategic and material benefits and the mission was undertaken as a humanitarian one that carried an expectation of small cost. Although nineteen dead American soldiers was a (relatively) small cost, it nevertheless was sufficient to drive the United States to the other side of indifference and so end its involvement. In this case, I would argue, the weaker power achieved its objective despite its weakness because its adversary was close to indifferent. In such a context, even the imposition of a small cost can alter behavior. Yet in this case, one would still describe the United States as more powerful and its opponents as very much weaker. Behavioral change was achieved through little effort and only a slight ability to impose costs. It may be that terrorists see US involvement in their part of the world as being close to the point of US indifference and

believe that attacking US targets will result in a US decision to leave. Ironically, this calculus is entirely undone by directly attacking the US homeland.

Neighborhood Effects

Finally, one can affect another's behavior without its constituting an exercise of power at all. Take the case in which those hearing of a ring of thieves operating in their neighborhood decide to install burglar alarms. Clearly they would have preferred not to have to do so and had not, in fact, installed them earlier. The burglars clearly affected and influenced the choices and actions of others from whom they did not steal. But we would not say that the thieves have power over those who subsequently installed alarms. Rather, we would argue that the burglars did not intend such an outcome, did not benefit from it, and were actually hampered by it in the future. The response of others to a burglary, their acting to improve their own security, made the thieves worse off. Implicit in the characterization of power as an ability to get others to do something they would rather not do is the assumption that the behavioral change is in the interest of, and intended by, the actor exercising power. Similarly, terrorists affect the behavior of people and countries whom they have not directly attacked. Much has changed in the United States in response to 9/11, yet this is not an expression of the terrorists' power. The responses undertaken within the United States to improve US security were neither intended by Al Qaeda, nor does Al Qaeda benefit from them. Indeed, the responses make it more difficult for Al Qaeda to continue its attacks on the US homeland.

Failed States with Terrorists with Nukes

One can no more explain the behavior of terrorists by emphasizing their degree of power than one can make the case that failed states constitute core security concerns. The case for the security importance of failed states also entails adjunct propositions, and the argument ultimately becomes not that failed states pose a threat, but that their weakness and inability to control their own territory provide terrorists critical space in which to organize and train and from which to operate. These weak governments do not threaten outsiders per se, but their territory can be exploited by others who actually do pose a threat. We have seen, as a result, proposals for surrogate sovereignty or some reinstatement of a trusteeship system.⁵⁹

Yet the concern with failed states as providing training grounds is one at some remove, for much of the training can be reproduced elsewhere, even in the United States. The kinds of training facilities Al Qaeda had in Afghanistan

can be, and have been, re-created on private campgrounds in the United States and other Western countries. An EU strategy document adopted in 2003 notes, “Logistical bases for Al Qaeda cells have been uncovered in the UK, Italy, Germany, Spain and Belgium.”⁶⁰ Not only can strong states provide training facilities, but some of them, including Britain and France, “have problems controlling portions of their own territories, such as weak border controls and no-go’ Diaspora enclaves, in which their police exert little authority, and which serve as facilitating environments for the spread of religiously extremist and violent groupings.”⁶¹

So it is that WMDs come to constitute the critical addition, the last auxiliary component, needed to generate a national security threat: “The availability of weapons of mass destruction and the presence of transnational terrorism have created a historically unprecedented situation in which polities with very limited material capability can threaten the security of much more powerful states.”⁶² Creating WMDs is, however, beyond the capacity of failed states and terrorist groups. Moreover, if the worry is about the transfer of such weapons to terrorists by states capable of building them, then the focus on weak states where small groups of terrorists train is misplaced. Rather than focus on large numbers of failed and failing states (the numbers given range from 30 to 46 to as high as 131),⁶³ policy makers might better consider the small number of known nuclear states and those pursuing such a capability, and few of these are failed or failing.⁶⁴ Yet ironically, US policy is directed at making some of the nations able to create WMDs more unstable by imposing sanctions on them.

In short, a US national security policy that focuses on failed states as an extension of the problem of terrorism or that emphasizes generic instability is inherently puzzling. Terrorism does not threaten great-power survival. Nor do failed states create terrorism; they at most facilitate, but are not necessary to, actors like Al Qaeda.⁶⁵ Failed states cannot project military power and are incapable of autonomous nuclear weapons development.⁶⁶ Yet US national security policy tries to stabilize failed states because of a concern that terrorists will obtain nuclear weapons even as the United States tries simultaneously to destabilize countries pursuing a nuclear weapons capability.

