NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION IN SOUTH ASIA:
MORE MAY NOT BE BETTER

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ABSTRACT

Most scholars and policy-makers hold the view that nuclear proliferation is inherently dangerous, while others, most notably Kenneth Waltz, view the slow spread of nuclear weapons as conducive to international peace and stability. This study is concerned with evaluating the rigor of Waltz’s rather controversial perspective. Waltz’s nuclear peace argument contains two significant errors: first, its neorealist theoretical foundation is blind to many aspiring nuclear powers and, second, Waltz mistakenly assumes that nuclear weapons necessarily enhance a state’s overall security. These errors may be overcome by adopting a subsystemic unit of analysis in lieu of Waltz’s systemic approach. Fully considering the exceptional characteristics of nuclear weapons suggests that nuclear weapons states are functionally different from non-nuclear weapons states, Waltz’s notion of capabilities should disaggregated into discrete sectors, and nuclear weapons have qualitatively changed the basic character of the international system. Constructing a subsystem on the basis of differentiating states by their nuclear weapons status and by discerning patterns of nuclear proliferation driven strategic interaction yields an analytical unit which is cognizant of all states in the system, sensitive to the limitations of nuclear power, and is sustainable within the neorealist/structural realist perspective. This analytical approach is used to assess the impact of nuclear proliferation on peace and stability in a subsystem comprised of China, India, and Pakistan. It is evident that nuclear weapons do not alleviate the principal sources of insecurity which afflict these states. When considered in this South Asian context, Waltz’s nuclear peace argument should be rejected in favor of more conventional approaches to nuclear non-proliferation.
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INTRODUCTION

The indefinite renewal of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) reaffirms the commitment by 178 states to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons and is heralded as a crucial step toward ensuring peace and security in the emerging post-Cold War order. At the conclusion of the renewal conference, President Bill Clinton declared that "[t]he decision to extend indefinitely the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty without conditions is a critical step in making the American people—and people throughout the world—more safe and secure."¹ Such faith reflects the widely held belief that the NPT—a set of rules which governs the legitimate possession of nuclear weapons and the sharing of nuclear technology—will promote peace and stability. Despite the ostensible commitment to the NPT by Clinton and his predecessors, Peter Lavoy observes that the United States has been consistently inconsistent in its non-proliferation goals; Washington ultimately supported the spread of nuclear weapons to Great Britain and France, and after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, it essentially ignored Pakistan’s covert pursuit of a nuclear capability.² This contradiction between declaratory policy and substantive practice raises an important question: is the norm of nuclear non-proliferation essential for preserving peace and stability in the world or is it simply a calculated attempt by the existing nuclear powers to promote their narrowly defined national interests and to safeguard their monopolistic control over nuclear weapons?

At the heart of the nuclear proliferation debate is the efficacy and relevance of the NPT in the post-Cold War environment. Illicit smuggling of fissile material from the republics of the former Soviet Union and the significant progress of NPT member states, namely Iraq and North Korea, toward acquiring a nuclear weapons capability have weakened confidence in the existing non-proliferation regime. Equally, the failure to persuade de facto nuclear powers, such as Israel, India, and Pakistan, to join the NPT erodes confidence in the non-proliferation regime as a means of promoting global peace. These fissures in the NPT edifice represent a larger and more fundamental debate between the traditional approach to nuclear proliferation and two alternative perspectives, one of which is concerned with coping with the inevitable spread of nuclear weapons, the other which views nuclear proliferation as conducive to international peace and stability.

Voluntary restraints and policies of technical denial anchor the traditional nuclear proliferation strategy embodied in the existing non-proliferation regime; controls governing the export of critical materials and intrusive inspections of nuclear power facilities are the principal mechanisms designed to deny access to materials for nuclear weapons to would-be proliferators. The keystone of the non-proliferation regime, the NPT, is intended to prevent the horizontal spread of nuclear weapons by establishing a legal barrier, a norm of non-proliferation, and confidence building measures. These functional purposes of the NPT do not, themselves, prevent proliferation but they appreciably affect perceptions, assessments, and ultimately the decision to pursue or

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forego the nuclear weapons option.⁴ States which fail to accede to the NPT or to abide by their treaty obligations face punitive sanctions until such time that their behavior falls within the bounds of accepted international standards.

