

The Sovereign State as Political Community: A Revisiting of the Post-  
Structuralist Critique of the Neorealist State

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## ABSTRACT

The continued commitment to and assertion of the primacy of the sovereign state within international relations theory has resulted in a discourse which theorizes and examines only those issues and conflicts of international politics which can be made to fit neatly within the prism of the neorealist discourse. As such, there exists a void in the examination of such issues as the nature and possibilities of alternative forms of political community, or into the political and economic effects these alternative forms of political community (such as social, economic, religious and environmental) pose to the traditional state and the envisioning of a global society. The aim of this thesis is two-fold: first, to renew interest and inquiry into the discursive limitations of the neorealist discourse of difference and negation; and secondly, to call attention to how the practical and discursive constraints of the neorealist conception of the state as political community effects the ability of international relations theory to address current conflicts and issues on the international stage. The intent of this analysis is to spark a renewed interest in exploring not only the emergence of new forms of political community but the possibility of being able to speak about these new forms within a discourse of international relations. Only through a commitment to the critical examination of its discourse can international relations theory uncover new ways to re-envision such concepts as political community and international politics.

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## Table of Contents

<b>CHAPTER 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: Neorealism and a Theory of International Politics.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Modern Political Science and Political Realism.....	6
The Emergence of Neorealism and Waltz’s Systemic Theory.....	9
Systems Theory and Balance-of-Power Theory.....	13
Waltz’s Theory in Application.....	16
Analysis of Waltz.....	20
Introduction to Post-Structuralism.....	28
<b>CHAPTER 3: The Post-Structuralist Critique.....</b>	<b>31</b>
The Notion of Sovereignty and the State.....	32
Sovereignty and the State-As-Actor Model.....	35
Sovereignty and International Political Order.....	40
The Post-Structuralist Perspective.....	45
Assessment of the Post-Structuralist Movement.....	51
<b>CHAPTER 4: Neorealism, Political Community &amp; Discourses.....</b>	<b>55</b>
Challenges to the Sovereign State as Political Community.....	55
Limitations of Neorealist Foreign Policy.....	59
The Importance of Discourse.....	64
New Discourses of Political Community.....	67
<b>CHAPTER 5: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>81</b>

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The sovereign state is the most significant construct in international relations theory to emerge in modernity. It is a more complex structure than simply a territorially bounded entity that claims authority to act on behalf of the people and resources found within its territory. It serves as a form of unifying political identity which fosters a perception of a shared history, common goals, and similarity not between individuals but “citizens,” establishing a sense of difference from those residing outside the state. Yet, the rise of non-state actors, globalization, technological advances and the success of capitalism over the course of the last century has resulted in an ever-shrinking world where new forms of association (economically, politically and socially) are increasingly possible. These new forms of association increasingly provide both practical and theoretical challenges to the sovereign state. This has left many scholars to question the relevancy and legitimacy of the sovereign state within the modern international system. Meanwhile as international relations discourses acknowledge many of the pressing issues brought about in postmodernity, these same discourses continue to remain silent on the implications of new forms of political community which do not require nor are sanctioned through the state.

The deafening silence can be attributed in part to the way in which the sovereign state has been entered into the discourses of world politics. Within these discourses the sovereign state serves as the conceptual cornerstone for international relations theory, situating itself within the discourse as a “metaphysical commitment prior to science” (Ashley 1988, 270) and as “the initial point from which all contemporary trajectories can be measured and controlled” (Walker 1991, 448). More simply, the sovereign state provides the foundation from which all international relations dialogue begins. However, to claim that there is widespread continuity in research,

interest, or argument surrounding the concept of the sovereign state would be naive and incorrect. For the purpose of this discussion, the following inquiry will focus on the post-structuralist critique of the neorealist conception of the sovereign state as a given assumption existing prior to discourse as opposed to a historical and political construct whose contingency must be subject to analysis.

The neorealist conception of the sovereign state provides the understanding for what exactly the state is and does within international relations theory. The sum of which can be reduced to three key assertions. The sovereign state is: (1) the only major actor on the international scene; (2) the sole form of political community; (3) ultimately concerned with maintaining and protecting its security. From these assertions several presumptions are made as to the purpose and motives of the state as it relates to a narrowly defined prism of actors within an anarchic international system. The discourse which emerges from these assertions and presumptions is one of negation and difference whereby political identity is mainly spoken in terms of exclusions – “us” versus “them” or “inside” versus “outside.” However, as new actors emerge on the international scene and new forms of association are established, the neorealist conception of an international system dominated by sovereign states that ultimately attempt to control all political interaction increasingly appears to be an antiquated relic of previous historical circumstance.

Unlike most other theoretical perspectives in international relations theory, post-structuralism is not concerned with creating a “best-fit model” theory to explain the current international structure. Instead, post-structuralism is concerned with the way in which concepts are “put in the discourse” (to borrow from Foucault), become unexamined foundational truths, and actively reinforce the legitimacy of the status quo. In *The History of Sexuality: An*

*Introduction* (1978), Michel Foucault demonstrates the way in which language influenced and restrained society's progress through its construction of particular forms of "acceptable" political discourse. Similarly, the post-structuralist critique aims not to dissolve the state but to examine the discursive constraints and theoretical limitations of the concept of the sovereign state as expressed through realist and neorealist accounts of international politics. In so doing, the post-structuralist aspires to new ways of speaking about international politics outside of the discursive structure of difference imposed by neorealist theory. The aim of post-structuralist critique is to "open up" the discourse to be able to speak to and about new forms of political community through demonstrating the historicity and politicality of earlier conceptions of political community. However, in the years since the emergence of post-structuralism, the discourse of international relations theory has remained largely unchanged in its commitment to the construct of the sovereign state as not only the discursive center but as the sole legitimate form of political community. The continued predominance of the sovereign state raises questions as to the success or failure of the post-structuralist critique as well as to why the state remains the pivotal point of departure for conventional analysis within the discourse. This commitment to and assertion of the primacy of the sovereign state has resulted in a discourse which continually theorizes and examines only those issues and conflicts of international politics which can be made to fit neatly within the prism of the neorealist discourse. As such, significant inquiries such as those into the nature and possibilities of political community, or into the political and economic effects that new forms of association not sanctioned by the state (such as social, economic, religious and environmental) pose to the traditional state and the envisioning of a global society are restrained by the limitations of state-centric discourse.

The aim of this thesis is two-fold: first, to renew interest and inquiry into the discursive limitations of the neorealist discourse of difference and negation; and secondly, to call attention to the practical and discursive constraints the neorealist conception of the state as political community poses to the ability of international relations theory to address current conflicts and issues on the international scene. The intent of this analysis is to spark a renewed interest in exploring not only the emergence of new forms of political community but the possibility of being able to speak about these new forms of political community within a new discourse of international relations. Only through a commitment to a critical discourse of international relations theory will new ways of imagining such concepts as political community and international politics be possible.

Chapter two provides a brief synthesis of the neorealist systemic approach to international politics as expressed through the work of Kenneth Waltz, as well as an analysis of Waltz's argument in order to demonstrate how neorealism not only failed in its aim to rectify the "defects" of realism (such as the rationality assumption) but also failed to produce a theory of international politics which could account for change or the emergence of non-state actors. Chapter three discusses the post-structuralist critique of the neorealist conception of the sovereign state and the ways in which this conception fosters a particular understanding of political community and international order. This chapter also includes a discussion of the uses and implications of the discursive elements of difference and negation propagated by neorealism in an attempt to perpetuate the status quo. After which, a brief analysis of the successes and failures of the post-structuralist critique provides an understanding as to the pervasiveness of the neorealist conception of the state and its ability to constrain new forms of theoretical discourse. Chapter four concludes with a discussion of the practical and theoretical challenges to the

singular notion of the political community fostered in the neorealist conception of the state and attempts to provide a brief introduction into how a new “imagining” of political community might be conducted. This thesis concludes with a discussion of the new forms of political community emerging on the international stage and the role political identity plays in establishing these new communities. In furthering the discussion about the role of discourse as a method of “power/knowledge,” the aim of this thesis is to continue a discussion about the re-envisioning of political community and international politics within international relations theory.

## **Chapter 2: Neorealism and A Theory of International Politics**

Chapter II will begin with the emergence of neorealist theory in the 1970's and will address why neorealism came about, what it viewed as the failures of realist theory, and how it aimed to fix realism's shortcomings. After which, I will provide a synopsis of Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* (1979) as an example of neorealist doctrine-specifically focusing on Waltz's treatment of the sovereign state and international political order. Concluding this chapter will be an introduction into the post-structuralist critique of neorealism, its assertions and implications.

### ***Modern Political Science and Political Realism***

The birth of the present-day political science discipline took place alongside the emergence of the modern university which advocated all things scientific (Ricci 1984). This emphasis on science as a means of garnering academic legitimacy fostered a climate that vitally influenced the way in which political science was practiced in the twentieth century. In particular, the period from 1945 to 1970 in the political science discipline has been characterized as being dominated by "two scholarly propensities... First, zeal for a scientific mode of research... Second, the revised conception of science found strong justification in the mid-century liberal matrix of discourse" (Ricci 1984, 133-134). The manifestation of this period was the primacy of the empirical and practical within the political science discipline, effectively excluding areas of inquiries deemed "useless to the affairs of realistic people" (such as political philosophy, and all things metaphysical) (Ricci 1984, 150). The result was the decline of the practice of political philosophy within the discipline as "concern for the normative- the implicit judgments about what is 'right' and 'proper' in political arrangements- was viewed as subjective, ideological, and speculative in counterpoint to scientific analysis that hewed closely to the

‘facts’” (Agnew 2002, 164). The consequence of which was that political philosophy was viewed as something that was taught and not practiced. As such, the main canons of the modern classical tradition of political realism emerged before 1950 from writers such as Max Weber, E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau.

The political realism of the twentieth century while claiming its origins in the writings of historical figures such as Aristotle, Machiavelli and Hobbes, was greatly expanded to reflect the international political climate of the early and mid-twentieth century. Utilizing the classical realist assumptions about humanity’s tendency toward evil and its desire for power, modern political realism aimed to create a general theory of international politics that bridged the juncture between theory and issues of war, international organization and change which characterized the first half of the twentieth century. What emerged was a realist discourse which utilized very specific conceptions of the state, power, politics and sovereignty. During a lecture given in Munich in 1919 and subsequently published later that year in an essay entitled “Politics as a Vocation,” Max Weber argued that the state was nothing more than “a human community which within a defined territory successfully claims for itself the monopoly of legitimate physical force” (Whimster 2004, 133). Therefore the purpose of the state, employing the act of politics, “is the striving for a share of power, or the attempt to influence the distribution of power,” leaving him to conclude that “whoever pursues politics, strives for power: power as either a means in the service of other goals..., or power ‘for its own sake’” (Whimster 2004, 134). For much of the twentieth century Weber’s notion of state and power were widely applied within the political realist discourse.

Weber’s particular perception of power, politics and the state are further expanded on in the later writings of Hans Morgenthau. *Politics Among Nations* first published in 1948, is largely

accepted to this day as the prominent example of modern realist theory over the course of the last century. In this work, Morgenthau reinforces the dominant role of power as the prism through which international relations are conducted. Arguing the success of political realism lies in the “concept of interest defined in terms of power... [establishing] politics as an autonomous sphere of action and understanding apart from other spheres” (Morgenthau 1985, 5). As such, all politics is reducible to three types of power- the desire to “keep power, increase power, or to demonstrate power (Morgenthau 1985, 52). This premise provides the basis for Morgenthau’s model of international politics, better known as balance of power politics. In balance of power politics, the general stability of an international system of sovereign entities is maintained as those entities work to either keep the current equilibrium or establish a new equilibrium based on their assessment of their own power as well as the power of other states. Thus, Morgenthau’s work demonstrates the melding of both classical realist assumptions about human nature and power with a modern improvement the centrality of the sovereign state.

Therefore, the discourse of modern realism as it emerged in the beginning of the twentieth-century can be characterized by the following four central assumptions: (1) human nature is evil and therefore in an attempt to escape the “state of nature” individuals choose to organize collectively; as such, (2) the state is the sole legitimate actor on the international scene and is (3) motivated by its desire to attain and or use power; therefore (4) the state is a rational actor because its pursuit of power is discernable through rational analysis (Smith 1986, 219-221). These assumptions provided the basis for the claim that realism is able to “accept and understand the world as it is” (Smith 1986, 1) by “ascertaining facts and giving them meaning through reason” (Morgenthau 1985, 4). This claim helped cement political realism as the singular dominant philosophy of international relations theory in a time when the discipline’s emphasis

on scientific authenticity through the use of facts and methods dominated much of the political science research and discourse. Yet despite its discursive dominance within the political science community the period from 1945 to 1970 is marked by a significant void of debate or inquiry into those normative and metaphysical aspects of international relations. As such, the realist discourse remained static for most of the twentieth century and was largely viewed as historical with limited practicality to modern day issues such as globalization, terrorism, human rights atrocities or drug trafficking.

### ***The Emergence of Neorealism and Waltz's Systemic Theory***

Against the backdrop of a turbulent international climate of the mid-twentieth century, a belief emerged that political realism was suffering from a “crisis of legitimacy” (Ashley 1984, 232). The criticism’s levied against political realism included that it was unable to account for change on the international political scene (to include the prominent rise of non-state actors), and that it was unable to withstand the standards of scientific scrutiny which had become the hallmark of academia in the twentieth century. Political realism’s inability to account for change, it was argued, was largely due to its foundational assumptions which advocated the supremacy of the state and a conception of power that existed as a political/military/security manifestation. This conception of power proved troublesome when considered in conjunction with the modern international scene because it fostered a theory which lacked any means to address the effects of social or economic forces on the world stage (Ashley 1984, 231). The consequence was the belief that realism could not fulfill its primary purpose as a “framework that could be deployed to legitimize and orient the state” (Ashley 1984, 232). As a result, political realism appeared unable to account for the emergence of non-state actors, the success and interdependence of capitalism (which effectively removed the state from many affairs of the economy), and the increased

influence of globalization on cultural and political arenas. The other criticism levied against political realism was that its use of normative hampered the scientific verification of political realism. Arguing that political realism did not go beyond “the usual vague identification of systemic forces and effects to their more precise specification” resulting in a theory that was unable to produce a scientifically legitimate (i.e. testable) theory (Waltz 1979, 40). This was viewed as a significant barrier to the acceptance of political realism (and political philosophy in general) at a time when legitimacy in academia was garnered through scientific methods.