Propaganda by the Deed and Terrorist Audiences

The foregoing has argued that neither the actions of terrorists in attacking great powers nor the responses of the latter can be explained in terms of conventional power politics. Assessing both requires a different understanding of their uses of power in an age of immense power disparity. Because terrorist violence cannot achieve military objectives directly, the focus has to be on their intended

audiences. And because great powers have elevated weak states to security concerns, they have redefined security in an era of unparalleled military strength.

As the substantially weaker party, terrorists cannot achieve their goals by militarily imposing their preferences. The presumption is that their strategy depends not on the actual harm inflicted but on the fear instilled in those not directly affected. It is essential then to understand the target audience of terrorist action, which can differ from the actual target of an attack.⁶⁷

Al Qaeda's objective has been, and continues to be, the reestablishment of the caliphate uniting Muslims in one state controlling all lands once ruled by Muslims and governing that territory according to its interpretation of Islamic law. Achieving this would require toppling Arab governments that Al Qaeda considers apostate and removing Western power and influence. Its original strategy focused on the near enemy, regimes it deemed weak and illegitimate.

In attacking New York and Washington on 9/11, Al Qaeda undertook "out-of-area" operations and shifted from a strategy that targeted the "near enemy" to one focused on the "far enemy." It was a change born of the failure to generate uprisings against, much less topple, regimes in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. There was some division in the organization about the wisdom of the shift, but one key hope was that such an attack would galvanize the *umma*, the Muslim community. There was, that is, no shift in audience entailed in the move to operations in the West. Though Americans were targeted, the actual audience for the attack of 9/11 was still the *umma*. The attack was intended to convey the extent of anti-US sentiment in the Arab world and thereby embolden those opposed to US interests in the region.⁶⁸

Al Qaeda's efforts reflected not its extant power, but its assessment of its prospective power, of the power it could mobilize. The intention was to mobilize the international Muslim community to rise up and topple the local regimes that rule the *umma* and to expel Western power from current and former Islamic lands, including Palestine and Andalusia. Like anarchist terrorists in the nineteenth century, they conceive of the propaganda by the deed.⁶⁹ The language they use is that of past revolutionary theorists. They speak of the role of a vanguard and of violence.

An extension of the argument that the purpose of violence by the weak is to instill fear is that it is also to generate an overreaction by the target. It is intended to goad and provoke, and the excessive response, whose very nature may impose much collateral damage, is presumed to lead to a weakening of support for the overreacting target. It is this second-order effect, the impact of the response, that is the key to achieving a political objective, as the overreaction by the more powerful increases support for the otherwise weak and marginal.⁷⁰

These varied explanations all make assumptions about the distribution of preferences and the existence of incomplete information in some community

(in the targeted country, in the Arab world, or in the country that becomes the focus of retaliation). Terrorist violence serves as a signal that conveys information to some actors who otherwise have incomplete information. In one interpretation, for example, the 9/11 attacks are said to have been meant to convey to US citizens the degree of opposition that exists in the Arab world to the United States and/or its policies.⁷¹ In another, the attacks are argued to have been intended to convey to Arabs and Muslims across nations the degree of anti-regime and anti-American sentiment. Violence is intended to mobilize current adherents to the cause and to attract new ones by conveying to individuals that others share their hatred for the governing regime and the United States. The anticipated and desired overreaction is assumed to be an additional means of convincing Arabs and Muslims of US antipathy toward them.

These varied explanations of terrorism disagree about the nature of the information transmitted by its violent attacks. Some believe that the attacks transmit information about the attackers, about their strength and resolve.⁷² Others, however, see the attacks as conveying information about actors other than the terrorists themselves. In some models of revolution, for example, attacks by rebels reveal to members of the general society the degree of anti-regime sentiment among the citizenry.⁷³

Extra-territorial terrorism is not a military strategy in the classic sense. Its primary intended audience is the community terrorists hope to mobilize rather than the targets of their attacks.

