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*Bradley S. Klein*

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# STRATEGIC STUDIES AND WORLD ORDER

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*Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut*



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In this book Bradley Klein draws upon recent debates in International Relations theory to raise important questions about the nature of Strategic Studies. He argues that postmodern critiques of realism and neorealism open up opportunities for new ways of thinking about nuclear deterrence. In clear and uncluttered language, he explores the links between modernity, state-building and strategic violence, and argues that American foreign policy, and NATO, undertook a set of dynamic political practices intended to make and remake world order in the image of Western identity. Klein warns against too facile a celebration of the end of the Cold War, concluding that it is even more imperative today to appreciate the scope and power of the Western strategic project. The book will be of interest to students of International Relations theory, Strategic Studies, Peace Studies, and US foreign policy.

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## PREFACE

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A section of Chapter 2 was first published in *Millennium*. Chapter 4 incorporates material that first appeared in an article co-authored with Frank Unger in *Militärregime und Entwicklungspolitik*, edited by Reiner Steinweg and published by Suhrkamp, Germany. Chapter 5 combines and elaborates various texts first published in *International Studies Quarterly*, *Alternatives*, and in an occasional paper by the Center on Violence and Human Survival at New York City's John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

A disclaimer is in order. To the extent that the following chapters appear unduly centered on the Western (or Atlantic) community, this is a deliberate analytical tactic rather than the product of some misguided ethnocentrism or Occidentalism. The many divergent strands of strategic thought emanating from regions beyond the centers of global power deserve serious treatment in their own right, as much for their originality and dissidence as for their attempts to coopt or conform to dominant modes of discourse. But such a worthy under-

taking has proven impossible here. Instead, I concentrate on an internal exploration of the Western strategic experience, and am especially concerned to see how the realist presentation of Strategic Studies veils the inherent uncertainty and contestability of modernist political-military state practices.

Appreciation goes to Terry and Callie, each of whom at times found a comfortable niche under my desk while I was pounding away at the keyboard; and to Thunder and Misty, for their uncanny ability in positioning themselves so they could keep a watchful eye on just about everything.

This book is dedicated to my wife, Jane, and to Cory-Ellen, our daughter, who have given me all the reason in the world for writing about peace.



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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This book has its origins in the realization some years ago that the two fields in which I was most interested, social theory and strategic policy, seemed, in terms of the prevailing literature administered to graduate students at that time, to have little directly to say to one another.

Social theory was essentially occupied with issues of domestic policy – democracy, economic growth, theories of the state, and political legitimacy. Moreover, the range of concerns was largely confined to the so-called advanced industrial states, usually capitalist, but occasionally, socialist as well. The presumption was that the trajectory of Western culture had delivered most of the interesting questions to be addressed by apologists and critics of modernity. The pathologies usually attributed to these social orders were largely confined to issues seen as “internal,” so that domestic concerns were granted priority while international dimensions were relegated to other fields and neglected by social theorists themselves. The tradition of post-Marxist critical theory, from the Frankfurt School to Habermas, and including such French structuralists as Poulantzas and Althusser, was particularly egregious in its neglect of transnational issues. But post-Weberians, following the lead set by Parsons, were equally negligent in their oversight of global, transnational dimensions to problems besetting advanced industrial Western societies. Concerns with international trade and security, to say nothing of imperialism and militarization, were curiously left out of the debate. There was, in particular, no attempt to address the questions of war and peace so central to International Relations.<sup>1</sup>

Strategic Studies, meanwhile, was entirely taken up with questions of military balance and the relations between conventional and nuclear weaponry. Neither contemporary social theory nor the grand narrative tradition of Western political thought was deemed to have much relevance to the enduring concerns of political–military strategy. One could certainly find a selective reading of certain classical thinkers – Thucydides, St. Augustine, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, Hegel,

Weber – in the works of E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau. But much of this appropriation was *ex post facto*, imposed retroactively upon thinkers whose political and philosophical concerns were richer and far more intellectually adventurous than as presented to a postwar American audience in terms of the divide between “idealism” and “realism.”