Counterproliferation or neo-nonproliferation, a rival to the traditional non-proliferation school, has emerged out of the perceived failures of the NPT and the uncertainty of the post-Cold War world. Neo-nonproliferationists, according to Leonard Spector, predicate their work on four principal beliefs: the diffusion of nuclear-relevant technology is inevitable, the disintegration of Cold War era security structures leaves the world more insecure, the present non-proliferation regime is ineffective, and determined proliferators may not be able to be stopped.⁵ Students of this school are most interested in learning how to cope with the spread of nuclear weapons after proliferation. Indeed, neo-nonproliferationists place less weight on denial strategies and necessarily view the NPT as an instrument of diminishing utility.⁶ Despite their skeptical view of the NPT, neo-nonproliferationists are still firmly part of the larger non-proliferation project. Neo-nonproliferationists consider the development of proliferation contingencies as complementing traditional policies of denial and they share with the traditionalists the


basic assumption that the spread of nuclear weapons is fundamentally detrimental to global peace and security.

The second alternative perspective—one that is not entirely new—falls entirely outside the parameters of the non-proliferation project and is surely the most controversial. According to Kenneth Waltz, the most notable proponent of this alternative view, the slow spread of nuclear weapons, buttresses, rather than erodes, international peace and stability. This perspective completely rejects the foundation upon which the non-proliferation project is built: strategies of denial, contingency planning, and the axiomatic belief that horizontal proliferation is categorically unsound and hazardous. “Scholars and policy makers,” contends Waltz, “have yet to grasp the full strategic implications of nuclear weaponry,” namely that nuclear weapons can be important contributors to global peace and security. This argument is informed by two principal factors: first, the structure of the international system and, second, the characteristics of nuclear weapons employed in a deterrence strategy with a secure second-strike capability. The interaction between international structure and the characteristics of nuclear weapons does not eliminate the possibility of nuclear war,

\footnote{Waltz is specific on the point that the slow spread of nuclear weapons is preferable to no proliferation or rapid proliferation. \textit{Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better,” Adelphi Paper No. 171,} (London: IIS, 1981), 28.}

\footnote{Kenneth N. Waltz, \textit{“Nuclear Myths and Political Realities,” American Political Science Review,} 84.3 (1990): 731.}

\footnote{An effective deterrent force, for Waltz, must be able to survive a first-strike and be able to launch a retaliatory strike of its own without relying on a launch-on-warning posture. As well, nuclear forces must not be susceptible to unauthorized or accidental use. Possession of a secure second-strike capability is an important component of Waltz’s nuclear peace argument because the threat of nuclear retaliation is thought to reduce the probability of war by raising the potential costs of war to unacceptably high levels. In contesting this claim, instances where only one state in a conflict dyad possesses nuclear weapons and the period after the acquisition of nuclear weapons but prior to the development of a secure second-strike capability appear to be promising areas of inquiry. Waltz does not address the former issue and he deals with the latter issue by suggesting that survivable nuclear forces are easy to build. Although these issues are indeed important, they are not addressed here in the interest of taking as much of Waltz’s argument possible on its own terms. See Waltz, \textit{“The Spread of Nuclear Weapons,”} 2-3, 13-19.}
however, it significantly reduces the likelihood that nuclear weapons—which cannot otherwise be eliminated or uninvented—will be ever used. In the final analysis, Waltz argues that the uncertainty of the international system and the potentially infinite costs of using nuclear weapons raise the consequences of resorting to force to unacceptably high levels.

It is this controversial second alternative perspective which is the focus of the present study. This thesis explores the validity and rigor of Waltz's claim that the slow spread of nuclear weapons promotes international peace and stability. Toward this end, it is necessary to examine the foundations of Waltz's nuclear peace argument. This examination will reveal that Waltz's theoretical perspective, neorealism, is unsatisfactory because it is constructed on a system's great powers and is therefore essentially blind to states whose nuclear ambitions are not explicitly linked to the balance of power logic of the great powers. Waltz commits an additional error by assuming at the outset that nuclear weapons, appropriately employed in a deterrence strategy with a secure second-strike capability, positively enhance a state's overall security.

These errors may be overcome by departing somewhat from Waltz's theoretical postulates and by problematizing his assumption that nuclear weapons necessarily enhance national security. Drawing upon the work of Waltz's critics opens theoretical space for assessing the potential impact of nuclear proliferation within the context of a subsystem. Disaggregating Waltz's notion of power in order to isolate nuclear weapons as a power resource separate from other power resources and discerning the patterns of positive and negative strategic interaction of existing and aspiring nuclear weapons states
yields a subsystem which is a more precise and parsimonious analytical device than the entire international system. A subsystem constructed in this manner is an advance over a systemic approach insofar as it is specific to nuclear weapons related issues and it is inclusive of all states regardless of their position in the system. Such a subsystem should not, however, be construed as being detached from the international system; rather it should be viewed as being embedded within the international system and as being a refinement of the neorealist/structural realist perspective. It is in this subsystemic context which the relationship between nuclear weapons and national security may be problematized. After assessing the probable impact of nuclear proliferation on one of the most conflict-prone regions of the world, namely South Asia, it is evident that Waltz’s nuclear peace argument is in need of considerable reevaluation. Nuclear weapons do not meaningfully contribute toward stabilizing the pattern of chronic conflict in South Asia; on the contrary, continued nuclear proliferation in South Asia will further erode what is already a delicate regional security equation.
In a controversial 1981 article, Kenneth Waltz first asserted his claim that the slow spread of nuclear weapons would promote international peace and stability. Waltz arrives at this unusual conclusion by identifying characteristics of nuclear weapons which he judges to be beneficial and by evaluating these characteristics within the context of the basic principles of his theory of international politics. Fundamentally, the unequaled destructive power of nuclear weapons so severely distorts the cost-benefit calculation of contemplating war that the incentive to use offensive military force as an instrument to promote and protect the national interest is negligible. This essential quality magnifies the influence international structure has on state behavior in systems where the principal state actors are most responsible for their own fate and for the fate of subordinate states. Hence, the establishment of a functioning nuclear deterrence relationship between the system's major actors eliminates great power war and provides a level of global peace and stability which is enjoyed by all states in the system.¹