Unbridled Power, Task Expansion, and the Counterpropaganda of the Deed

As policy makers in great powers have achieved security against external assault they have the luxury of shifting their eyes to whatever smaller threats remain or can be envisioned as arising in some near or distant future. Unbridled power generates task expansion to encompass concerns not typically thought of as national security ones. This is demonstrated strikingly in a strategic document drawn up by the European Union (EU). The paper has a schizophrenic quality. On the one hand, it notes that things have never been so good: "Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free. The violence of the first half of the 20th Century has given way to a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history." Central to this, the scourge of war has disappeared: "Large-scale aggression against any Member State is now improbable." Nevertheless, Europe faces "key threats," the first of which is terrorism, which "poses a growing strategic threat to the whole of Europe." Even though listed second, the "Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction is potentially the greatest threat to [European] security," and the two threats are conjoined in that,

“the most frightening scenario is one in which terrorist groups acquire weapons of mass destruction.”⁷⁴

The same schizophrenic quality affects the UK’s strategic assessment. On the one hand, it points out that “Britain today is both more secure and more vulnerable than in most of her long history.” More secure, it explains, “in the sense that we do not currently face, as we have so often in our past, a conventional threat of attack on our territory by a hostile power.” In the past, the country “grappled with the brutal certainties of the Cold War—with an existential danger that was clear and present, with Soviet armies arrayed across half of Europe and the constant threat of nuclear confrontation between the superpowers.” And yet, the country is “more vulnerable” and “faces a different and more complex range of threats from a myriad of sources,” which include “non state actors.” And, the document recognizes, “the concept of national security in 2010 is very different to what it was ten or twenty, let alone fifty or a hundred years ago.”⁷⁵

Being able to worry about more than survival means that the definition of the threat posed by failed states has come to include such nations as exporters of disease, organized crime, and drugs, as well as terrorism. This is not the classic characterization of a national security threat, and any security policy that focuses on organized crime and drugs clearly implies the pursuit of secondary and tertiary objectives beyond the primacy of the physical and territorial integrity of the state. The great powers live in a period of unparalleled prosperity and security. Nuclear war and even great-power conventional war seem largely unimaginable.⁷⁶ In such a setting, attention is focused on what would have been counted as minor concerns in a different era. Yet even in an age of unparalleled security, militaries still plan for contingencies and for new and prospective enemies.⁷⁷ Even in an age of unparalleled national security, governments still must attend to those threats to their citizens that do exist, however differently they are defined and however much more minor they may seem.

International relations theory provides few useful guidelines for understanding the peripheral objectives pursued by states. A theory that posits that states are at a minimum dedicated to their own survival is not particularly useful in understanding the interests and actions of those whose existence is assured.⁷⁸ Those prepared to posit secondary and tertiary national interests typically only add ideology and material interests to security ones. Focusing on failed states as threats constitutes an elevation of a host of relatively minor concerns to security ones.

Moreover, meeting the challenge of groups intent on political mobilization through terror requires responding to the propaganda by the deed with counterpropaganda. It requires an ability not to be provoked and not to overreact, and a comparable focus on political mobilization. The effort to counteract Al Qaeda’s efforts to mobilize Muslim masses is what is meant by the battle for hearts and minds in this context.

The focus on failed states reflects a combination of task expansion by the secure with their need for counterpropaganda and the pressure of domestic politics. In democracies, politicians are often not rewarded for their achievements but punished for their failings.⁷⁹ Success simply removes a given issue from electoral politics when challengers highlight the failures of incumbents and incumbents emphasize the fear of change. Failed states and the externalities they generate—refugees, disease, conflict, among them—can also embroil the United States in the world of the weak because they affect conscience even when they do not affect security. It is striking that this point is made by two realists who served in the Bush administration, Richard Haass⁸⁰ and Stephen Krasner. The latter wrote, as part of an argument for new institutions for dealing with failed states:

Poorly governed societies can generate conflicts that spill across international borders. Transnational criminal and terrorist networks can operate in territories not controlled by the internationally recognized government. Humanitarian disasters not only prick the conscience of political leaders in advanced democratic societies but also leave them with no policy options that are appealing to voters.⁸¹

It is stunning how far removed these criteria for action fall from the needs of addressing the maintenance of security, how much they are not issues of power and threat.

In the end, this expansive notion of the requisites of security has led the strongest to worry about the threats emanating from the weakest. To meet both the requisites of domestic politics and to mobilize against international threats below the level of survival, powerful states now treat humanitarian issues as having security implications. Security policy is driven by a confluence of humanitarianism and the political desire of government officials to be seen as doing everything possible to prevent a terrorist attack on the homeland⁸² and as responding to domestic sentiment. The result has been the elevation of the domestic and international politics of conscience.