What passed for “theory” among scholars of International Relations was largely a collection of totalizing efforts by postwar behavioralists concerned to isolate various levels of analysis and to reduce political dynamics to static hypotheses and predictions.<sup>2</sup> From the standpoint of sheer style, most of this was clumsily written. Worse yet, it tended to be narrow in terms of the range of its concerns and of the intellectual horizons it embraced. How else to make sense of the claim, so widespread after Hiroshima, of a “nuclear revolution,” as if the concept of revolution could be explained in terms of a technological change in weapons systems. To be sure, a European realist tradition was more sensitive to theoretical discourse in a classical idiom than were US practitioners of International Relations. This is precisely what made the likes of Friedrich Meinecke and Raymond Aron so appealing to International Relations students – as contributors to what Robert Gilpin has called “the richness of the tradition.”<sup>3</sup>

The philosophical and sociological dimensions of classical *Realpolitik* gradually have imperceptibly given way to narrower, more determined commitments to an abstraction called “The State.” Hypostatizing this entity of sovereign authority had been an element of European thought dating back to Bodin. And Hegel’s whole philosophical system is given life by the idea of the state as the embodiment, indeed, the apotheosis, of an ethical teleology.

What is interesting in terms of the development of International Relations as a discipline is that postwar thinkers, while consciously eschewing reference to such elusive philosophical constructs, nonetheless retained commitment to a curiously reified entity, the state, which they insisted had some originary existence as the source of all action in world affairs. These thinkers were for the most part wedded to a conception of the state that, while heavily relied upon and reiterated, was annoyingly underspecified in its scope and historical character. Thinking about the state seemed to be stuck in a time-warp, as if a model derived from eighteenth-century mercantilism could render adequate service in an era of globalized armaments and transnational exchange relations.<sup>4</sup> Thus, notions of “the national interest” and “national security” enjoyed a widespread circulation precisely as the welfare of modern societies was thoroughly dependent upon the

resources derived from beyond national borders. Yet there was precious little conceptual space for understanding such relationships.

In the 1970s, attempts were made to elaborate the foundational conceptual framework of academic International Relations through a generous appropriation of certain sociological traditions of thought. Functionalist sociology began to inform writings on balance of power politics and the structural character of the international system. Rational-choice theory, micro-economic analysis and the organizational approach to decision-making also contributed to the development of both foreign policy and international political economy as articulated within a reconstructed realist frame. This came to be called, variously, neorealism or structural realism, and there can be no doubt that these insights did much to alter the character of International Relations research.<sup>5</sup>

In refashioning International Relations, however, these “state of the art” debates within International Political Economy relegated classical and enduring questions of strategy, war and peace to a back seat. It seems that military force had for too long enjoyed undue attention at the hands of classical realism, and that modernist perspectives were now needed to overcome that debility by concentrating instead on issues of interdependence, economic bargaining, regimes and liberal hegemony.<sup>6</sup>

Yet questions of war and peace are too important to leave to students of Strategic Studies. Or, to put it another way, insights from social and political theory can help us enhance our appreciation of such crucial constructs as “the balance of power,” “the states system,” “alliances,” “security” and “deterrence.” Each of these is, after all, a social practice, not a primordial given, and has a history and a place in the making of the international system. In this sense, the basic point of *Strategic Studies and World Order* is to locate these practices in a generative account of the modern world, to see, in other words, how the organization of violence has helped produce the subject matter that presents itself to scholars of global politics. In this way, recent concerns about nuclear strategy, and contemporary concerns about war and peace, can become historicized and seen as part of ongoing political debates about the nature and evolution of world order.

The impetus for this critique derives from a debate about the basic categories of International Political Economy. For soon after neorealism began incorporating sociological and economic perspectives, a more critical orientation developed challenging the very terms of the discipline. Called the “Third Debate” (as a successor to earlier controversies concerning idealism–realism and realism–neorealism), this

literature has raised fundamentally critical questions concerning the whole discourse of International Relations.<sup>7</sup> And as the following chapters elaborate, such a critical perspective makes it possible to re-examine enduring assumptions about the character of war, peace and political–military strategy.