Neorealism emerged in response to political realism’s “crisis of legitimacy” and purported to solve the “crisis” by improving upon political realism through the proper utilization of structure in international political theory. Often cited as the pinnacle of neorealist doctrine the *Theory of International Politics* (1979), by Kenneth Waltz, provides an example of neorealist attempts to shore up the “defects” of realism through the creation of a “systemic” approach to international politics. The value of a systems theory exists in its ability to isolate the integral components of the theory, “the structure” and “interacting units,” from each other in order to analyze how organizational order affects interacting units. Therefore, a successful systems theory demonstrates “how the systems level, or structure, is distinct from the level of interacting units” in order to reveal “how the two levels operate and interact” (Waltz 1979, 40). The result is the construction of a theory that emphasizes the importance of structure as an independent entity, whereby the parts (interacting units/sovereign states) are not constitutive of the whole (the structure/international political order). Waltz argues that focusing on the effect of structure over interacting units allows a systems theory to determine “why different units behave similarly and, despite their variations, produce outcomes that fall within expected ranges” (Waltz 1979, 72).

According to Waltz, a systemic theory of international politics must establish “how international politics can be conceived of as a domain distinct from the economic, social, and other international domains” (Waltz 1979, 79). He suggests this differentiation is achieved through correctly defining and delineating the structure from the system’s interacting units, arguing that the proper definition of structure is one that is “free of the attributes and interactions of units” (Waltz 1979, 79). As a result, the intrinsic qualities of interacting units are discounted allowing for system level and unit level causes and effects to be easily distinguished from each other. The effect of which is the creation of a “purely positional picture of society,” where the focus of the structure is not the “personality of actors, their behavior, and their interactions” but rather how the actors “stand in relation to one another (how they are arranged or positioned)” (Waltz 1979, 80). As such, the structure of a system is its ordering principle which serves “as a constraining and disposing force” on interacting units (Waltz 1979, 69), and defines “the arrangement, or the ordering, of the parts of the system” (how the parts of a system stand in relation to each other) (Waltz 1979, 81). While Waltz distinguishes between the types domestic and international political systems, which have different ordering principles and interacting units, for purposes of the subsequent discussion the focus will be on international political systems.

Waltz defines the role of “interacting units” as the major actors within in a system. He argues that like market structures which are defined by the interaction of the major actors (firms), international political structures are defined not by the interaction of all its actors, just the major actors which he reasons are states (Waltz 1979, 93-94). As the “interacting units” of international political systems, he asserts states are responsible for “set[ting] the terms of the intercourse, whether by passively permitting informal rules to develop or by actively intervening to change rules that no longer suit them” (Waltz 1979, 94). While Waltz acknowledges that non-

state actors are participants in the international system, he suggests that they do not hold any real power of their own separate from that granted to it by the state and that power is always tentative (Waltz 1979, 94). As a result, Waltz concludes that “states are the units whose interactions form the structure of international political systems” (Waltz 1979, 95).

Further establishing the role of the state as a major actor, Waltz asserts that states are sovereign entities because each is an “autonomous political unit” (Waltz 1979, 95). While sovereignty guarantees political autonomy (the freedom to make decisions independently), it does not guarantee equality of money, land, or resources between sovereign entities. Therefore, Waltz argues that states are “alike in the tasks that they face,” but are not equal in “their abilities to perform them” (Waltz 1979, 96). This disparity is what Waltz terms the “distribution of capabilities” which serves as the mechanism for gauging the power and influence of each state. He argues that sovereign states are “functionally undifferentiated” within the international political structure and the only means of distinguishing between states is to assess “their greater or lesser capabilities for performing similar tasks” (Waltz 1979, 97). Thus, the determination of a state’s capabilities establishes its placement (how a unit stands in relation to other units) in the international political system (Waltz 1979, 97).

As such, Waltz asserts international political systems are defined by the “distribution of capabilities” between units and the ordering principle (its structure) of the system. He argues that international political systems are anarchic orders consisting of sovereign states that interact on a basis of equality resulting in the “absence of agents with system-wide authority” (Waltz 1979, 88). In such systems Waltz explains that “formal relations of super and subordination fail to develop” between units; therefore, “authority quickly deduces to a particular expression of capability” as each unit must ensure its own survival (Waltz 1979, 88). Therefore, self-help

becomes the “principle of action in an anarchic order” (Waltz 1979, 111) and security becomes the ultimate concern of states. Waltz argues that in systems of self-help every state has an “incentive is to put itself in a position to be able to take care of itself since no one else can be counted on to do so” (Waltz 1979, 107). As a result, “in any self-help system, units worry about their survival, and the worry conditions their behavior” (Waltz 1979, 105). This “conditioning” of state behavior, Waltz suggests discourages cooperation between states because they are not concerned only with their own progress but also the progress of their competitors (other states) (Waltz 1979, 106). Ultimately, Waltz asserts that the ordering principle of anarchy in the international political structure provides an example of how structure serves as a constraining force, as the self-help system perpetuates discernable behavior patterns as “states seek to control what they depend on or to lessen the extent of their dependency” in order to protect their autonomy (Waltz 1979, 106-107).

### ***Systems Theory and Balance-of-Power Theory***

The modern conception of balance-of-power politics was born out of the realist attempt to explain the post war era of international politics. For realists, balance-of-power theory served as the means to explain the trade-offs states make, such as action or inaction, peace or war, as they navigate within the international system. As a result, balance-of-power politics came to signify “stability within a system composed of a number of autonomous forces” which worked to establish an equilibrium whenever there were disruptions within the international system (Morgenthau 1985, 188). However, Waltz suggests that realist utilization of balance-of-power theory has been misunderstood in part due to incorrect assumptions about theory in general and due to realism’s use of normative aspects to explain state action. Instead he argues that objectivity could be achieved through the application of a systemic theory, where predictable

patterns of behavior emerge because “similarities of behavior are observed across realms that are different in substance but similar in structure, [meanwhile] differences in behavior are observed where realms are similar in substance but different in structure” (Waltz 1979, 123). The result is the separation of the causes and effects at the systems level from those at the unit level (Waltz 1979, 78).

Therefore, Waltz argues that in a systems theory “structural constraints explain why the methods are repeatedly used despite differences in the persons and states who use them. [Meanwhile,] Balance-of-power theory purports to explain the result that such methods produce” (Waltz 1979, 117). Furthermore, Waltz asserts that international political systems meet the requirements necessary for “balance-of-power politics [to] prevail;” mainly, “that the order be anarchic and that it be populated by units wishing to survive” (Waltz 1979, 121). Utilizing systems theory to establish the terms of the discourse (sovereign states, anarchic international systems) and the means (state-as-actor model, principle of self-help, etc) to achieve certain ends (security), Waltz argues balance-of-power is a “theory about the results produced by the uncoordinated actions of states” (Waltz 1979, 122). Stated in such a manner the attractiveness of balance-of-power theory is that it does not rely on assumptions of rationality or the permanent will of the state as the terms for explaining the actions or motives of states (Waltz 1979, 118). Instead, balance-of-power theory is understood through the prism of Waltz’s use of the fact of anarchy, the sovereign state, the state-as-actor model, the principle of self-help and the distribution of capabilities between units.

Waltz asserts that states as sovereign entities “at a minimum, seek their own preservation and, at a maximum, drive for universal domination” (Waltz 1979, 118). Operating on the principle of self-help (which Waltz has established as the necessary course of action in an

anarchic order) it is argued that patterns of behavior are established as “those [states] who do not help themselves, or who do so less effectively than others, will fail to prosper...[and] Fear of such unwanted consequences stimulates states to behave in ways that tend toward the creation of balances of power” (Waltz 1979, 118). These balances of power emerge as states attempt to achieve their own security and in so doing take stock of their capabilities in relation to other states. As a result, the interests of states are not only defined by the advancement of their own good (whether politically, militarily or economically) but also in protecting from any “possible gains that may favor others more than itself” (Waltz 1979, 105-106). However, these formations of balances of power are not necessarily the result of the calculated actions of states because the success of the system does not rely on the participation of all states, just some of them (Waltz 1979, 118).

As such, the notion of security serves as the decisive structural element of Waltz’s systemic theory serving as the constraining and disposing force upon a system’s actors. He argues that balances of power emerge and/or are maintained because in systems of anarchy “the security of states is not assured” (Waltz 1979, 92) and as such “the goal the system encourages them [actors] to seek is security” (Waltz 1979, 126). Therefore, the “first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their positions in the system” (Waltz 1979, 126). Therefore balances of power emerge out of conflict and competition within the international system, as states seek to prevent the widening of disparities and maintain their position within system. For Waltz suggests only after “survival is assured can states safely seek such other goals as tranquility, profit, and power” (Waltz 1979, 126). Thus, a more complete picture of the international political system is established through the combination of systems theory and

balance-of-power theory as the pursuit of, the attainment of, and maintenance of security serves as the ultimate end for states.

### ***Waltz's Theory in Application***

As explained above, Waltz asserts that the application of a systemic theory to balance-of-power politics allows for both explanatory and interpretive analysis of international relations to be conducted. In the years since the publication of a *Theory of International Politics*, several studies have in fact been conducted utilizing Waltz's theory of structure as the basis for examination of such issues as national security, power distribution and balance of power politics under the anarchic conditions of the international community. Through these studies, political scientists have made assertions, predictions and observations about both past and present trends within the international community with the aim of being able to better understand the world around them. In particular, the balance of power inquiries take on two forms (these forms can be examined together or separately): (1) historical – whereby the discussion focuses on balance of power politics and state policies which ensued surrounding a proscribed time period; and (2) predictive- whereby the discussion focuses on the possibilities of the modern international order given balance of power politics and how this will shape or should shape future policy decisions. For the purpose of this discussion, a treatment of an historical examination of balance of power politics utilizing Waltz's systemic theory is provided. The aim of which is to demonstrate one example of the way in which Waltz's theory is utilized as a practical application in the study of international relations.

In “Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity,” Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder (1990) employ the conditions of Waltz's reworking of balance of power theory through his application of structure in order to explain the differing

types of alliance formations leading up to both World Wars. As discussed elsewhere, Waltz's balancing theory asserts that the structure of the system acts as "constraining and disposing force" to condition the behavior of the states in the system. He argues that given similar structures, similar patterns of state behavior will be observed despite variations in the type of states (such as governments or ideological beliefs) within the structure (it is important to note, Waltz does not assert that this is always the case nor that state behavior will always be the same-just that state behavior will be similar). Yet, despite the existence of a multipolar structure within the international system prior to both World Wars, Christensen and Snyder argue that state behavior was not similar and resulted in differing alliance formations. They do not, however, propose that these observed differences in state behavior should lead to the discrediting of Waltz's theory but rather they argue that his theory is too restrictive (and as a result limits the conclusions to broad generalizations) for use by itself in creating a "theory of foreign policy" which they explain is a "theory whose dependent variable is the behavior of individual states rather than the properties of systems of states" (Christensen and Snyder 1990, 138).

Therefore, Christensen and Snyder propose using Waltz's theory as a basis for their examination and then improving upon his theory by adding "a minimal number of variables from the security dilemma theory and from perceptual theories...to derive a theoretically determinate and historically accurate account" of alliance patterns prior to World War I and World War II (the authors are referencing the security dilemma theory of Robert Jervis (1978)) (Christensen and Snyder 1990, 139). They use the terms "chain-ganging" and "buck-passing" to characterize Waltz's systemic constraints of the patterns of behavior in state alliances in multipolar systems (which Waltz argues existed until after World War II). Arguing that in a world of multipolarity, states are "structurally prone to either of two opposite errors"- chain-ganging whereby states

“chain themselves unconditionally to reckless allies whose survival is seen as indispensable to the maintenance of the balance” or states may choose to pass-the-buck whereby states count on “third parties to bear the costs of stopping a rising hegemon” (Christensen and Snyder 1990, 38). Within these conditions, they conclude that “given Europe’s multipolar checkerboard geography” the events leading up to 1914 led to chain-ganging alliances, while the events leading up to 1939 led to buck-passing alliances (Christensen and Snyder 1990, 139). As such, they contend that the inability in Waltz’s theory to accurately explain the differing alliance formations despite the same multipolar structure, is a result of his assertion that “the structure of the system- that is the number of poles- selects and socializes states to a particular form of behavior” (Christensen and Snyder 1990, 143). For if chain-ganging and buck-passing are two forms of behavior equally possible in a multipolar system then “how do states become socialized” to a particular behavior? (Christensen and Snyder 1990, 143) This inconsistency leads them to assert that “more information about the international setting must be provided in order... to set states on a determinate path,” concluding that Waltz’s theory needs to be slightly modified (Christensen and Snyder 1990, 143).

Christensen and Snyder suggest that in order for Waltz’s theory of state behavior to accurately describe differing alliance situations leading up to both World Wars, two factors utilizing Jervis’s security dilemma theory must be incorporated into Waltz’s theory. First, technology and geography must become “variable elements of international structure” (Christensen and Snyder 1990, 144). Secondly, “perception of the strategic incentives inherent in the systemic structure must be introduced” (Christensen and Snyder 1990, 144). Lastly, they argue that any perceptual biases must be accounted for and utilize the following two hypothesis: (1) the perceptions of soldiers’ and policymakers’ regarding “international structural incentives,

including the offensive-defensive balance are shaped by their formative experiences, especially the last major war;” (2) “civilian control over the military was much greater in the 1930s than in the 1910s, [therefore] the military-fueled “cult of the offensive” no longer dominated strategic perceptions” (Christensen and Snyder 1990, 145). Taking into account these modifications, Christensen and Snyder assert that “they can account for the differences in multipolar alliance balancing behavior” before both World Wars- “rescuing Waltz’s theory from its predictive indeterminacy” (Christensen and Snyder 1990, 146).