Conclusion

International relations scholars typically analyze the role of power.⁸³ Exogenous forces may change power relations, but certain dynamics flow from the resulting distribution of power. Questions that lie outside the understanding of the field include which country industrializes first, which develops the atomic bomb, which implodes economically or socially, and so on.⁸⁴ The study of power politics purports to explain only what follows such disturbances in the balance of power, not the seeds of changes themselves. Although an incomplete explanation

for the behavior of great powers, relative power is considered to most constrain the behavior of the weakest actors in the system.⁸⁵

What we observe in this world of immense power disparity does not conform to the conventional expectations of power politics. Vast asymmetries of power transform the calculus of both the strong and the weak. Our standard vision owes much to the words spoken by the Athenian envoys in what has come to be known as the Melian Dialogue: “the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.”⁸⁶ Put differently, the strong have choice, and the weak do not—they are constrained by their incapacity. Making the dictum even more telling are the words that come before it. In full, it reads, “since you know as well as we do that right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.” That is, power matters most in relations between states when the states are clearly unequal in power. Issues of justice, of right and wrong, arise only when the parties are nations of equal power. When power is highly asymmetric, it is all that matters, and the weak have little choice.

Yet, this chapter holds, the events of the early twenty-first century have demonstrated a different conclusion, that asymmetries of power do not conform to this simple calculus. This too can be seen in the response of the Melians, who make two points about submission. First, they say, “We know that the fortune of war is sometimes more impartial than the disproportion of numbers might lead one to suppose; to submit is to give ourselves over to despair, while action still preserves for us a hope that we may stand erect.” The outcomes of war, they point out, do not always reflect the initial disproportion in power, and this provides some hope and reason to fight. Moreover, they continue:

You may be sure that we are as well aware as you of the difficulty of contending against your power and fortune, unless the terms be equal. But we trust that the gods may grant us fortune as good as yours, since we are just men fighting against unjust, and that what we want in power will be made up by [those] who are bound, if only for very shame, to come to the aid of their kindred. Our confidence, therefore, after all is not so utterly irrational.

Knowing that they are less powerful, but believing that justice is on their side, they choose to place their trust in the gods and hope that others will come to their aid. One can transpose this conversation to modern times and hear the arguments of Al Qaeda leaders.⁸⁷ They recognize the inequalities in power, and their hope in god is one of utter certainty and not just the hope for comparable good fortune; but the key to their hope is the mobilization of the masses of Muslims in their struggle.⁸⁸

Having heard the argument of the Melians against them, the Athenians pressed their original point: “Your strongest arguments depend upon hope and the future,” which stand

in contrast to the Melians' scant resources. The Athenians recognize that the Melians are revolutionaries, focused on a future they intend to bring about rather than a present they reject: "Well, you alone, as it seems to us, . . . regard what is future as more certain than what is before your eyes, and what is out of sight, in your eagerness, as already coming to pass."⁸⁹ In short, in the face of large asymmetries of power, the weak can submit, but they can also fight in the hope that they will mobilize allies and achieve a level of power they do not have.⁹⁰

But large asymmetries in power affect the strong as well as the weak. As the world's sole superpower, the United States is subject to imperial temptation.⁹¹ At a minimum, relative growth in power leads to expectations of greater compliance by others. Whatever one argues about whether the United States did or did not succumb to this temptation in invading Iraq and whether it will continue down this path,⁹² what is surprising is the focus on failed states, on the weakest states. The greater security provided by greater relative power during the last decades led to the elevation of minor concerns into major ones, and the elevation of non-security concerns into security ones. Thus we observe what some would call the securitization of failed states.

The combination of a globally connected world and immense power asymmetry changes the viability and utility of military power. The weak cannot defeat the strong militarily yet can use force as part of a strategy of political mobilization. A weak non-state actor attacks militarily the most powerful country on the planet in order to convey hope and possibility to people far from its target. The actions matter more for their symbolic and signaling import than for their actual physical consequences. The focus of the groups and their actions is on the potential and not the actual. Violence is used to actualize the potential power of mobilized masses. And the strong, unprecedentedly secure, adopt foreign policies that deal with matters far removed from their core security concerns. Tertiary objectives become elevated to primary goals, and the great powers turn from military objectives to political counter-mobilization.

Notes

* My thanks to participants at conferences held at Stanford and Princeton to discuss the chapters in this book and to Jim Fearon, Ed Mans eld, Marty Finnemore, Judy Goldstein, and Amy Davis.