Chapter 2 explores the strengths and limits of contemporary Strategic Studies. The concern here is to elaborate an influential perspective on world order, according to which a formally anarchic condition of a system of sovereign states provides the ineluctable backdrop for the security dilemmas of its constituent units.

Chapter 3 casts a critical eye at contemporary claims of a “nuclear revolution” and reinterprets deterrence in terms of its place in the dynamics of contemporary world order. Along the way, I historicize the evolution of Strategic Studies. My focus here is on the transition from the pre-nuclear to the nuclear world, and on how modern strategic practices became coupled with the establishment of military representations of global space and political identity.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore the decisive postwar shift from “war” to “deterrence,” or from “Strategic Studies” to “International Security.” Here I examine in detail the relationship between extended nuclear deterrence and strategies of industrial development and modernization throughout the Western world and throughout much of the Third World – undertaken by the United States and the Western alliance in ways that are obscured when presented through the analytical lens offered by Strategic Studies. Two crucial arguments are made here, the first concerning the link between militarization and modernization, the second examining the nature of deterrence as a globalized social practice.

The final chapter offers as much a summary conclusion as a prospectus on thinking about the future. It is notoriously difficult to speculate on what the coming millennium – or decade, for that matter – will look like. It is more helpful, I believe, to dispatch cautionary notes about the analytical approaches available to those who would address the contours of an emerging world order. Thus the concern here is less with the architecture of global politics than it is with, more simply, the analytical practices by which any world order can be understood. In particular, I distinguish two forms of speaking about “the end of the Cold War:” the one a self-congratulatory account of Western strategy; the other a more critical recasting of the basic categories of International Relations now that certain essential structures have exhausted themselves politically. What is most interesting about “the end of the Cold War,” I argue, is that despite the rhetorical

excesses of the West having “won,” the material infrastructure of armaments and nuclear weapons remains very much in place. Ironically, however, the foreign policy establishment has quickly – all too quickly – moved beyond these issues in its attempts to shape a new global architecture. Having paid too much attention to weapons for decades, there is now the danger of not paying enough attention. And this suggests, as I conclude, that the dynamics of strategy and militarization are far more deeply embedded than conventional accounts acknowledge.

A note here is in order about the politics of what follows. It is, I believe, all too easy to launch into a critical diatribe regarding all that has passed for nuclear deterrence. But just as intellectually irresponsible is the smug celebratory triumphalism found across the spectrum of popular and academic publications dealing with world affairs in the aftermath of 1989. By invoking the relationship between Strategic Studies and world order, I want to praise the genius and the ambition of deterrence strategy in ways that neither its staunchest defenders nor its most ardent critics have been willing to articulate. The point, in effect, is to recognize the power and politics of deterrence strategy. The intent, however, is not to praise its practitioners but to examine it critically for its scope and ambition while recognizing, as well, the unavoidable incompleteness of modern strategic practices. In this sense, following Richard K. Ashley and R.B.J. Walker, the text engages in a “countermemorializing” reading of recent strategic policy.<sup>8</sup>

A key argument in this text is that strategic violence does not merely patrol the frontiers of modern culture. It helps constitute them as well. If Strategic Studies assigns to violence a regulative function in the international system, the argument developed here elaborates the generative nature of that violence – generative of states, of state systems, of world orders, and to some extent, of modern identity as well. In this sense, the ability of strategic violence to reconcile itself with liberal discourse and modern civil society is possible only because that violence draws upon a variety of discursive resources that are themselves widely construed as rational, plausible and acceptable. Chief among these is a series of apparent opposites – contending concepts – such as domestic and foreign, inside and outside, order and anarchy, peace and war, us and them, good and bad, First World and Third World.

What Strategic Studies does, I argue, is provide a map for the negotiating of these dichotomies in such a way that Western society always winds up on the “good,” that is, the former – side of the equation. Our putative enemy, whatever the form assumed by its

postulated Otherness – variously the Soviet Union, or Communism, guerrilla insurgents, terrorism, Orientals, Fidel Castro, Nicaragua, Qaddafi, Noriega or Saddam Hussein – simultaneously is endowed with all of these dialectically opposed qualities. Strategic violence is then called in to mediate the relationship, patrol the border, surveil the opponent and punish its aggression.