Utilizing case studies to examine the actions and decisions of Germany, France, Russia (or in the case of World War II, the Soviet Union) leading up to both World Wars, Christensen and Snyder claim that “in every case perceptions of offensive advantage were associated with chain-ganging....[and] perceptions of defensive advantage were associated with buck-passing” (Christensen and Snyder 1990, 165). Leading them to conclude that “given the constant factors of the multipolar checkerboard configuration of power...varying perceptions of the offense-defense balance constitute a sufficient explanation for the differing alliance patterns” leading up to World War I and World War II (Christensen and Snyder 1990, 148). They suggest that Waltz’s theory provides a good foundation for broadly explaining state action in a multipolar system; however to be able to make determinate predictions about state alliance strategies requires going further than asserting that states in a multipolar system are predisposed to one of two options (chain-ganging and buck-passing). Therefore, Christensen and Snyder suggest that the Waltz-Jervis theory is able to not only accurately explain historical state alliance strategies but also is capable of predicting and prescribing future alliance strategies of states. They argue that this type of analysis is extremely prudent given the “potentially unstable condition of multipolarity” which is likely to reemerge in the future (Christensen and Snyder 1990, 140).

The Christensen and Snyder analysis is just one example of the way in which Waltz's theory (and neorealist principles in general) has been utilized in the practical study of international relations. However since its debut, Waltz's theory has significantly impacted not only the types of research conducted but also the discursive parameters within which the research is conducted. It opened up a new "scientific" approach to international relations research where hypothesis were formed, the "structure" of the international system (defined largely by the number of actors and the distribution of power) provided the constraints, variables were controlled for, and a common set of assumptions (what James (1993) refers to as the "axiomatic basis") were given at the outset. These studies largely produced research which was limited to questions of structure, the state, national security, the distribution of power amongst states, and the effect of interaction between states. In essence, the international research program was reduced not only to inquiries of the state but to a statist discourse which did not allow for considerations of other types of political action (such as the emergence of politically active social or cultural groups) or issues not reducible to the confines of the state (such as humanitarian or environmental concerns).

### ***Analysis of Waltz***

The *Theory of International Politics* (1979) is considered to be the benchmark work for neorealism, in which Waltz aimed to "systemize political realism into a rigorous, deductive systemic theory of international politics" (Keohane 1986, 15). He believed this could be achieved by removing the normative aspects of realism and replacing them with a systemic approach which emphasized the proper definition and delineation of structures and interacting units. In removing the normative aspects from realism, which included the use of the rationality assumption, the belief in the "will" of the state or considerations of an actor's internal

characteristics, Waltz argued a more scientific approach to international politics was attainable. Thus the normative aspects of realism were replaced with objectivity of Waltz's international political structure where the structure served as the "principle determinant of outcomes" allowing for inferences to be made about state behavior (Keohane 1986, 166). Waltz argued that the utilization of structure allowed for differentiation between system level and unit level causes and effects. This is critical because Waltz believed prior theories failed to provide an accurate account of international politics because the lines between system level and unit level causes and effects were often blurred making scientific analysis difficult (Waltz 1979, 78).

Noticeably, Waltz's conception of the international politics solely involves the relations of sovereign states, operating on a principle of self-help while existing in an anarchic structure. (Waltz 1979, 91). This conception of international politics demonstrates Waltz's use of four inter-related realist assertions - the sovereignty of the state, the primacy of the state-as-actor model, the fact of anarchy, and an international system predicated on the notion of self-help- in support of his assumption "that states seek to ensure their survival" (Waltz 1979, 91). From these premises, Waltz conducts his theory with the aim of creating "a more rigorous theory of international politics" which "distinguish[s] unit-level and structural elements,...demonstrate[s] the inadequacy of the prevalent inside-out pattern of thinking...of international politics" and creates a testable theory of international politics (Waltz 1986, 322). However, certain critics suggest Waltz was unsuccessful in achieving these aims because he simply "reformulates and systemizes realism" through the utilization of its fundamental assumptions (Keohane 1986, 175).

As stated previously, Waltz's believed that in order for a theory of international politics to be more scientific, it must abandon the use of normative notions such as the rationality assumption. The rationality assumption is best understood as the belief that governments act

“rationally” meaning “they have consistent, ordered preferences, and that they calculate the costs and benefits of all alternative policies in order to maximize their utility in light both of those preferences and of their perceptions of the nature of reality” (Keohane 1986, 11). As such, theorists often use the rationality assumption to make inferences about the actions of states. However, the rationality assumption does not lend itself easily to scientific verification because the concept of what is rational is subjective. The “consistent, ordered preferences” may change from state to state, from situation to situation and are based in large part on how a state perceives itself and others. For this reason, Waltz aimed to construct a theory which did not rely on the rationality as the basis for state action. However, upon close examination several critics have argued that in fact Waltz’s theory does make use of the rationality assumption.

Waltz’s use of the rationality assumption results from his assertion that “states seek to ensure their survival” (what I will call the survival assumption) in international political systems. Before further discussion of Waltz’s use of assumptions, it is important to note the criteria for which Waltz argues assumptions should be judged. Waltz posits that assumptions are not factual, and therefore must be examined based on whether the assumption proves useful to the success of the theory, not whether the assumption proves true (Waltz 1979, 117-118). However, Waltz’s use of the survival assumption does not aid in the success of his theory; not only does it require the use of the rationality assumption but the survival assumption also relies on realist assumptions which have several implications for his theory. In particular, the use of realist assumptions fosters the establishment of a theory which objectifies the sovereign state, an anarchic international society, and places a premium on the notions of power and security in the international system.

Through the deployment of the survival assumption, security becomes the highest purpose for states and the ability to achieve security fashions states behavior within the international political system. Waltz argues that the behavior of states is influenced as states assess the distribution of capabilities (i.e. distribution of power) within the international system. As such, the structure serves as the “constraining and disposing force” (Waltz 1979, 69), while the distribution of power becomes the only variable as states “determine their interest and strategies on the calculation of their own positions in the system” (Keohane 1986, 167). The use of this assumption permits Waltz to argue that given the need to assure security, combined with the structure of the system and the distribution of capabilities; discernable patterns of behavior will emerge regardless of the differences between states. Therefore, Waltz asserts that regardless of variation between states (whether in resources, economies, governments, etc.) they are influenced and constrained in a similar manner by the structure. However, the success of this assertion relies on the assumption that all states will not only act in a comparable manner (they will act rationally) in their attempt to achieve security but also that states interpret “this system in the same way” (Cox 1986, 212). As a result, the rationality assumption provides “the link between system structure and actor behavior” (Keohane 1986, 167) as “inferences about state behavior ...[are] drawn solely from knowledge of the structure of the system” (Keohane 1986, 191).

For Waltz, the success of a systemic theory of international politics lies in the ability to examine the structure as an independent entity in its own right. In establishing the structure as an independent entity, the structure becomes a controlling condition which allows for predictability rather than the summation of the actions of a system’s units which would result in continuously changing structure. Therefore, Waltz argues that “structure defines the arrangement of the parts”

it is “not a collection of political institutions, but rather the arrangement of them” (Waltz 1979, 81). Under this philosophy, the international political system is not anarchic and decentralized because it consists of sovereign states, but rather the international political system is one of anarchy which establishes the grounds for interaction between states. However, Waltz is unable to account for the independence of the structure separate from being “the logical consequence of the parts taken together” (Ashley 1984, 255). This is most visible in his discussion of the differences between the ordering principle and the interacting units of international political systems and domestic political systems.

The distinction between Waltz’s definitions of interacting units in international versus domestic political structures demonstrates how the type of interacting units (whether they be “like units” similar in function or “differentiated units performing specific functions”) establishes the ordering principle of the structure (i.e. whether it is hierarchic or anarchic). Waltz explains that international political structures consist of “like units” which interact on a basis of equality propagating an “absence of agents with system-wide authority” fostering an international political structure which is anarchic and decentralized (Waltz 1979, 88). Meanwhile, domestic political structures consist of “differentiated units performing specific functions,” (Waltz 1979, 93) requiring them to “stand in relations of super- and subordination” to one another (Waltz 1979, 88). Therefore, he argues the ordering principle of domestic political structures is hierarchic and centralized. Waltz’s discussion demonstrates that he is unable to establish the ordering principle of a system separate from the units in the system. The result is the creation of a system predicated on the notion that the unit is a stationary entity within history. The assumption is that the unit is and always will exist in the form of the sovereign state of the Western European tradition following the Treaty of Westphalia. However, history demonstrates

that the sovereign state has not always existed nor has it always been the center for political action within international politics. The fixing of the unit to an historically specific account of time and space raises questions to the applicability of Waltz's theory should the nature and purpose of the unit change.

The last criticism to be addressed in this section deals with Waltz's use of realist concepts such as the fact of anarchy, the sovereignty of the state, and the state as actor model. Waltz states that one of his aims was to correct the defects of realism through the application of a systemic approach to international politics. The state-as-actor model, as its name suggests, establishes the sovereign state as the sole legitimate actor in international affairs. However, critics argue that the rise of non-state actors not only suggest the end of the primacy of the state as the premiere actor in international relations, but they also assert that the existence of non-state actors challenge the sovereignty of the state (Waltz 1979, 93). Waltz responds to these criticisms, arguing that they are based on an inaccurate understanding of states and their role in the international system. He asserts that states have never been the only actors in the international system; however for the purposes of defining the structure of a system, the theorist must choose which actors to include or exclude for analysis (Waltz 1979, 93). As such, Waltz argues that as "long as the major states are the major actors, the structure of international politics is defined in terms of them" (Waltz 1979, 94). Therefore, Waltz asserts states as the major actors and discounts the any role non-state actors may have from his analysis of international politics (because as has already been discussed non-state actors only have power to act if granted to it whether passively or explicitly by the state).

Similarly, Waltz argues that states are sovereign because they are "autonomous political units" (Waltz 1979, 95); however, Waltz utilizes a very specific notion of sovereignty. He

suggests that the notion of sovereignty is misunderstood, asserting that sovereignty is often misconstrued as the ability of states to do what they want when they want. Instead, Waltz explains that sovereignty is the ability of a state to decide “for itself how it will cope with its internal and external problems, including whether or not to seek assistance from other and in doing so to limit its freedom” (Waltz 1979, 96). Under this conception of sovereignty, sovereignty is not jeopardized because a state is influenced by internal and external pressures. Rather, Waltz argues that sovereignty grants states the right to “develop their own strategies, chart their own courses...[and] meet whatever needs they experience and whatever desires they develop” (Waltz 1979, 96). Therefore, sovereignty is manifested in the freedom of states to make decisions independently; the fact that states take into consideration the actions of other states means only that the state is continually working to ensure its survival (which fulfills Waltz’s explicit assumption), whether in its physical form or in its position within the international community. This specific notion treats sovereignty as a tool of the state, while simultaneously establishing sovereignty as an innate feature of the state (as the legitimate form of political community) and therefore above discursive inquiry. As such, the sovereign state is presumed as a fact given prior to the beginning of the theory and therefore questions as to the assertions of sovereignty, primacy, and legitimacy of the state are not contemplated. The state is assumed to be what it is simply because it exists.

In pursuit of a systemic approach Waltz argues that the utilization of theoretical assumptions is necessary and validated by “the success of the theories that employ them” (Waltz 1979, 6). However, Waltz deploys the same assumptions in his theory as those used in the realist theory he argues was not capable of providing a complete account of international politics. By systemizing the realist assumptions, Waltz removes them from the neorealist discourse because

they are established as facts given prior to the theory. Similar to economic models where the conditions, actors, and products are given, and therefore not subject to assessment; Waltz uses realist assumptions as the given conditions (anarchy and self-help), actors (sovereign states), and products (balances of power) of a systemic approach to international politics. As such, Waltz is able to justify the use the realist assumptions as the foundational elements which in total form the structure of international political systems of his theory without acknowledging the problems these assumptions posed to the success of realism.

Ultimately, Waltz's exercise in theory did not address the fundamental assumptions of realism but rather addressed realism's approach to international politics. The aim was not to discount realism but rather improve on it and make it more appealing as a scientific mode of inquiry. For Waltz the purpose of theory is to "indicate what is connected with what and how the connection is made..., [to] convey a sense of how things work..., [and] of what the structure of a realm of inquiry may be" (Waltz 1979, 12). Waltz posited that in isolating the international political system as a means of inquiry, the system's effect as a "disposing and constraining" force would dissolve the normative explanations of state actions that existed in the realist discourse. The result was a theory which examined the international political system for its effect on the actions of states, as opposed to the traditional way of interpreting the international political system as the sum of state interactions. However, in his attempt to create a systemic approach to international politics which improved upon the realist tradition, it has been charged that Waltz fostered a theory of international politics that is a "self-enclosed, self-affirming joining of statist, utilitarian, positivist, and structural commitments" which leads to "the rationalization of global politics" (Ashley 1984, 228).

## *Introduction to Post-Structuralism*

About the same time as the emergence of neorealism, certain political theorists such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida began to examine the way in which concepts entered the discourse (sometimes theoretical, sometimes practical) and limited perceptions and practices. They argued that discourse served as a means of knowledge/power and therefore it was critical to examine the way in which concepts were “put into the discourse” (Foucault 1990, 11). Therefore, a body of work emerged in the 1980’s which critically examined how neorealism’s use of such concept as the fact-of-anarchy and the sovereignty of the state were entered into the international political discourse. For the purpose of the subsequent discussion, I will focus on this body of work referred to as post-structuralism and in particular its critique of the neorealist conception of the sovereign state and an anarchic international order.

Unlike other theoretical perspectives (neorealism in particular), post-structuralism is not concerned with creating a “best-fit model” theory to explain the current international system. However, as was briefly discussed earlier, neorealism emerged amongst the backdrop of the privileging of all things scientific in academia and in its attempt to rectify the perceived “crisis of legitimacy” of realist theory, neorealism “set out to develop and historically to corroborate scientific theories that would portray or assume a fixed structure of international anarchy, trim away the balance-of-power concept’s scientifically inscrutable ideological connotations; [and] reduce balance of power’s scientific status to that of systemic property” (Ashley 1984, 232). As such neorealism attempted to create a “best-fit model” of international politics which was able to accommodate the requirements for scientific validity (i.e. that it was testable). Therefore, the post-structuralist critique argues that in his concern to create a scientific form of inquiry, Waltz removes “the subjectivist veils and dark metaphysics of classical realist thought” and replaces

them with the objective structures which exist as part of the established parameter necessary for scientific inquiry (Ashley 1984, 233). Resulting in the development of a neorealist discourse which relegates traditionally normative concepts such as “power and national interest, securely in the scientifically defensible terrain of objective necessity” thus preventing any real critique or examination of its underlying assumptions (Ashley 1984, 233).