1. The title of a book by Rothstein (1977).
2. Although a complete explication of this definition is beyond the purview of this paper, aspects of it are discussed further below.
3. One of the ironies of the realist depiction of an international system that constrains states is that it is better suited to explain the actions of small states whose choices are tightly

circumscribed than big ones who are not comparably constrained. But the theory is generally applied only to the latter, and the former are typically ignored. See Stein 2006.

4. Walt 1985, 34.
5. Van Evera 1990. For the opposing view, see David 1989.
6. The qualifications in this sentence are necessary. First, bipolarity at most existed in a military sense and not an economic one. The Soviet Union was not a global economic power, and following the general economic recovery after World War II, there were major economic powers other than the United States. Second, there are some who see the end of the Cold War as less momentous in this regard, since they characterize even that era as one of US hegemony. For them, the Soviet collapse only increased the degree of US superiority over others.
7. For a typology of armed non-state actors, see Schneckener 2007.
8. David 1993, see also Desch 1996.
9. Mearsheimer 1990; Layne 1993, 2006; Waltz 1993, 2002.
10. In contradistinction to the expectations from conventional international relations theory, some scholars have seen in the opposition of some nations to the US war in Iraq what they have coined, "soft balancing." See Pape 2005, and Paul 2005.
11. Watson 1992, 314.
12. This argument was labeled power transition theory by Organski 1968. Similar arguments, with slightly different emphases, include the hegemonic stability theory of Gilpin 1981, the power preponderance theory of Doran and Parsons 1980, and the long cycle theory of Modelski 1987. Consistent with this vision of hegemony and order are the recent revisionist arguments made about the nature of empire; see Lal 2004, Ferguson 2004, and also Mandelbaum 2005. Niall Ferguson (2004, 2) argues that "many parts of the world would benefit from a period of American rule," but some readers were tremendously discomfited by his characterization of an American empire; see Ferguson 2005a.
13. Violent non-state actors, some of which adopt terrorist tactics, are of long-standing in international politics. They have often emerged as nationalist movements fighting to become states. But the United States is threatened by non-state actors whose strategy is extra-territorial. There is no small irony in Al Qaeda's targeting the more powerful United States if its purpose is to topple the Saudi regime, for example.
14. The Iraq War provides an interesting example. In the initial stages, two militaries engaged in combat. Although Iraq possessed some of the elements of modern power, including aircraft, missiles, and tanks, it was utterly defeated in a conventional war and inflicted few casualties and little damage. By contrast, in the subsequent phase of the conflict, the remnants of the Iraqi military and security services could only undertake guerrilla tactics and suicide missions.
15. Lukas 1997, 64.
16. A bombing of Wall Street used the truck bomb of its age, dynamite in a horse-drawn wagon; see Gage 2009. See Boyarsky 2009 on the bombing of the Los Angeles Times headquarters. European terrorists attacked post offices and trains in London, a Madrid theater, the Paris stock exchange, and the French Chamber of Deputies, among others; see Stewart 2005; also see Kassel 2009. Rapoport 2004 characterizes this as the first wave of modern terrorism. Note that the emphasis in this paper on the role of dynamite in modern terrorism differs from Rapoport's discussion.
17. This is one way to characterize what is new about terrorism, about which there is a debate. See Tucker 2001 and Duyvesteyn 2004.
18. Roberts 2003. Still later, the Bush administration broadened its response to what it labeled a "global war on terror" (GWOT). More recently, the Obama administration has dropped this term in favor of "overseas contingency operation" (in the nomenclature of the Defense Department), see Kamen 2009, and Wilson and Kamen 2009, "man-caused disaster" (the term used by the Department of Homeland Security), see *Der Spiegel*