This is not an ameliorative or reformist work. I am not concerned, for instance, with proposing a more workable treaty for regional arms control treaty, or arguing the merits of this or that weapons system. But I am concerned with the terms by which arms control treaties and weapons systems circulate in the economy of representation and discourse that animates – and also forecloses – public debate on security. Thus, my interest is not in arguing for or against a distinct theory of security but, rather, in exploring how the language, referents, and attendant social practices of military strategy and international security have come about in the first place. At the same time, I try to show that each representation of strategy comes, so to speak, at a price, a political and cultural price in terms of what those ways of speaking and doing exclude by way of silence and inaction.

The argument pursues some themes suggested by the works of Michel Foucault regarding the enabling nature of power. In his view, modern power does not delimit or constrain human action and identity; it functions, rather, to enable and make possible a range of specific social identities. Power, in other words, is a constitutive relationship rather than a delimiting one, and modernity is characterized by a diffusion and decentralization of the mechanisms by which power manifests itself on the social body. In this schema, the pre-modern model of the sovereign state becomes anachronistic and assumes a back seat to the subtler, more invasive procedures of specialized, disciplinary intervention by which knowledge affixes its gaze to an object.

Michel Foucault has explored a variety of medical, psychiatric and disciplinary strategies by which contemporary practices of selfhood and self-knowledge have been constructed.<sup>9</sup> Such a perspective can be harnessed to an analysis of contemporary military–strategic practices in an attempt to see the constitutive and enabling character of the modern state’s interventionary modes. Such a project might seem to contradict Foucault’s understanding of the modern state – as itself a congeries of competing, fragmented discourses of social intervention in the name of civic freedom. Yet Foucault’s account of the mechanisms of modern power seem well suited to a study of a field whose interventionary and disciplinary power is, on the surface, all



too obvious. For what else is Strategic Studies about but the political-military defense of the state?

The answer, I think, is that rather than understood merely as defining the modern state and delimiting claims upon its sovereignty, modern military practices can be understood as recurrent and always incomplete attempts to constitute and create what from a traditional perspective looks like a self-evident project – the state. In this manner, strategic violence is less a function of the state than an instance of its own assertion. And instead of regulating the territorial and ethno-national boundaries of modern state identity, strategic violence is an ongoing process of defining state boundaries, excluding that which differs from its domain, and punishing those who would challenge it. In other words, Strategic Studies empowers the displacement of difference.

In all of this, there is a strong temptation, one could even say, an expectation, for scholars to declare undying adherence to this or that school of thought. Yet paradigm battles fought from the safety of a particular intellectual redoubt are no longer immune to the theoretical critique that here a privileged position is harbored. One of the defining principles of the age in which we live is that a theoretical stance cannot ultimately be grounded – except, that is, in uneasy and always inconclusive relation to the social world of which it is a part and which it hopes to engage. In this sense, to take a position, to adopt a pose, or to assume an attitude toward a social practice means to engage dialogically with it, to examine it, criticize it, take it seriously and to check continually so that the terms of analysis bear some relationship to it.

If this seems like a refusal that is because my own perspective is informed by a certain reluctance to engage the imaginary questioner on the terms he would so confidently pose: “Well, what is different about your point of view, how is it different from and superior to that which has been said before?”

Posed in this manner, the question cannot be answered on its own terms, for it presumes that a single unifying framework is available. There is little doubt, in my own mind at least, that this text is most heavily influenced by critical reading of a variety of recent schools of thought, among them discourse analysis and poststructural readings of modernity. Yet without an engagement with critical social theory and the traditional Marxist critique of ideology and hegemony, it would be all too simple to succumb to the avoidance of social practice of which postmodernism is (for the most part, wrongly) accused.

The danger can be mitigated by heeding certain principles in the course of analysis.<sup>10</sup> To begin with, a conviction that an appropriate