As a form of critical theory, post-structuralism questions “how that order came about....does not take institutions and social and power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing” (Cox 1986, 208). In pursuit of these aims, post-structuralism examines the way in which neorealist concepts are “put in the discourse,” become unexamined foundational truths, and actively reinforce the legitimacy of status quo. Ultimately the post-structuralist critique rejects neorealism as a legitimate form of inquiry, and even more strenuously rejects the notion that neorealism is a theory which improves upon the realist tenants. The post-structuralist argues that the classical realist tradition displayed an awareness of the historical and political contingencies with which theories were developed, in stark contrast to the neorealist tradition which purports a historically fixed account of notions such as the state and political community.

In particular, the following discussion will focus on the writings of the theorists Richard K. Ashley and R.B.J. Walker, whose combined works focus in particular on the how the use of notions such as sovereignty and anarchy (as applied to international order) in international relations theory promote a singular conception of political community manifested in the concept of the sovereign state. They argue that the neorealist use of the notion of sovereignty has far reaching discursive effects beyond Waltz’s assertion that sovereignty is freedom of states to make their own decisions. They assert that neorealism’s use of unexamined foundational truths

has several theoretical implications about the concept of the state which include: the state as a rational identity; the privileging of the state; and the creation of a “closed space” both discursively and physically within the discourse. Ultimately, neither Ashley nor Walker aim to discount realism but rather they want to expand the discourse by challenge theorists to examine the use of foundational concepts within in the discourse. Specifically, both suggest that through the inspection of unexamined notions, new possibilities and limitations of political community will emerge in international relations theory.

### **CHAPTER 3: The Post-Structuralist Critique**

The predominance of realism over the course of the last century has greatly shaped the discourse of international relations theory. Arguably, no other discourse of political theory is more affected by the way in which certain principles, such as the sovereign state and the fact of anarchy, have come to define its parameters than the theories of international relations. In particular, realist assertions of the sovereignty of the state and the fact of anarchy have come under increasing scrutiny as world dynamics have changed over the course of the last 30 years, challenging the conclusions provided by these realist assumptions. As discussed in the previous chapter, neorealism emerged to rectify the “defects” of realism. Continuing in the realist tradition of power politics, sovereign states and an anarchic international system, Waltz utilized these concepts as the foundation for his systemic approach of international politics. The result is the creation of a theory in which “the proposition that the state [and the assertion of its claim to sovereignty] might be essentially problematic or contested is excluded from neorealist theory” (Ashley 1984, 238). As such, critics suggest that “it [neorealism] fails as a theory of world politics... because it is so deeply immersed in the tradition it interprets” (Ashley 1984, 274). Essentially, arguing that realism has wrapped itself in a tradition that it has accepted without critically examining the context (whether historically, spatially or temporally) from which the theories emerged (Walker 1993). These criticisms are significant to understanding why neorealism as a theory of international politics, is unable to adequately address situations involving non-state actors, or issues not reducible to the confines of the state such as globalization, humanitarian and/or environmental crises.

The significance of these critiques, which for the purposes of this discussion will be labeled as post-structuralist, is compelling if Foucault’s argument that discourse is a form of

power/knowledge is to be granted any gravity. Michel Foucault, a French philosopher of the 1970's was primarily concerned with the way in which a concept was "put into the discourse" as a "discursive fact" and utilized as a form of power over the way in which a concept was, perceived, practiced and discussed (Foucault 1990, 11). Evoking Foucault the post-structuralist critique aims to demonstrate

the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (Foucault 1990, 101).

In this manner, the post-structuralist critique extends beyond the basic interest in assertions of fact of particular concepts in neorealist theory and examines how these assertions dictate the parameters of the international relations discourse. The aim is to garner a more serious deliberation about the way in which uncontested concepts such as the sovereign state and an anarchic international order are daily reinforced both discursively and in practice to perpetuate a cycle that is self-affirming and self-enclosing. As Walker explains "the substantive character of these claims is less significant than the processes through which these claims have been selected, shaped, articulated, legitimized and reproduced within a specific discursive economy" (Walker 1993, 107). The ultimate aspiration of this line of inquiry is to open up international relations discourse to new possibilities of political community and international order. However, achieving this objective requires a serious examination of the notion of sovereignty and its application within the international relations discourse.

### ***The Notion of Sovereignty and the State***

The notion of sovereignty is a very powerful concept within any discourse; whether vested in a deity, person, or an institution, the notion of sovereignty affords certain rights –

mainly uninhibited power and authority – and shapes interactions. How the concept of sovereignty became vested in the institution of the state has a more precise historical foundation in the struggle to establish a political order which existed apart from the church or a monarch. Ironically, this struggle was not simply about challenging the specific notion that political orders were predestined by a higher power, as it was a struggle to speak about the possibility of a new political order within the confines of the existing discourse. One of the first instances of this struggle is evident in the writings of Machiavelli, the theorist most often associated with the beginning of modern political philosophy. Machiavelli “struggled to speak about an emerging form of political community-the city state-in categories dominated by sensibilities of Christian universalism” (Walker 1993, 16).

This difficulty was not unique to the space and time of Machiavelli, but similar to that of most early-modern theorists who found themselves struggling to define a new political order that was not bound to the notion of a higher power— whether manifested through the church or through the sovereign ruler. What resulted from this discourse was the birth of the sovereign state. The sovereign state was uniquely a “response to the stubbornly held assumption that some value higher than the state governed political behaviour...and the means chosen to pursue them” (Haslam 2002, 12). Understood as a reaction to these beliefs, Machiavelli’s conception of the city-state rested in a particular notion of capability that throughout the years became associated with the ability to exert power, authority and violence. In this manner, the emergence of the sovereignty of the state and the foundations of political community is viewed as a reactionary attempt to construct a society outside of the universalistic notions of the church.

Hence “conventional accounts of political life [defined by its claim to sovereignty] have thus come to express a fundamental paradox or contradiction” between universality and particularity (Walker 1990, 165). As Walker explains:

In the struggle to reconcile the claims of men and citizens, of a universalist account of humanity and a particularist account of political community, early-modern thought both affirmed the primacy of the particular-statist community, but also the individual- and attempted to legitimize accounts of political authority within particular communities through a reinterpretation and secularization of claims to universal reason and natural law (Walker 1993, 61)

In each case the notion of sovereignty was utilized in claims to the universal and the particular. Within the confines of the state, the notion of sovereignty is utilized in the particular claims of the individual Hobbesian “reasoning man” with the universal claim of authority by the institution of the state. Outside the boundary of the state, the notion of sovereignty is used in the universal claim of equality between states, which Walker suggests is in fact a particularistic claim because sovereignty is being asserted on behalf of a particular community found within a specified bounded territory (Walker 1993, 63). Therefore in an attempt to speak to new possibilities of political order which took into account universalistic claims of humanity and the particular claim of the reasoning man, the notion of sovereignty became associated with a discourse of difference.

This discourse of difference is best characterized by the series of dichotomies it perpetuates establishing “the decisive demarcation between inside and outside, between self and other, identity and difference, community and anarchy, that is constitutive of our modern understanding of political space” (Walker 1991, 456). Through its claim of sovereignty the state fosters an identity of a fixed notion of political life inside and outside of its boundaries- “affirm[ing] a clear sense of here and there” (Walker 1993, 174). Life inside the secure confines of the state (here) is characterized as the space where notions of freedom, peace, autonomy and enlightenment are possible; meanwhile, life outside (there) is “strange, mysterious or

threatening” and must be feared (Walker 1993, 174). Consequently, the discourse of difference establishes political identity (the defining element of who “we” are) as a particularistic notion achieved at the expense of the possibility of a universal political identity. In such a discourse defining who “we” are requires knowing what “we” are not – mainly “them.” When combined with the spatial boundaries of the state, the notion of sovereignty sustains the tension of the universal with the particular, the inside with the outside, and presence with absence. Thus the discourse of difference fosters the belief that only “within the secure confines of particular states, it becomes possible to aspire to the universal” (Walker, 1993, 177).

### ***Sovereignty and the State-As-Actor Model***

The state-as-actor model is one of the most prevalent concepts in international relations theory; and as its name suggests, the state-as-actor model asserts that the state is the sole legitimate actor on the international stage. Neorealism utilizes this model combined with a particular notion of sovereignty in its assertion that the state is the only “major actor” within the structure of international politics. While not expressly stating that the legitimacy of the state rests on the premise that the state is a sovereign entity, neorealism utilizes the conception of sovereignty to establish difference between “major actors” and all other actors (to be defined as non-state actors). This monopolistic claim to sovereignty, assigns the state an identity “whose existence, boundaries, identifying structures, constituencies, legitimations, interests, and capacities to make self-regarding decisions can be treated as given” (Ashley 1984, 238). From this premise, the sovereign state is not only granted preeminent status but is established as permanent, rational, and above reproach within the neorealist doctrine.

The post-structuralist argues that to speak of sovereignty is to speak of identity, both individually and collectively (in the form of a political community), by establishing the terms in

which “we” can be defined. As applied to the construct of the state, the notion of sovereignty works to “shape our understanding of what states are and what they do” by providing legitimacy, power, authority and order to political life through the definition and delineation of a very specific political community- the state (Walker 1991, 446). The demarcation of this particular community is only possible through the discourse of difference associated with the notion of sovereignty. For “once difference is assumed to be the simple opposite of identity, a theoretical universe of Manichean dualisms ensues” where the world can be understood and interpreted in terms such as “order versus justice; national interest versus human interest; international politics versus civil society; community versus anarchy” (Walker 1993, 123-124). As a result, the sovereign state has been established as the “primary constitutive principle of modern political life” continually in the process of reifying “the practices of state sovereignty” through the enforcement of geographical boundaries, legitimization of violence, and the demarcation of danger (Walker 1990, 159-160). These success of these practices are only possible once the “demarcation between inside and outside, self and other, identity and difference, community and anarchy” are secured, since once the outside is distinguishable “it is possible to affirm identities inside” (Walker 1991, 456). Likewise, “knowing identities inside, it is [now] possible to imagine the absences outside” (Walker 1991, 456). Thus, unable to conceive of or speak about, the existence of political identity amongst the absence of the outside, the sovereign state has assured its place as the only legitimate space for the possibility of the political within international relations discourse.

The sovereign state has come to represent the sole legitimate space for politics in modern international relations theory and is frequently used as a synonym for the political community. In part, this has been achieved through the usurpation both physically and discursively of the notion

of political community by the sovereign state. Physically, the geographic spatial delineation between states serves as a means of creating a physical barrier between a familiar here and a not so familiar there; as well as daily employing complex means through laws, institutions, and icons to foster a belief in a common identity within and an aberrant identity without. Discursively, through the use of what Richard Ashley terms the “heroic practice” (to be discussed later), a discourse is employed by which the sovereign state is established as the recognized “center” from which politics can be interpreted. The seizure of the notion of political community by the sovereign state, resulted in the notion of political community being assigned an identity of ethics, defined as an “achieved body of principles, norms and rules already codified in texts and traditions,” practices often ascribed to the institution of the state (Walker 1993, 50). Therefore, Walker argues that the sovereign state has come to represent “an historically specific account of ethical possibility in the form of an answer to questions about the nature and location of political community” (Walker 1993, 62). More simply, he suggests the answer to the possibilities of political community is now restricted to the confines of the sovereign state.

As a physical boundary, the sovereign state establishes difference as a means of maintaining legitimacy, power and authority – it creates a notion of common identity within and a “foreign” identity of those outside, it establishes the notion of security and order within the border from the danger lurking across the border. Within the confines of the state, the ability of a state to claim sovereignty (whether through the belief that as an “elected” government, or through the belief that the government has the approval of its citizens) establishes the authority of its institutions to create and enforce laws, maintain the national money supply, provide defense of the physical borders and/or the wage wars. Additionally, the sovereign state works to foster the notion of a shared identity culturally, through the establishment of a common heritage -

whether through the writing of a common history taught in schools, the reverence given to national icons such as the flag, anthem, and/or animal, or the continuation of national fables (for example, in the United States the story of George Washington chopping down a cherry tree)- which works to erase the appearance of difference or uniqueness within and emphasize the strangeness of others located outside. As such, the sovereign state is viewed as “an institution, container of all cultural meaning and site of sovereign jurisdiction over territory, property, and abstract space, and consequently over history, possibility and abstract time” (Walker 1991, 445).

Therefore, “framed within a spatial metaphysics of same and other,...the principle of state sovereignty expresses an ethics of absolute exclusion.... [which] denies the applicability of ethical principles beyond certain bounded space” (Walker 1993, 66). The assertion being that a political community exists only within the spatial boundary of the sovereign state – which establishes a “clear demarcation between life inside and outside a centered political community” (Walker 1993, 62). Thus, the sovereign state “affirms that the good life, guided by universal principles, can only occur within particularistic political communities” leaving no room for the establishment of an ethics necessary for the political community beyond the territorially bounded sovereign state (Walker 1993, 64). However, the state’s assertion of sovereignty does not solely rest on its preeminent claim to geographical space and brute force but also on its monopolistic claim to the political community. Through its claim over the political community, the sovereign state establishes itself as the only legitimate space where the practice of the political can occur. The space whereby particularistic and universal claims are navigated as “it [the sovereign state] alone, is able to allow the citizens of particular states to participate in a broader humanity” (Walker 1993, 151).

Through the utilization of a discursive construct, the “heroic practice,” the sovereign state within the international relations discourse is established as the rational center from which international politics can be explained. As such, the deployment of the heroic practice works to limit the notion of political identity to that of sovereign state – which is manifested through the construct of domestic society. Through the notion of domestic society, the state garners its legitimacy through the consent (implicitly or explicitly) of the sovereign Hobbesian “reasoning man” (Ashley 1995, 100). Therefore, the heroic practice “accord[s] ‘sovereignty’ to the state as an agency of action only on the condition that the transcendental foundations of man’s free, public, and universalizing use of reason are established as the fundamental of state conduct, the objective of state policy, and the ground of state legitimation” (Ashley 1995, 107). As such, the heroic practice deploys

a hierarchical opposition of sovereignty versus anarchy, where the former term is privileged as a regulative ideal. A heroic practice invokes this sovereign identity of truth and power as the regulative ideal and necessary origin of an already present state of domestic being (Ashley 1995, 103)

The “heroic practice” becomes the instrument deployed to establish the sovereign state as a “rational identity; a homogenous and continuous presence..., that has a unique center of decision presiding over a coherent ‘self’” (Ashley 1988, 230). Thus, the “heroic practice” creates the perception of homogeneity within the confines of the sovereign state as well as establishes the state as a hegemonic center of power which is capable of speaking as one voice on behalf of its citizens (Ashley 1988, 245). All the while, the “heroic practice” reinforces the boundaries within which the political can be practiced and where most explicitly it cannot (the anarchy existing outside of the sovereign state).