2009. There has been an ongoing debate on how to conceptualize terrorism and whether it should be treated as anything more than crime. See Schmid 2004, Kruglanski 2008, and Kruglanski et al. 2008.
19. Some nationalist movements have been characterized by extra-territorial attacks, such as the modern IRA attacks in Great Britain, but the Al Qaeda attack on the United States stretched the conception of occupying power to target the United States simply because it supported certain governments in the Middle East and had bases in the region (bases that had been voluntarily accepted and were the product of invitation rather than coercion).
 20. Note that this analysis focuses on terrorists attacking the homelands of the United States, Britain, and others. It sets aside the use of terrorist tactics by insurgents waging a guerrilla war on their own soil against a government and its foreign supporters.
 21. The search for a theory of victory animating the powerless is driven by a presumption that they are purposive calculating actors and that irrationality, evil, and hatred are inadequate explanations for their actions. A parallel problem exists in explaining the behavior of extremists; see Cetinyan and Stein 1997. Psychologists find little evidence that terrorism is an emotional syndrome rather than a strategic tool; see Kruglanski and Fishman 2006. Note that treating terrorism as purposive behavior and assessing the strategy of its perpetrators does not imply that it will be successful. As a desperate last resort, it is akin to experimental cancer treatments or a “Hail Mary” pass play in football, something tried but with a low probability of success. The likely lack of success is not an indicator that the choice or the strategy was not purposive, calculated, and rational.
 22. The US military characterizes the weapons used by insurgents in both Iraq and Afghanistan as improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Despite the limited ability of non-state actors to produce weapons, a cottage industry of doom has developed depicting a world in which terrorists can so leverage technology that the entire world can be threatened. At the extreme, we have to come to worry about “super-empowered individuals,”; see Friedman 1999.
 23. Only in a few cases were the terrorists raised in those societies.
 24. Thus, the disjuncture between rogue states and fragile ones; see Bilgin and Morton 2004.
 25. The list of reasons given by David 1993 for why the Third World matters does not include failed states harboring terrorists. Indeed, he argues that the Third World matters because of its strength, not its weakness.
 26. The “U.S. National Security Strategy” statements of 1998, 2002, and 2006 “all point to several threats emanating from states that are variously described as weak, fragile, vulnerable, failing, precarious, failed, in crisis, or collapsed,”; see Wyler 2008, 1. An enormous literature has arisen on these states, on how to conceptualize state failure, how to develop early-warning indicators of such failure, and how to deal with it. See, among others, Dearth 1996; Dorff 2005; Gros 1996; Milliken and Krause 2002; Norton and Miskel 1997; Rotberg 2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2004; and Zartman 1995. Scholars disagree about terminology and whether it is a singular category and even whether it is a useful term at all.
 27. The same problem arises with the use of the term “national interest.” It is used by domestic political actors and officials who characterize specific policies as being in the national interest. But it is also used by scholars as an analytic construct for explanation.
 28. Beauchemin 2004.
 29. Helman and Ratner 1992 initiated the discussion of failed states. The foreign-policy-as-social-work critique is Mandelbaum’s of 1996. In 1994, at the request of Vice President Gore, the CIA established a State Failure Task Force and contracted scholars to develop models for predicting state failure. The initial studies are Esty et al. 1998, and Goldstone et al. 2000.

30. "Before September 11th, failed states were largely considered a humanitarian problem. They were seen as an obstacle to development, to democratic governance, to economic growth and to human rights. Failed states were generally not thought of as military or security problems, but as, at worst, regional problems, but not a danger to national or global security,"; see Lambach 2005, 10.
31. Berger, Scowcroft, and Nash 2005, 6.
32. US President 2002, 1.
33. Rice 2005.
34. Ottaway and Mair 2004, 1.
35. Commission on Weak States and US National Security 2004.
36. Korb and Boorstin, 2005, 7.
37. Hamre and Sullivan 2002, 95, an article that was part of a task force report.
38. Brown 2009, 18.
39. Krasner and Pascual 2005, 153.
40. This poses a problem for any idiosyncratic reliance on a notion of American exceptionalism to explain this focus of US security.
41. NATO 1991, 1999. Also see NATO 2010.
42. Straw 2002.
43. Norton-Taylor 2008.
44. Lambach 2005, 2006, and Desrosiers and Lagassé 2009. For a complaint about the consequences of "over-securitisation" of the South Pacific, see Greener-Barcham and Barcham 2006.
45. Chtaigner and Ouarzazi 2007, 1. Also see Beall, Goodfellow, and Putzel 2006; Bertoli and Ticci 2010; and Guillaumont and Jeanneney 2009.
46. Stein 1980.
47. Although it does not matter for the discussion below, it should be noted that power also derives from an ability to bestow benefits as well as impose costs. It should also be recognized that there is a difference between coercion and exchange, even though it can be argued that an end to coercion in return for submission/acquiescence does constitute a benefit (of sorts).
48. Rosen 1970, 1972.
49. See, among others, Sullivan 2007.
50. Low cost-tolerance on the part of the United States is typically characterized as "casualty aversion" (a term that does not adequately capture the idea). The existence of casualty aversion has again become a matter of debate and contention as the United States is again embroiled in war; see Mueller 2005, and Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2009.
51. In contrast, Al Qaeda stressed that the United States had "reached a stage of effeminacy,"; quoted in Hart 2008.
52. The Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s provides a demonstration of the intensity with which soldiers fight under different circumstances. In the initial stages of the war, Iraqi forces penetrated Iranian territory and Iranian forces fought with greater intensity. In the latter stages, Iranian forces, having successfully repelled the invaders, crossed into Iraq and went on the offensive. At that point, Iraqi forces fought with greater determination and intensity. The greater motivation of defending the homeland provides one explanation of this shift. See Dodds and Wilson 2009.
53. US battle deaths in the first Gulf War totaled 147; 11 soldiers died (only 4 were fatalities due to hostilities) in Afghanistan in the toppling of the Taliban in 2001, and there were 109 American battle deaths in the defeat of the Iraqi military in March and April 2003. For the two Gulf wars, see Fischer 2005, and for Afghanistan, see iCasualties.org (n.d.).
54. Some in the George W. Bush administration referred to the end of the Vietnam syndrome. Indeed, the Bush administration garnered domestic support not only for invading Afghanistan, but also for invading Iraq, even though the latter was not linked to 9/11. In