## *Sovereignty and International Political Order*

While the notion of sovereignty is constitutive of the state, it is the perennial lack of a singular sovereign entity that is constitutive of the international political order in international relations theory. As Hedley Bull wrote, “Whereas men within each state are subject to a common government, sovereign states in their mutual relations are not. This anarchy it is possible to regard as the central fact of international life” (Bull 1995, 75). Hence, the international political system is “defined both by the presence of sovereign states as primary actors and by the absence of a sovereign power/authority governing the system itself” (Walker 1991, 454). This discourse of presence and absence which has come to define the international political order can be attributed to the neorealist assertion of the sovereignty of the state. As discussed in the previous chapter, the notion of sovereignty is defined by a state’s ability to make decisions independently. Therefore, the assertion that the international political system consists of sovereign entities negates the possibility of the existence of an international political entity with over-arching authority over its sovereign members. Thus, “sovereignty is both constitutive of the system and a problem to be overcome” (Walker 1993, 172). As such, the concept of sovereignty provides the great juxtaposition of international political life – how is an international system based on competition between sovereign entities working to maintain their position within the system conducive to order and cooperation?

It is precisely this question that Richard Ashley aims to address in his work *Untying the Sovereign State* in which he suggests traditional international relations theory is being held hostage by the discourse of the “anarchy problematique,” which utilizing the “heroic practice” reinforces a dichotomy of difference to continually advocate the preservation of the status quo within the international system. Ashley argues that the “anarchy problematique” is a powerful

mode of discourse because it “obscures from view, and assumes to be solved... the problem of order in the absence of an order” (Ashley 1988, 229). In part, he suggests that the discourse of the anarchy problematique has positioned itself uniquely as both the premise for the question of international order in anarchic system, as well as claiming to provide the answer to the question it has posed. Observing that the international system lacks a “central agency of rule,” the discourse of the anarchy problematique resolves that the “structure of the world political authority may be understood to consist of a number of states and domestic societies, each an identical sovereign presence” (Ashley 1988, 229). More simply, the notion of sovereignty as uniquely and narrowly applied to the state within international relations theory, has resulted in the assertion of the fact of anarchy as the only acceptable form of order possible within the international political system.

The discourse of the anarchy problematique utilizes the concept of sovereignty to negate the possibility of international political order existing beyond the unmanageable interaction of sovereign states. As a result, the anarchy problematique fosters a discourse which is fascinated with the notion of co-operation and has limited the examination of international political life to that of how “regimes are constituted and changed through state decisions and actions” (Ashley 1988, 237). In particular, the discourse purports certain inter-related conceptions which work to limit the possibilities of the discourse. These conceptions include the establishment of a particular identity to the sovereign state, co-operation as an “instrumentalist relation,” the fact of anarchy, and the propensity of sovereignty over anarchy. As such, the anarchy problematique is deployed to “interpret ambiguous circumstances, impose meaning, discipline and exclude resistant interpretations, and participate in the construction of conditions, limits, dilemmas, and prevailing ways of knowing and doing that we take to be the familiar truths of global life”

(Ashley 1988, 228). Together the implications of the anarchy problematique have had far-reaching effects, not the least of which has been the perceived creation of a “foundation” for modern international relations theory which exists irrespective of theoretical perspective (realism or idealism). Exactly how the anarchy problematique has fostered a particular notion of international political order requires a more detailed examination of the conceptions fostered by the discourse.

The first conception of the anarchy problematique is the assignment of a particular identity to the state which establishes the state as sovereign and therefore limits the possibilities for international order. Ashley argues that the discourse of the anarchy problematique advances the construct of the state as an “identical decision-making subject presiding over a domestic society...[which is] uniquely structured and sharply bounded entity having an identity-and identifying interests-independent of the pluralistic contests of international life at large” (Ashley 1988, 236). The state is thus assigned the role of the homogenous rational center of political identity, resulting in an international political order which is limited to the sum of co-operation (or lack thereof) between states. Consisting of sovereign entities existing in a system of anarchy, international political life is limited to the interaction of sovereign states as it is preposterous to believe that states would give up some form of their sovereignty to a universal/international organization. Therefore, co-operation becomes the necessary tool of sovereign entities within the international political system. The second conception produced by the discourse of the anarchy problematique is a particular notion of co-operation which Ashley argues is limited to that of “instrumentalist relation[s]” (Ashley 1988, 236). Co-operation understood as such, results in the assertion that co-operation in international politics results in “courses of action that are advantageous for other actors” (Ashley 1988, 236). This “narrow” understanding of co-operation

Ashley claims does not consider the effects of social collaboration which result in political interaction because the discourse of the anarchy problematique fosters a particular notion of the state as a “singular decision-making agency” with a predetermined set of interests which excludes the possibility of other forms of interactions and interests within international political life (Ashley 1988, 235-236).

The third conception fostered by the discourse of the anarchy problematique is the assertion of the fact of anarchy. As such, the notion of anarchy represents a peculiar situation of international political life “characterized by a presence and an absence” (Ashley 1988, 236). As should be evident by now, the presence to which Ashley is referring is the existence of sovereign states and the absence is the lack of a central universal authority within the international political system. This juxtaposition of presence and absence within international political life, Ashley argues prevents the assertion of “a lasting co-operative order...as if by grand design” (Ashley 1988, 236-237). Instead, Ashley argues that any form of lasting international co-operative order is not possible without the establishing a “matrix of shared expectations” by which cooperation is viewed as a pragmatic option whereby collaboration between states provides the means to meeting the self-interests of each individual state (Ashley 1988, 237). Therefore in a system of anarchy, international political life becomes limited to how co-operation between sovereign entities is achieved through the building, maintaining, challenging and changing of alliances (or regimes as Ashley refers to them). Thus, the discourse of the anarchy problematique fosters a particular discourse limited to the decisions and interactions of states. Therefore, while the existence of sovereign entities prevents a single overarching international political authority, the discourse of the anarchy problematique asserts that order can only be obtained through the sovereign state.

Lastly, the triumph of the anarchy problematique as the singular mode of discourse in international relations theory relies on the successful deployment of the “heroic practice.” As has already been established, the “heroic practice” is the idea that sovereignty and anarchy are discursively pitted against each other as polar opposites, with sovereignty being the preferred outcome (Ashley 1988, 229-230). The previous discussion of the heroic practice focused on its use of sovereignty to establish the state as a rational identity and ‘center’ for inquiries. However, the heroic practice also functions as the ordering principle of the international political structure. In its privileging of sovereignty, the heroic practice appeals to a fear of anarchy by establishing

the real historical presence of domestic being in opposition to a fearsome time and place of ambiguity, contingency, and chance where conflicts of interpretation are intrinsically undecidable- a region of conduct where the sovereign truth is not reliably honored but put in question” (Ashley 1995, 103)

Therefore, Ashley argues that through the construct of the heroic practice, the discourse of the anarchy problematique “must ‘find’ the state to be a pure presence already in place, an unproblematic rational presence..., a sovereign identity that is the self-sufficient source of international history’s meaning” (Ashley 1988, 231). The result is the notion of anarchy becomes a line of demarcation for life outside the confines of the sovereign state, signifying chaos, danger, unfamiliarity and differentness. Thus the international political order becomes defined in terms of this conflict between the sovereign state and the anarchy of international society. This constant tension between anarchy and sovereignty in turn fosters a discourse of dichotomy which is spoken of in terms such as either/or, inside/outside, and absence/presence- this is the discourse of the anarchy problematique. Consequently, the anarchy problematique is attractive as a mode of discourse because it appears to accurately describe and explain the current world political order; it is through the prism of this singular discourse that all interpretations of international political life are expressed.

### *The Post-Structuralist Perspective*

Emerging in the 1980's, the post-structuralist movement not only challenged long held assumptions of international relations theory but also confronted the way in which the discourse's use of these assumptions limited its ability to address the possibilities of political community and international order. Ashley and Walker differentiated themselves from other inquires in that their concern was not to make a particular theory fit the observable world- as the neorealist turn had attempted to shore up the perceived faults of realism's applicability to an ever changing world. Instead, their aim was to open up international relations theory to new investigations and a more deliberate discourse.

In so doing, Ashley and Walker aimed to challenge a neorealist discourse which "assumes a fixed structure of international anarchy" (Ashley 1988, 262), "freezes the political institutions of the current world order," and renders "absolute the autonomy of technical rationality as the organ of social progress" (Ashley 1984, 257). For Ashley, this meant fostering a discourse that deconstructed the notion of the sovereign state through the disassociation of the two concepts; meanwhile, confronting the privileged status of sovereignty over anarchy within international relations theory. Similarly, Walker aimed to expand the discourse beyond the barriers of a fixed political identity rooted in a particular spatial/temporal composition, by challenging the way in which the notion of sovereignty is used to foster political identity as an either/or, inside/outside, here/there juxtaposition.

The post-structuralist critique is ultimately concerned with the way in which the privileged use of sovereignty has fostered a particular discourse which is not only self-affirming and self-enclosed but limits the possibilities of the nature and location of the political community. The result it is argued is a tradition which is wedded to the notion of the sovereign state and the fact

of anarchy as the constitutive principles of international relations theory. However, the post-structuralist critique aims to challenge the assertions behind these assumptions- mainly the privileging of sovereignty over anarchy, the state as a rational self-evident reality, the state as the sole legitimate form of political community, and the creation of a closed space both physically-discursively. They argue through a critical examination of these assertions, the preeminent role of sovereignty as an uncontested notion within international relations theory will be shown to be a fallacy. The aim is to demonstrate through the use of deconstruction that the “knowledgeable practices,” which are used to establish meaning and reinforce the concept of the sovereign state, will be exposed as problematic and conditional (Ashley 1988, 228-229).

Ashley demonstrates in his discussion of the discourse of the “anarchy problematique” that the predilection of sovereignty over anarchy serves as an imposing framework from which examinations of international relations theory must submit to a particular discourse of difference and negation. He suggests that the discourse is “compelling...as a description of self-evident dilemma of collaboration and institution building...[which] is powerful because it is understood as an ineluctable consequence of a single indisputable fact of international life, namely, the absence of a centre of global rule” (Ashley 1988, 238-239). Luckily, the discourse claims to provide the answer to this dilemma in the assertion of “a sovereign presence as a principle of interpretation that makes it possible to discipline the understanding of ambiguous events and impose a distinction” (Ashley 1988, 230). However, Ashley confronts the notion that a successful discourse requires a foundational truth, a centered perspective from which all examinations must begin, and instead advocates a new form of examination which at all times treats the foundations of a discourse as problematic.

Achieving this new discourse requires the use of a dialogical interpretation of international political order which does

not honour the interpretive rule that valid reading must come to rest in a sovereign principle of interpretation...[but instead] it explores how the ongoing 'surface' conversations of a theoretical discourse work within a rich, ambiguous, and indeterminate history to effect the objective ground they presuppose and, at the same time, potentially contribute to its undoing (Ashley 1988, 243)

As such, the dialogical interpretation abandons the use of the heroic practice as a "deep structure-something autonomous, [and] originary;" instead it recognizes the heroic practice as a "knowledgeable practice...which [is] replicated in a wide variety of ambiguous and indeterminate sites to discipline interpretation, fix meanings,[and] impose boundaries" (Ashley 1988, 243). Understood as a practice and no longer a fixed structure, the success of the heroic practice lies in its ability to daily impose the boundary between sovereignty and anarchy both physically and discursively. However, Ashley suggests that the heroic practice is no longer able to impose these boundaries and therefore is ineffective as a means for "disciplining what people know and do" (Ashley 1988, 243-244). The most prominent example of the failing of the heroic practice and the anarchy problematique is demonstrated by the way in which the discourse has attempted to include non-state actors.

Even Waltz was willing to acknowledge the existence of the non-state actor in international politics; however, the non-state actor poses a significant problem for those theorists who hold strongly to a statist interpretation of international political order. As was witnessed in Waltz's account of international political order, non-state actors are granted an existence of conditionality- a conditionality based on the desires and actions sovereign states. Ashley argues that the anarchy problematique has attempted to address the challenges to authority and order posed by the acknowledgement of the non-state actor by allowing for the possibility of non-state actors as sovereign beings. However, he argues that this requires the "redeployment of the heroic

practice to accommodate other modes of sovereign being...in effect, the state becomes a sovereign presence among sovereign presences” (Ashley 1988, 245). This “turn” however, “threatens the representation of the state as a well-bounded rational unity and agency of reasoning action” (Ashley 1988, 248). Ashley explains that the state as a sovereign presence and claim to a sovereign identity requires establishing a distinction between the domestic ‘inside’ and the international ‘outside.’

Achieving this distinction requires that the state demonstrate that it can effectively quell difference internally through an appeal to a national will while simultaneously demonstrating it is capable of mobilizing resources in defense and pursuit of this national will (Ashley 1988, 248). As a result, the boundary between inside and outside is differentiated by those practices which are capable of being “subordinated to a singular hegemonic centre (the domains of the domestic) and those that are not (the international)” (Ashley 1988, 248). However Ashley argues that if non-state actors are to be granted the status of a sovereign presence, then “all claims regarding state interests and state means are intrinsically disputed” and the boundaries of the state become uncertain (Ashley 1988, 249). In essence, it becomes impossible to clearly define the state as a permanent structure. Ashley suggests that the inclusion of the non-state actor as a sovereign entity has resulted in the destabilization of the notion of the sovereign state a “well-bounded sovereign identity” (Ashley 1988, 250-251). The consequence of which is the representation of the sovereign state as nothing more than an “arbitrary” construct which is only conceivable through the “political exclusion of others” (Ashley 1988, 251).

Thus through the use of deconstruction, Ashley claims he has been able to demonstrate that the hard core of international relations theory can no longer be treated as “foundational, given, and prior to the interpretation of political problems of global collaboration” (Ashley 1988,

251). Instead, he argues a dialogical reading fosters a discourse in which there is never any foundational truth but rather a continuing discourse of inquiries and questions. Through a continual process of investigation Ashley argues that observers are now able to take into account the way in which history, circumstance, boundaries and practices are utilized in forming, limiting and dispersing a particular discourse. No longer limited to a particular foundational truth, he suggests observers are able to explore ways in which “practices might be resisted or disabled; boundaries might be put in doubt and transgressed; representations might be subverted;...new connections among diverse cultural elements might become possible” with the hope of establishing “new ways of thinking and doing global politics” (Ashley 1988, 254).