that sense, the attack of 9/11 had an effect similar to that of Pearl Harbor in 1941, freeing an administration that had then been constrained by internal isolationist sentiment to go to war against Germany as well as Japan. The attack on Pearl Harbor made possible the very mobilization Japan feared and insured its defeat.

55. This is relevant to the question of how much power is required to deter an adversary—whether deterrence can be achieved with lesser capability, with comparable capability, or requires superior capability. It turns out the answer depends on the strategy available to an aggressor.
56. Certain martial arts emphasize leveraging and using another's power to defeat them.
57. I am putting the point this way because it is possible to understand actors as having the “power to” do something and to treat this as non-relational and solely dependent on capability. Thus, power affords autonomy and in effect frees actors from relationships.
58. Dahl 1957
59. Krauthammer 1992, 1993; Jackson 1998; Langford 1999; Fearon and Laitin 2004; and Krasner 2004.
60. European Council 2003, 4–5. Similarly, a planned camp in Oregon was to offer “training in archery, combat, martial arts, rifle and handgun handling, all in a secure environment in a pro-militia and fire-arms state;” see Carter and Bernton 2005. The training to fly civilian aircraft into buildings was provided in the United States, not Afghanistan. Similarly, visitors to the United States have the ability to practice military maneuvers in paintball exercises.
61. Sinai 2007. Some have even suggested that failed states are less useful to terrorist groups than weak states because the former cannot provide the infrastructure terrorists require, whereas the latter provide infrastructure while not being able to control such groups. It has even been suggested that terrorists are most vulnerable in failed states, that they “are not safe havens”; they are defenseless positions;” see Dempsey 2002, 13. In contrast, the case for the importance of training facilities in a weak host state is made by Takeyh and Gvosdev 2002 and by the report of the 9/11 commission; see Miko 2004. For a correlational assessment, see Piazza 2008. For an assessment of the relative suitability of ungoverned territories as havens for terrorists, see Rabasa et al. 2007.
62. Krasner 2004, 86.
63. The lower number is from Anderson 2005, 2; the higher one is from Fund for Peace 2009.
64. Ironically, the United States and its allies could deal with the problem of failed states and groups such as Al Qaeda and still face the problem of states with nuclear weapons who could transfer them to terrorist groups of their own creation so as to see the weapons used and not experience retribution.
65. Newman 2007.
66. This is an important proviso in that the number of countries that autonomously and independently developed nuclear weapons is smaller than those that currently possess them. Most nations that currently have nuclear weapons received assistance from others in initially building reactors and other nuclear facilities. This was the reason for the construction of international rules for such transfers.
67. Different approaches to assessing Al Qaeda strategy can be found in, among others, Abrahms 2006; Libicki, Chalk, and Sisson 2007; and Hart 2008. On the evolution of its strategy, see Brooke 2008, Cullison 2004, and Zabel 2007. For Al Qaeda documents, see, among others, Ibrahim 2007.
68. Only about the attack on Spain can one make a case that the primary audience was in the target country, that terrorists targeted Spain immediately prior to an election hoping to generate sufficient opposition sentiment to topple the ruling government and see the new government withdraw Spanish forces from Iraq. Ironically, the conventional wisdom is that support for the opposition arose because of the government's initial attempt to attribute the attacks to Basque separatists and not admit their true source. In formal

models, this is characterized as voters not knowing the competence of their own government. A terrorist attack serves to shift the modal assessment of government competence and can thus affect electoral outcomes and, in turn, public policy. In this case, the terrorists achieved their aim because the attacks led to a change in Spain's governing party and the withdrawal of Spanish forces from Iraq.