Similarly, Walker argues that traditional international relations theory propagates a static discourse through its assertion of the sovereign state as a fixed point “of identity- a universality in space and time-against which all differences in space and time can be measured, judged, and put in their place” (Walker 1993, 175). Therefore, the sovereign state represents the codification of an historically specific account of space and time within the discourse whereby the notion of sovereignty provides the “legal expression of the character and legitimacy of the state” (Walker 1993, 165). As such, the notion of state sovereignty “expresses the claim by states to exercise legitimate power within strictly delimited territorial boundaries... [which] stands in ambiguous relation to the claims about power and authority” (Walker 1993, 165). Despite this ambiguous relationship, such notions as “power, legitimacy and supreme authority” have been fused with the concept of the sovereign state promoting the assertion that the sovereign state is the only entity by which these notions (power, etc) can be vested (Walker 1993, 165). As a result, Walker concludes that these assertions require that all discourse of international relations be limited to the inquiry and interaction of sovereign states. However, Walker argues that the notion

of state sovereignty needs to be understood not as the cornerstone of political identity but rather “only one expression” of the principle of a sovereign identity in order that other forms of political identity could be explored.

This requires understanding the way in which sovereignty and the notion of state sovereignty are utilized not only in reinforcing the need for physical borders, but also how it effects the way in which borders are thought of as a particular “delineation of political possibility in both space and time” (Walker 1993, 175). As such, Walker argues that “the principle of state sovereignty organizes this historically specific resolution into a spatially differentiated double contradiction or dialectic” which reproduces a discourse of difference where identity is only established through terms such as same and other, inside and outside, here and there (Walker 1990, 175). What has resulted, is “an explicitly normative account of how the world must be, a way of constructing empirical evidence on the basis of prior assumptions about how lines are to be drawn through messy appearances and contested subjectivities” (Walker 1993, 180).

Culminating with a notion of the sovereign state which serves not only as the center from which all inquiries of international relations begin but also as a discursive restraint on the possibilities of political community within international relations theory. Therefore, the discourse of international politics is unable to address issues of class, gender, cultural or social similarities and differences which may exist outside of the national identity of the state.

However, Walker suggests that the discourse of international relations theory does not have to be beholden to the notion of the sovereign state arguing that as an “historically constituted form of community, one that has been subject to considerable variation across time and space, the state does not have to be analysed in terms of the metaphysics of presence and absence demanded by the principle of state sovereignty” (Walker 1993, 77). Instead the

discourse must acknowledge that “claims about state sovereignty, [are] claims that express a specifically modern aesthetics and ethics as much as they express a specifically modern understanding of reality and of how that reality might be known” (Walker, 1991, 446). Only once the sovereign state is understood as a construct of history and happenstance within the discourse, the notion of the sovereignty of the state becomes something which is contingent, contestable and temporary. Therefore, Walker suggests that in order for international relations theory to remain relevant, theory must be able to take into account “the possibility of a world politics” which requires a reevaluation of the necessity of the discursive “Other” as the means for establishing identity and the utilization of the notion of sovereignty within international relation theory. Only if the international political theory community is able to discursively abandon the restraints of the sovereignty of the state as both the foundation from which all inquiry begins and as the sole source of political identity, will it become possible to speak to new possibilities of political community and international order.

### ***Assessment of the Post-Structuralist Movement***

The legacy of post-structuralism is not one of success or failure but rather an ongoing process of mixed outcomes. As a mode of discourse with the aim of opening up the international relations discourse to possibilities of political community and organization beyond the sovereign state, the post-structuralist movement can largely be credited with the forging the way for the emergence of the subfield of geo-politics within the political science community. However, the geo-political discourse (as will be briefly discussed below) is a practical discourse and does not as a mode of inquiry examine the theoretical and discursive critique put forth by the post-structuralist argument. This may in fact, be the great irony of the post-structuralist movement – that a great silence exists both in affirmation and in dissent of the post-structuralist critique

fostering the existence of a body of work which is simultaneously acknowledged and forgotten at the same time.

In its questioning of the discourse's singular notion of political community and international organization, the post-structuralist movement made way for the practical examinations of geo-politics. The geo-political field examines the practicalities of how "historical-geographical contexts condition the possibility of different kinds of knowledge-seeking, and limit exploration of the ideas that can be used in that task" (Agnew 2002, 12). Similarly, the geo-political discourse fosters a practical discussion of the way in which modern and/or postmodern conditions such as economic and technological advancements have produced an international system that must address and maybe even redefine the "roles of territory, boundary, spheres of influence, ethnic geographies and place-based politics" (Agnew 2002, 24). As such, a certain segment of geo-politics focuses on the practical examinations of how the "geographical distribution of power ... relates to other geographies such as those of ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation, and how these geographies produce the politics of identity and interests" (Agnew 2002, 44). In many ways, it can be argued that part of the discourse of geo-politics, among other things, is the acknowledgement and examination of social/cultural interactions which influence the concept of political identity – a form of discourse long excluded from international relations theory.

This opening up, if you will, of the discourse has resulted in a discourse which has come to challenge the foundational assertion of the sovereign state and an international political order consisting of sovereign states. As Agnew suggests, geo-politics has fostered a discourse that recognizes that the "image of a 'fixed' territoriality to political organization can no longer be taken for granted. This has encouraged...speculation about the limitation or displacement of state

sovereignty as a governing principle of international relations” (Agnew 2002, 112). However, despite the best intentions, the geo-political discourse of Agnew and others, operate within the confines of the discursive constraints of the state. As a result, a critical form of geo-politics has emerged which attempts to shed the discursive restraints of the state. Geariod O Tuathail explains: “In contrast to a modern geopolitical imagination dominated by state centric spatiality (bordered, sovereign, territorially delimited states) the post-modern geopolitical imagination grapples with the borderlessness, state failure, and deterritorialisation” (O Tuathail 1999, 18). In so doing, the critical discourse of geo-politics aims to examine how certain practices create “conceptual spatializations of identity, nationhood and danger manifest themselves” within states work collaboratively produce “certain political, social and physical geographies” to form particular identities expressed in the forms of self and other, inside and outside, danger and security (O Tuathail and Dalby 1998, 4). This critical form of discourse is more closely in line with the discourse which the post-structuralist critique aimed to foster.

While the discourses that have emerged since the post-structuralist critique of the 1980’s address the practical issues of the assertion of the sovereign state and the effects of its existence, little has emerged within the political theory community with regard to the exploration of a theory of international politics which does not assume the centered foundation of the sovereign state. Of notable exception is Bruno Latour’s *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, in which he envisions a society of humans and nonhumans interacting as a collective society which does not exist as singular entity but rather as a dynamic society of members which are constantly shifting and changing. However beyond the work of Latour, the political science community has largely remained silent with regard to the acceptance or the rejection of the post-structuralist critique.

Throughout the years this silence has resulted in an all but forgotten critical discourse within the political science community. Through its use of deconstruction, post-structuralism in effect “takes what is claimed to be authoritative, logical, and universal and breaks them down, exposing arbitrariness, ambiguity, and conventionality...exposing a power phenomenon where it is claimed only reason existed” (White 1988, 188). The resulting discourse is one of perpetual questions rather than resolutions, assertions, or self-evident facts, which does not lend itself to the establishment of a grounded center, a unifying point of departure, from which a singular dominant discourse can emerge. In this way, post-structuralism requires that discourse be dynamic which at all times is concerned with the way in which a particular concept is “simultaneously and necessarily create and marginalize an Other” (White 1988, 196). However, the dynamic aspect of the post-structuralist discourse has proven too much for the main-stream theorist who aims to explain the world around them through foundational truths and self-evident facts. For this reason, while concepts that have emerged from the post-structuralist critique (such as those issues addressed in the geo-political subfield) have resulted in new practical explorations, explorations into the theoretical possibilities of a discourse of international politics which does not conform to the discourse of the sovereign state is largely deemed as an abstract undertaking. As a result, international relations theory (in particular realism/neorealism) continues to be dominated by the discursive restraints of the sovereign state not only as the primary actor in international politics but also as the embodiment of the political community.

## **CHAPTER 4: Neorealism, Political Community & Discourses**

Thus far it has been argued that the neorealist conception of the sovereign state fosters a singular concept of political community which does not allow for the possibility of alternate forms of political community outside the confines of the state. However, in the “highly complex global system” of postmodernity “states are nevertheless bound in webs of transactions and organizations that restrict their [the states] theoretical freedom to make unilateral decisions” (Camilleri 1990, 28). At the same time technological advancements, globalization, and economic progress has fostered the emergence of economic, cultural, and social networks which increasingly do not include the apparatus of the state and have objectives separate from and sometimes contrary to those of the state. The development of these new types of associations suggests that new forms of political community are not only possible but already exist as “formal authority continues to be vested in the governments of nation-states, ... effective authority- moral, customary and even coercive authority- is [becoming] widely dispersed” (Camilleri 1990, 28). Unfortunately, the continued privileging of the sovereign state in international relations theory not only constrains the discourse’s ability to address these new forms of political community but also limits the foreign policy choices of those in power. As such, it is time that the political theory community address the need for new modes of discourse which can speak to and about the many possibilities of political community.

### ***Challenges to the Sovereign State as Political Community***

The notion of the political, the legitimate space where politics is to be practiced, is part of a “great tradition of Western political theory” which celebrates “the polis, the centered political community, as the model of proper political life” (Walker 1991, 451). It is the space, in which particular and universal interests were navigated in the aim of achieving, as Aristotle wrote, “the

good for man” (Aristotle 1999, 4). However, as previously discussed, the emergence of the sovereign state and the vesting of the political community in the construct of the state were the result of a reactionary attempt to construct a society outside of the universalistic notions of the church. From this tradition, a definition of the political emerges which is defined by an existence of ethics characterized as an “achieved body of principles, norms and rules” and demarcated by the geographic boundaries (Walker 1993, 50). As a result, the political community became synonymous with the sovereign state and propagated through a discourse of difference.

The discourse of difference (as discussed in the previous chapter) is best characterized by the series of dichotomies it perpetuates establishing “the decisive demarcation between inside and outside, between self and other, identity and difference, community and anarchy, that is constitutive of our modern understanding of political space” (Walker 1991, 456). Now applicable to the notion of political community and “framed within a spatial metaphysics of same and other,...the principle of state sovereignty expresses an ethics of absolute exclusion...that denies the applicability of ethical principles beyond certain bounded space” (Walker 1993, 66). As such, the sovereign state becomes the only legitimate place in which the ethics needed for the creation of political community may exist. Now limited to the temporal and spatial confines of the construct of the sovereign state, the political community is defined by a dichotomous discourse of inclusion and exclusion whereby commonalities are established, relationships forged, rights constituted, and collective goals are all to be executed within the confines of territorially bounded space. Through the use of the discourse of difference the “inside” (existing within the confines of the sovereign state) is established as the only appropriate place for the exercise of the political and “the outside comes to be understood as the place where political community...is impossible” (Walker 1993, 37).

Yet, the discourse of difference used to foster a sense of belonging (identity) to a specific political community tied to a geographic space seems irrelevant as a result of the acceleration of time and space that has come to define postmodernity. Distinguished from other historical periods in which technological advancements have led to increased interaction, the postmodern era is defined by the “fast, interdependent spread of open society, open economy, and open technology infrastructures” often association with globalization; therefore, it is not the interconnectedness that distinguishes the postmodern era but rather the level of which interconnectedness is achieved through the “speed, reach, intensity, cost and impacts of the current period” (Love 2003, 2). Individuals and goods are able to cross borders in a matter of hours, the exchange of money and ideas can be conducted instantaneously and from various locations, and business services (such as consulting, data processing, or customer support functions) can be provided irrespective of physical location. These examples demonstrate the way in which technological and economic progress “have accelerated changes in the ways people, places and states interact and how economic and political actors perceive these interactions. States (and others) must now manage these interactions...., [as they are] being rapidly challenged by new spaces of networks and flows in which speed and access are more important than command over territory” (Agnew 1998, 58).

Within this context, the postmodern era is marked by the “contemporary struggles for particular identities [which] occur in the context of reiterated claims about the forging of a common identity, of a sense of connection in some shared enterprise of production, distribution and exchange, ... or as a universalizing cultural condition” (Walker 1991, 445). As such, new identities are being forged as citizens of sovereign states are now able to identify and associate as individuals with a larger global community – for example citizens from the United States,

France, South Africa and Australia are now able to share common interests and foster shared experiences despite geographic separation. As individuals choose to organize and act politically as collective groups around common interests or experiences across sovereign borders new political communities are being constructed which exist beyond the boundaries of the state. The formation of these political communities “articulate new ways of experiencing life, a new attitude to time and space, [and] a new sense of history and identity” (Camilleri 1990, 36), demonstrating the way in which the “operation and legitimacy of sovereignty [vested in the state] are being undermined by both external and internal dynamics” (Love 2003, 14).

No where are the challenges to the singular notion of political community and the sovereign state more prevalent than in the presence of the non-state actor within international politics. Possessing no sovereign territory of their own and often acting within and across sovereign boundaries, non-state actors each possess their own interests, ambitions, and constituencies. They can include a wide variation of associations from multinational organizations (the United Nations), non-governmental organizations (the International Red Cross), and multi-national corporations (Nike), to less formal types of associations such as private social and environmental issue groups (Doctors Without Borders), separatist movements (the Basque’s in Spain) and terrorist organizations (Al-Qaeda). Through their efforts non-state actors have not only worked to raise global awareness of humanitarian, ecological and environmental problems (such as genocide, the treatment of refugees and oppressed people, crop failure, and pollution), but they have also asserted themselves as political actors that are responsible for preventing or rectify these injustices. As such, the non-state actor primarily functions in support of or to “oppose this or that activity ...or to pursue objectives that transcend

political boundaries” which often are in conflict with the particular interests of a sovereign state (Agnew, Mitchell, and Toal 2003, 2).

Consequently, the non-state actor challenges three long-held assumptions about the sovereign state as political community: (1) the “notion that political authority is exercised exclusively or even primarily within clearly demarcated territorial boundaries”; (2) the belief that “within its territory the state’s authority is unlimited and indivisible”; (3) and it “suggest[s] a growing disjunction between state and civil society, between political authority and economic organization, between cultural identification and social cohesion” (Camilleri 1990, 29). Yet despite acknowledgement of the technological advancements which have opened lines of communication and commerce beyond the traditional avenues of the state, and the new forms of social and cultural associations being established across geographic boundaries, the neorealist discourse requires that the political community continued to be enclosed within the confines of the sovereign state. As such, the nature and location of the political community is continually being contested as it is becoming increasingly difficult to divide the world into compartmentalized spaces of “here” and “there” or “inside” and “outside” dictated by the discourse of difference.

### ***Limitations of Neorealist Foreign Policy***

As the basic framework of international relations theory, neorealism is inadequately prepared to address modern day issues which often challenge the long-established notions of the primacy and sovereignty of the state in international affairs. Unfortunately for a generation of policy makers, the neorealist doctrine provides the perspective from which they approach the formulation and execution of policy. As demonstrated through Waltz’s theory of international politics, the neorealist doctrine has three main assertions: first, the state is the only major actor

on the international scene and while other actors do exist, their ability to act is conditional based on the implicit and/or explicit permission of the state; secondly, the state is a sovereign entity; and lastly, in the anarchic international system predicated a system of self-help whereby security is the ultimate ends of the state. These main assertions have not only served as the foundation for the neorealist discourse but they have also established the parameters of research programs within the broader field of international relations – which have focused primarily on issues pertaining to the balances of power within the international community, and the security and primacy of the state. However in the changing political landscape of non-state actors and humanitarian, economic, and environmental crises which reach across sovereign borders, current policy makers struggle to respond to global events such as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States, the genocide occurring in Darfur, or the recent conflicts between Israel and neighboring territories of Gaza (in 2008/9) and Lebanon (in 2006).

One of the most significant challenges facing policymakers' ability to address modern day issues is the notion of the sovereignty and primacy of the state. Within international relations theory the concept of sovereignty works to foster a particular identity of the state while simultaneously affording rights to the sovereign state at the exclusion of other actors. The most prominent of these rights are autonomy and reciprocity. Within the international community the right to autonomy is defined as the freedom of the state to “decide for itself how it will cope with its internal and external problems” (Waltz 1979, 96); while the right of reciprocity is established as “the right to exercise exclusive political authority within territorial limits” (Wendt 1995, 150). At first glance, these definitions may appear identical; however, the right of reciprocity “constitute[s] a spatially rather than functionally differentiated world—a world in which fields of practice are constitute and are organized around ‘domestic’ and ‘international’ spaces rather than

around the performance of particular activities” (Wendt 1995, 150). Therefore, the right of reciprocity places precedence over the location (within a sovereign territory) of an action over the action itself. To clearly summarize, through the assertion of sovereignty, states are attributed certain rights. The right of autonomy affords the state the freedom to make decisions independently, while the right to reciprocity establishes the state’s freedom to act within its established geographic boundaries. Thus, in their claim to sovereignty states interactions are based in part on the notion that they are able to act as they want within their borders and without interference from other states. However, the claim of reciprocity and autonomy proves troublesome when states are confronted with humanitarian, economic and environmental crises. In these situations, often times states are confronted with the choice of intervening within the sovereign borders of another state (thereby violating a state’s autonomy and risking the invalidating the right of reciprocity for themselves in the future) or choosing not to act and allowing what they (and maybe others) deem to be atrocities occur- genocide as seen in Rwanda and Bosnia is but one example of this type of situations.

Another practical problem the neorealist doctrine poses to policymakers is that it does not expressly say how a geographic space is determined to be a sovereign state – it just posits that states exist and they are sovereign. This provides an interesting dilemma for policymakers as they try to determine what constitutes the existence or demise of a state within the international system. One observer demonstrates the process of acceptance into the international community stating:

Sovereign states have four characteristics, three of which are negotiable: territory, population, a government with control over the territory and population, and international recognition. In practice, only international recognition is non-negotiable. If a political entity has territory, population, and a government but lacks international recognition, then it is not considered a sovereign state; the Palestinian Authority is one example. Once a state is internationally recognized,

such as Somalia, it does not matter if it lacks a government with the ability to control the territory or population (Love 2003, 3)

Therefore, recognition by other states within the international system constitutes the only means to gain entrance into the system. As such, policymakers must now decide what constitutes recognition into the international system. Is it the acknowledgement by all current states in the system or just some? What about if disagreement exists between current states about the acceptance of a new state?

For example, the modern day issue of Taiwan where the People's Republic of China does not recognize the island of Taiwan to be as a sovereign state and takes issue with other states who support Taiwan's entrance into the international community as sovereign entity. The particular case of Taiwan has proved challenging for policymakers in the United States in particular as they carefully negotiate interactions with both entities. Unfortunately, the neorealist doctrine provides policymakers no guidance on such situations. Furthermore, because entrance into the system is done by international recognition the state as actor model does not allow for consideration of those particular interests of the local community that might be at odds with a more universal interest outside of the geographic bounds of the state (for example secession or independence movements). As Walker argues "claims about state sovereignty suggest permanence...governments and regimes come and go, but sovereign states, these claims suggest, go on forever" (Walker 1993, 166). This proves challenging for independence and secession movements within sovereign territories which look to the international system to grant them access.

Lastly, a commitment to neorealist principles requires a commitment to an international system of states, for states and by states, where no real diplomatic mechanisms exist to address non-state actors that seek direct interaction with states. As has been established, non-state actors

exist in many forms and can range from non-governmental organizations, and multi-national corporations, to terrorist organizations. However, unlike disputes between states where the state can utilize certain tools (such as economic sanctions, military action, or appealing to the broader international community of states for consensus) to obtain resolution or convey dissatisfaction, states often lack the ability to utilize these same tools to effect the actions of non-state actors. One of the challenges that non-state actors pose is that while they are physically located within the borders of sovereign territory they often are not sanctioned by the governments of the sovereign territory they inhabit. This applies particularly to terrorist organizations and separatist movements where policymakers struggle find ways to respond when such organizations have carried out acts of violence against sovereign states.

Interestingly, the response by sovereign states (in particular the United States) when acts of violence have been carried out against them highlights the difficulty such non-state actors pose. For example, in 1998 the United States bombing of terrorist sites in Afghanistan and Sudan in retaliation for terrorist attacks against U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania earlier that year demonstrates the decision by policymakers to violate the sovereignty of established states in order to pursue a non-state actor. The other challenge that non-state actors pose, is that the interests of non-state actors may cross geographic boundaries or may not be aligned with the interests of the sovereign state. Therefore as non-state actors “become mobilized...policy makers find their tasks complicated because they must address and coordinate the interests of additional groups. Domestic labor, environmental and industry groups mobilize for international discussions of acid rain, for example” (Love 2003, 9).

The challenge facing policymakers educated during the predominance of neorealism is that many of the current problems faced by governments today do not solely involve relations

between sovereign states or issues of security. However, the neorealist assertions of the primacy of the state (the state-as-actor model) as well as the sovereignty of the state have significantly limited the ability of policymakers to successfully enact foreign policy which adequately addresses the issues raised by the changing political landscape of the twenty-first century. For this reason, challenges facing the relevancy of international relations theory within the foreign policy community are rooted in the discursive constraints of neorealist theory.

### ***The Importance of Discourse***

The discussion thus far has attempted to demonstrate that the predominant discourse of international relations theory needs to move beyond the notion of sovereignty as the necessary component for legitimization within the international community. The aim of this analysis is to create a renewed interest in post-structuralist critique which aimed to foster new discourses to examine other possibilities of political community and international interaction not necessitated by the construct of the sovereign state. In order to understand what's at stake for the post-structuralist critique as exemplified through the works of Richard Ashley and R.B.J. Walker a more general discussion needs to be addressed about the importance of discourse and what most decidedly a post-structuralist discourse of international relations theory is not.

The international relations post-structuralist critique of Ashley and Walker has its foundational roots in the more general theory of post-structuralism most commonly associated with the works of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Post-structuralism is most often defined by its concern for discourse as a means to transmit particular understandings, influence behavior and inform other discourses. Particularly relevant to the post-structuralist critique is Foucault's appreciation of discourse as a form of "knowledge/power." In Foucault's theory of discourse he argues that power is not a stagnate set of principles or authority centralized in one person, place,

or institution, but instead power was the result of a complex web of relations. For this reason, he uses the term power relations in lieu of power; because he asserts that power relations are established through the multiplicity of discourses coming “from below” (Foucault 1990, 94). Foucault had a particular understanding of power as something that was “neither given, nor exchanged, nor recovered, but rather exercised, and that it only exists in action” (Foucault 1972, 89). As such, it was not just the location of power relations that interested Foucault but recognition of the means in which power relations were exercised through simultaneous discourses and practices to foster a particular form of power/knowledge that disciplines everyday practices in society. Therefore as something that is exercised and emanates from multiple places Foucault’s conception of power requires “we must understand power . . . , namely as a slowly spreading net of normalization that invades our language, our institutions, and even (and especially) our consciousness of our ourselves as subjects” (White 1988, 190). Power is thus made “tolerable” through its ability to become normal, by “mask[ing]” itself and “hid[ing] its own mechanisms” (Foucault 1990, 86) which it does through the “production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of discourse” (Foucault 1972, 93).

In the same manner, the post-structuralist critique examines the way in which neorealist concepts are “put in the discourse,” become unexamined foundational truths, and actively reinforce the legitimacy of status quo. In so doing, the post-structuralist aspires to new ways of speaking about international politics outside of the discursive structure of difference imposed by neorealist theory. Understanding the objectives of the post-structuralist critique requires an understanding of what post-structuralism is not. The post-structuralist critique is a rejection of everything that neorealism claims to possess, mainly “a well-bounded sovereign identity possessing its own ‘internal’ hegemonic centre of decision capable of reconciling ‘internal’

conflicts and capable, therefore, of projecting a singular presence, a coherent voice in the ambiguous and polyvocal world ‘outside’ its recognized bounds” (Ashley 1988, 245). As such, neorealism claims to possess an ahistorical, permanent, and centered foundation from which theories of international relations can be derived. In repudiation of neorealist aspirations and assertions, the post-structuralist critique establishes itself as theory that is not

an exercise in the discovery or recovery of an identity, an origin, or a deep essence behind and ordering the manifest differences on the surface of human experience...[nor is it] an attempt to penetrate superficial and distorted understandings of a manifestly fragmented, conflictful, and violent international sphere, thus to disclose some essential unity, some ordering principles, some firm foundations secreted in repressed or forgotten realms (Ashley 1987, 407)

Dispelling all notions of the possibility of a fixed identity, the aim of the post-structuralist critique is to “open up” the discourse to be able to speak to and about new forms of political community through demonstrating the historicity and politicality of earlier conceptions of political community.

To achieve these aims, the post-structuralist employs the technique of deconstruction which Ashley argues “appeals to a discourse’s own terms to show how it undermines, undoes and displaces its own central and certain voices” (Ashley 1988, 251). Through the use of deconstruction all concepts become problematic as the process of deconstruction takes “what is claimed to be authoritative, logical, and universal and breaks them down, exposing arbitrariness, ambiguity, and conventionality...exposing a power phenomenon where it is claimed only reason existed” (White 1988, 188). The end result of which is what Ashley calls a dialogical interpretation of international relations theory which “explores how the ongoing ‘surface’ conversations of a theoretical discourse work within a rich, ambiguous, and indeterminate history to effect the objective ground they presuppose, at the same time, potentially contribute to its

undoing” (Ashley, 1988, 243). Thus, through the use of deconstruction the dialogical interpretation renders at all times the supposed foundational truths of a discourse problematic.

Foucault described discourse as something that “transmits and produces power” while at the same time able works to “undermine,” “expose” and “thwart” power (Foucault 1990, 101). However in the case of the neorealist discourse, its central tenants have been entered into the discourse as notions which exist independently of and prior to the theory; and therefore not capable of being critically examined. This has led the post-structuralist critique to assert that neorealism is a “self-enclosed, self-affirming joining of statist, utilitarian, positivist, and structural commitments” which has resulted in “the rationalization of global politics” (Ashley 1984, 258). As a result, there appears no possibility of the emergence of an opposing discourse which does not utilize the neorealist assertions of the sovereign state and the fact of anarchy, for example; accordingly, these neorealist assertions do not appear able to be undermined, exposed, or thwarted. Therefore, the continued predominance of the neorealist discourse exists not only in its discursive authority but in the way in which it “appeals to, replicates, and productively deploys” knowledgeable practices as an “effective [means] in the disciplining of knowing and doing in modern culture” (Ashley 1988, 229). Leading the post-structuralist to argue that within international relations discourses there has been no “death or disappearance of sovereignty” but rather a collapse of “any account of authority that does not learn to speak in the languages of complexities and reciprocities, of the fluidities and productions of powers, agencies, and resistances” (Walker 2004, 241).

### ***New Discourses of Political Community***

The sovereign state is the most significant construct in international relations theory to emerge in modernity. It is a more complex structure than simply a territorially bounded entity

that claims authority to act on behalf of the people and resources found within its territory. It serves as a form of unifying political identity which fosters a perception of a shared history, common goals, and similarity not between individuals but “citizens,” establishing a sense of difference from those residing outside the state. As such, the persistent allegiance to the notion of sovereignty within international relations theory fosters a discourse which effectively limits the possibilities of political community to that of the sovereign state and advances a singular discourse of difference and negation. This particular conception of the sovereign state is ingrained in our current way of life and is reinforced through every day practices which define and order the world around us. Yet in a world that is becoming less defined by geographical borders, where technology has minimized the gap of geographical space both in business and private endeavors, and where states wage wars not against other states but against terrorist organizations, international relations theory must be able to speak to the new forms of political community which are emerging on the international stage.

In an attempt to speak to these new forms of political community, the post-structuralist discourse aims to “open- up” international relations discourse beyond the discursive restraints of the sovereign state and the fact of anarchy. However, what exactly does this opening up entail and what would become visible to the observer through the process? In order to demonstrate the possibilities, I will partially utilize Ashley’s argument his essay “The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics” (1987) to demonstrate what becomes visible once the international relations discourse is opened up. As discussed earlier, when the construct of the state became conditioned by the notion of sovereignty it became associated with a discourse of difference and negation. Part of this transformation established the “inside” as the space where political community was possible and determined that the “outside”

was defined by the negation of political community. Therefore, the notion of political community became understood as an “ahistorically and monastically...fixed thematic unity, a kind of essence, an identity transcending and uniting manifest difference in the world of human practice....[placing] community in opposition to pluralism, each negating the other” (Ashley 1987, 406). However, through the separation of the notion of sovereignty from the state the discourse of difference no longer provides the discursive framework from which notions of international community must be confined.