69. Propaganda by the deed was typically thought of as entailing a revolutionary vanguard attacking authority within their own societies. It has been modeled by Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007. What is distinctive about Al Qaeda is the choice of an extra-regional target to mobilize a local, though multinational, community.
70. This discussion develops a larger assortment of possible audiences than recognized by Kydd and Walter 2006.
71. In pitching their decision to target the West, Al Qaeda leaders engaged in the same kinds of policy "overselling" as US politicians and offered a number of reinforcing arguments to explain their motivation. This makes it possible for those in the West proffering explanations to disagree as to whether the terrorists hate the US way of life, hate Americans, are simply opposed to US policy in the Middle East, and so on. This inability to separate determinants plagues analyses of terrorist motivations.
72. The assumption here is that the more asymmetric the relationship, the less terrorist action is about signaling strength, because the strategy is one of weakness when the relative capability is known. Contrast this with Hoffman and McCormick 2004.
73. Bueno de Mesquita 2010. One problem with explanations of incomplete information is that they should apply only to short-lived contests in which a few battlefield encounters serve to provide the information the parties did not have at the outset. Revolutionaries who expect a mass uprising following a violent demonstration can gauge mass sentiment in the aftermath. Sustained attacks are thus a problem for incomplete-information models of terrorism. Indeed, there is evidence that terrorists are quite slow to update their assessments. It is interesting that revolutionary jihadists continue to see regimes they attack as illegitimate and with little popular support, even when their attacks have not generated evidence of widespread anti-regime sentiment. Rather, they treat their assessment of Middle Eastern regimes as common knowledge.
74. European Council 2003, 1, 3, 4.
75. UK Prime Minister 2010, 3.
76. The one exception is the possibility of a confrontation between the United States and China over Taiwan.
77. Colin Powell, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, noted in the early 1990s that "I'm running out of demons, I'm running out of villains. I'm I'm down to Castro and Kim Il Sung,;" quoted in Kaplan 1991.
78. Scholars have typically broken down into two camps when assessing secondary state objectives: those who emphasize inductive or subjective criteria versus those with a deductive or objective approach; see Rosenau 1968, and Krasner 1978.
79. For such an argument about the economy and US electoral politics, see Brown and Stein 1982.
80. Berger, Scowcroft, and Nash 2005, xiii.
81. Krasner 2004, 86.
82. Feith 2008.
83. Even those who are not realists accept the centrality of power in international relations.
84. For many in the field, the implosion of the Soviet Union was just another exogenous factor, whereas for others, the field's inability to predict the event was a matter for soul-searching and the spur to pursue new intellectual directions.
85. Balance of power is a typical equilibrium theory that describes the forces that maintain equilibrium but treats shocks to that equilibrium as exogenous. For a brief explication of realism and neorealism, see Stein 2001.

86. The quotations in this section are from the Crowley translation and can be found in Thucydides 1996, 351–356.
87. See Van Creveld 2006, 226–227, for the implications of power asymmetries for the choices of the weak and strong and the resulting assessments of justice.
88. In contrast, the Melians were looking to their allies to come to their assistance.
89. Kissinger (1966) describes this as a charismatic-revolutionary type of leadership.
90. This vision of action as preserving hope in contrast to submission fits with prospect theory and the argument that people will opt for risky choices with worse expected utilities rather than accept sure losses.
91. The point was made in the wake of the first Gulf War (Tucker and Hendrickson 1992) and repeated after the Iraq War a decade later (Joffe 2006).
92. In that regard, it is interesting to note the changing subtitles of the book Niall Ferguson wrote championing a US imperial role. The hardcover, published in 2004, was titled, *Colossus: The Price of America's Empire*; the paperback, published in 2005 (Ferguson 2005b) was called, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*. Changes in book titles published during the last decade provide one metric of the half-life of the imperial temptation, if not of the empire.

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