Once the concept of the international community is no longer constrained by “dichotomies of identity and difference, surface and depth,” a critical analysis of the international community is now possible (Ashley 1987, 408). Ashley suggests that the framework he will use for this analysis is similar to the perspective of Foucault’s “genealogical attitude” (Ashley 1987, 408). He explains that a genealogical perspective is “occupied with motion, space, strategy and power...and is distrustful of all approaches that would accord moral claims, traditional institutions, or deep interpretations the states of a fixed and homogenous essence” (Ashley 1987, 411). Therefore, Ashley asserts that a critical analysis of the international community establishes it not a predetermined fixed identity but rather the international community is understood as an historically contingent product of “precedents, skills, and procedures that define competent international subjectivity” (Ashley 1987, 411). Once deconstructed through the use of the genealogical perspective, the “consensually held codes, rules, precedents and procedures...are seen to be objects of power politics and modalities by which violence is done and domination advanced” (Ashley 1987, 411).

A similar rendering could be achieved through the post-structuralist opening up of the international relations discourse. Utilizing the technique of deconstruction, this opening up

would reveal not the demise of the state but rather would demonstrate the way in which sovereignty is but one practice of the state. As such, the notion of sovereignty is used in the disciplining of knowledgeable practices to garner the illusion of a sense of belonging and protection; when in fact, the practice of sovereignty serves as the means in which violence is conducted, boundaries are enforced and subjugation is achieved. Once the notion of sovereignty has been exposed for what it is, a practice of the state and not its essence (to borrow from Ashley), the post-structuralist critique argues observers should look for ways in which new discourses and means can be achieved to undermine and thwart the effects of sovereignty. One way this can be achieved is through the entertaining of new forms of political community through the introduction of new discourses within international relations theory. However in keeping with the dialogical interpretation, these new discourses must at all times be understood as problematic and require continual examination into the way in which new possibilities of political community transmit power/knowledge through the controlling of its discourse and the dissemination of particular understandings and practices.

The post-structuralist critique demonstrates the need for a discourse of international politics which does not utilize the sovereign state as the foundational premise for the discussion of the nature and location of political community. The methods required to achieve a new discourse have already been suggested in the works of both Ashley and Walker-these and include:

- (1) Abandoning the notion that a centered perspective must exist in order for a discourse to begin. Instead, the theorists should at all times acknowledge that the point from which they began their inquiry is suspect. This requires the recognition that at all times the chosen foundation of a discourse is a representation of a specific space and

time. As such, the theorist must be committed to “question practices by which, in history, ambiguous circumstances are interpreted, boundaries are imposed, and resistant interpretations are dispersed or silenced” (Ashley 1988, 254).

- (2) Conducting a new discourse of political identity which requires a transformation of the current discourse on two fronts. First, it requires the termination of a discourse of difference and negation “in which identity and difference are counterposed as mutually exclusive opposites” (Walker 1993, 123). Secondly, it requires the acknowledgement that identity is not a singular concept, rather “modern political identities are fractured and dispersed among a multiplicity of sites” (Walker 1991, 445). As such, a new discourse of identity would “recognize that identities are always unfixed, contested, multiple and hybrid...in other words, rather than pitting identities against one another, we might regard identities as mutually constitutive” (Rygiel 1998, 124).

Despite the introduction of these methods as a means of achieving a more enabling rather than disabling discourse, a great silence exists with regard to new forms of discourse.

Following these methods, what would new discourses of political community look like? I will briefly offer some possibilities. We could begin with an examination of what constitutes a political community. Allowing for the assumption of the existence of multiple political communities, then the discourse would have to address issues such as is a political community a collective group of individuals, states (not as sovereign entities), or organizations? Does a political community solely consist of one type of collective group (meaning can a political community include individuals and organizations in the same community)? Is there a minimum requirement for the number of participants in order to be considered a political community (does

a group of 3 individuals constitute a community)? After which, the discourse could consider the purpose of political community? Is it to achieve as Aristotle hoped the good for all men, or is it as Hobbes suggested to escape the evils of the state of nature, or is it something else?

After considering what constitutes a political community and its purpose (notice it is not establishing because at all times, the foundation is problematic), the discourse could examine the issue of authority. Acknowledging Ashley's observation that the notion of sovereignty cannot be ascribed to one community without fostering a discourse of negation (which would return us to the current discourse), nor can it be ascribed to all communities (and thereby invalidating the concept of sovereignty), the conclusion would be that political communities are not sovereign. This would lead to a series of problematiques, questions and inquiries as to how political communities obtain power, achieve individual goals, or interact with other communities. How would disputes be resolved, would a hierarchy of political communities form and if so on what basis? The discourse would also have to engage with the notion of membership or belonging. How are "members" of a political community determined? Is membership something that is automatic, accepted or requires participation? Can members be part of several political communities? If so, how do members choose between political communities should competing objectives emerge?

Beyond discussing the notions of the new nature, location and possibilities of political community, new discourses of international relations theory should consider how these new conceptions of political community are entered into the discourse to form new power relations. In so doing, the examination would include how the various conceptions of political community not only establish the parameters of any new discourse it disseminates but also how this discourse constrains new understandings of political community. An inquiry would need to be

carried out into how the particular understandings of political community fostered by a particular discourse influences the actions and interactions of individuals and other forms of collective groups. Furthermore, the theorist should study how these understandings control the dissemination of “knowledgeable practices” which work to reinforce the new discourse. As witnessed by the brief considerations above, engaging in a discourse lacking a centered perspective and allowing for a multiplicity of identities creates more questions than answers (if it could be argued to provide concrete answers). This does not mean that such a discourse is invalid or offers no insights into the subject matter. However, what it does suggest is there can be no assertion of a singular discourse of political community; instead, there would be a multiplicity of discourses.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

The neorealist assertion of the sovereign state as political community fosters a particular discourse of difference and negation which serve as the predominate mode of discourse within international relations theory. However, the post-structuralist critique demonstrates, that neorealism “is so deeply immersed in the tradition it interprets” (Ashley 1984, 274) that it has accepted without critically examining the context (whether historically, spatially or temporally) from which the foundational truths of the neorealist discourse emerged (such as the primacy of the state, the sovereignty of the state, and the fact of anarchy). The result of which is the propagation of a discourse confined to “a celebration of an historically specific account of the nature, location and possibilities of political identity and community” manifested in the construct of the sovereign state (Walker 1993, 15). Therefore, not only does neorealism foster a discourse in which the notion of political community can only exist within the confines of the sovereign state but it also creates a tradition which lends itself to the exclusion of other possibilities of political community from international relations theories. As such, critics argue that neorealism propagates a discourse which reinforces the status quo of international political life leaving both science and theory unable to address the complexities of postmodernity.

Much of the discussion within this thesis has focused on the role of discourse and its ability to speak to the emergence of new forms of political community; however, little has been said about the significance of the emergence of these new forms of political community, and what questions they now require us to examine. It has long been held that the political community is vested in the government of a sovereign territory. This conception of political community fosters a particularly domestic conception of identity where pride of place takes precedent over action or interest and where political awareness was limited to domestic issues

(such as taxes, health care, education, etc.). Issues existing outside the geographic border were relegated to foreign policy and left to the administration of the sovereign state. As has been argued elsewhere, the compression of time and space of postmodernity has ushered in an era in which new forms of political community are fostered not on the basis of geographic location but based on shared interests and experiences. This same acceleration of time and space has also brought about a new era of global awareness and sense of belonging to a larger community of humanity, as citizens of particular states are now able to also see themselves as members of a more universal community. These changes have resulted, to a limited extent, in a shift in the perception of the traditional notion of identity where pride of place is now in competition with the pride of action/interest. The environmental movement provides one such example, as some members of the environmental community view their environmental causes to be more important than the interests of the state in which they are also citizens.

The emergence of these new forms of political community not tied to the sovereign state, are also fostering new modes and methods of action not just between individuals but also among other forms of political community (such as the state). These political communities can, and often do, have different objectives separate from and sometimes contrary to those of state interests. Additionally, because these political communities do not see themselves restrained by geographic boundaries, nor subject to the international law of states, they perceive themselves as agents more freely able to act across borders. At two opposite ends of the spectrum with regard to interests and objectives, humanitarian organizations (such as the International Red Cross) and terrorist groups (such as Al-Qaeda) provide examples of political communities which act across geographic borders in pursuit of their causes. Many of these new forms of political community are given purpose not solely through the uniting of shared interests and experiences but also

through the perception that they fill a void within the international community where states are unable or unwilling to act. The recognition of these voids is now possible thanks to the technological progress of the last century, which has decentralized the state's ability to control information flows with the rigor of the past. This has had two important effects with regard to inciting political communities to action: first, humanitarian atrocities and environmental crises around the world are now transmitted hourly to the plugged in news consumer and compel action on the basis of a membership in the greater global community; and secondly, particular groups of individuals such as minorities or oppressed groups confined within particular geographic spaces are now able to appeal to an international community for sympathy and aid.

Through appeals to membership in the existence of a broader, global community these new forms of political community seek to resolve issues they feel are largely neglected by the international system of sovereign states. As these new forms of political community decide to act in domestic and international affairs, they raise several challenges to the existing conception of community within the international system. Despite its claim, the sovereign state is not a community but rather a semi-legal construction which assumes the existence of a community within its territorial bounds, and asserts its existence through the construction of a shared history, language and culture. As new forms of political communities emerge with no territory or legal status to claim, and where membership is elective rather than forced, they challenge our notion of what it exactly it means to be a political community. This brings about several questions for consideration for future research within the international relations field of study: These new communities foster a sense of belonging and attachment not to a particular space but to what? How do they change our perception of identity and our ability to define individual identity? Can and should the international system of states create mechanisms for the appropriate interaction

and discipline of these new forms of political community? In many respects these questions are not new; however, if these questions were to be considered from the post-structuralist view point where the questions begin with “how” instead of “why” or “what”, then maybe new discourses would emerge with regard to the nature and location of political community which would foster a greater understanding of such notions as identity, community and order.

Beyond the practical considerations that the emergence of these new forms of political community pose; they also pose theoretical challenges. The advantages associated with the notion of the political community tied to the state, is that the government and physical boundaries provide a concrete means for assessment. Whether part of a democratically elected government or not, the political community of the state as is executed through the actions of its governing body. This allows for discursive examinations of the modes and methods of membership, action and exclusion within the political community. More simply, the “other” is easily established and the disciplining of knowledgeable practices are more easily unveiled to reveal the exercise of power relations. However, these new types of political community are defined by free association and the lack of a claim to a geographic space. Therefore, it is more difficult to distinguish the modes and methods employed by these new types of political communities to discipline knowledgeable practices. This ability to understand the knowledgeable practices becomes especially difficult if it is presumed that these political communities are understood to exist simultaneously and individuals can be members of multiple communities. As a result, these new forms of political community and the discourses they employ require further examination in order to reveal how these new discourses enact violence and establish authority.

Through its discourse, the post-structuralist critique offers a wholesale rejection of neorealism and its assertions. This explicit rejection of neorealism should not be interpreted as a

rejection of the theory of realism; in fact, the post-structuralist critique asserts that the classical realist tradition when properly understood represents a set of theories which acknowledge the historical and political contingencies upon which they were forged. As such, the post-structuralist suggests that classical realism has merit as a form of discourse arguing:

Claims to political realism in international politics have drawn on quite different and fundamentally conflicting philosophical traditions. To the extent that such differences have been ignored, ... there is no single tradition of political realism, but rather a knot of historically constituted tensions, contradictions and evasions, it is possible to reconsider the conditions under which certain realist claims might be rearticulated in a rather more critical and creative fashion (Walker 1993, 106)

This understanding suggests that the discourse of classical realism has value as a form of discourse because its central tenants are able to be critically examined and rendered problematic – as the effect of contingency, not necessity; however, this does not mean the post-structuralist critique believes classical realism to be a complete theory of international relations.

While the discussion of this thesis has focused on the practical and theoretical limitations of a neorealist discourse which proclaims the sovereign state as the only legitimate form of political community, the sovereign state is not disappearing. This is in part due to the state's ability to adapt within the system it operates to the new conditions and challenges the post-modern era has presented (this does not mean they can meet all the challenges but at least a significant portion of them). I offer two examples, one economic and one about security. The state may no longer control the daily technological and economic transactions of entities within its borders, but it does to a certain extent manage them through regulations, the prospect of public funds, the enactment of trade protections on certain goods, or the brokering of trade agreements (The North American Free Trade Agreement, for example). As such, the state has not disappeared from the economic sphere but has established new ways of acting within the new economy. Similarly, when it comes to issues of national security, it is in moments of national

crises such as those which follow terrorist attacks when citizens are most willing to relinquish certain rights for the perceived guarantee of protection by the state (I submit the Patriot Act as one example). While many perceived at the time that the end of the Cold War would usher in age of peace, the last now almost twenty years have been marked by increasing violence. As a result, the state has not diminished but rather grown stronger as it consolidates its power through assurances of protection.

The post-structuralist critique provides many insights into the problems facing both the discourse and practice of international relations. The continued commitment to and assertion of the primacy of the sovereign state has resulted in a static discourse which continually theorizes and examines only those issues and conflicts of international politics which can be made to fit neatly within the prism of the neorealist discourse. As a form of critical discourse, the post-structuralist critique aims to undermine, expose, and thwart the practices of the neorealist discourse which discipline our understanding of identity, community, power and violence. And in so doing, demonstrate the ways in which the neorealist discourse utilizes its “hard core” presumptions of the sovereign state and the fact of anarchy to prohibit the inclusion of the “other” (differing forms of political community not tied to the state) from theoretical consideration. As such, post-structuralist theory does not accept the established order as given, natural, or unproblematic but rather an historical effect of contingent practices. It aims not to search out foundational truths, but rather render all assumptions problematic for the purposes of fostering a deeper dynamic discourse which is able to address the changing nature of the political world. For these reasons, the post-structuralist critique should be revisited by theorists of international relations theory and granted more serious discussion as to its merits. For only through a commitment to an unconfined discourse can examinations reveal new ways of

understanding and speaking about such concepts as identity, power and political community which are prevalent to our understanding of daily life.

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