Waltz's nuclear peace argument continues to draw a great deal of attention from supporters and dissenters alike. Scholars such as Richard Betts, Dagobert Brito, Michael Intriligator, Shai Feldman, and Brahma Chellaney, present work which supports Waltz's position in one way or another, while others, such as Peter Feaver, Steven David, and

Scott Sagan, offer contending views.² It is interesting to note that among the contenders, there is little criticism leveled at the synthesis of what Waltz describes as the beneficial properties of nuclear weapons and his theory of international politics; criticism of Waltz’s theoretical assumptions and framework and how they relate to nuclear proliferation is, for the most part, conspicuously absent. Dissenting scholars tend to focus their attention on problems associated with the logic of nuclear deterrence, command and control problems, internal characteristics of states, and the biases inherent in military organizations which make intentional and accidental nuclear war possible. Although comprehension of these areas of scholarly research is necessary to gain a more thorough understanding of the nuclear proliferation debate, it is of rudimentary importance to critically examine the foundation upon which Waltz builds his nuclear peace argument.

A critical examination of the nuclear peace argument is most appropriately conducted by isolating and evaluating separately, in a two step process, the theoretical component of the nuclear peace argument and the component which deals specifically with the characteristics of nuclear weapons. First, a review of Waltz’s neorealist theory of international politics, which provides the theoretical foundation of the nuclear peace argument, is necessary in order to establish its basic propositions and purpose. The terms and assumptions that Waltz uses to define international structure, and the principal focus

of neorealism, the system’s great powers, are of particular interest to this study. Second, Waltz’s discussion of the exceptional qualities of nuclear weapons and how they affect the operation of the international system is of equal interest and importance. A systematic examination of these two fundamental elements of the nuclear peace argument reveals that Waltz’s reasoning and analysis contain two important errors: the first is attributable to the construction of neorealism while the second is a function of Waltz’s inchoate treatment of nuclear weapons and their subsequent synthesis into neorealist theory. It is possible to repair these errors in an attempt to rethink how nuclear proliferation impacts international peace within the confines of a neorealist framework.

**NEOREALISM AS THE FOUNDATION FOR THE NUCLEAR PEACE**

Neorealism is a systemic theory of international politics which regards the international realm as a bounded domain separate from the domestic realm. In the international realm, Waltz observes that “[o]ver the centuries, the texture of international life has remained impressively, or depressingly, uniform even while profound changes were taking place in the composition of states which...account for national behavior and international outcomes.”

This repetition, despite significant and constant change in state institutional organization, economic system, political ideology, leadership, level of development, and mode of production, leads Waltz to conclude that something other than state attributes are responsible for the recurrent patterns of international politics. For Waltz, reoccurring outcomes in the international system are the interactive product of the

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structure of the system and the political units which populate the system. Reductionist theories, which attempt to explain international outcomes by analyzing causes that emanate from the individual and national level, are rejected since unit-level causes are most properly considered in conjunction with the international structure which conditions and constrains them.4

Waltz defines a system as comprising of a structure and interacting units. It is, however, the notion of international structure that forms the cornerstone of neorealist theory. International structure, as conceived by Waltz, is derived from three definitional terms which omit all unit attributes and relations so that structure may be distinguished from the unit-level.5 The first term of the definition, the ordering principle of the system, is derived from what a formal-legal construction of sovereignty which is used to confer juridical statehood: political units are formally equal, responsible to no higher authority, and entitled to no authority over other units.6 This interpretation of sovereignty is the foundation upon which Waltz argues that the ordering principle of the international system is a condition of anarchy.7 The anarchic nature of the international system profoundly affects the second definitional term of international structure, the functional differentiation of units. Anarchy encourages competition among units which are all

5 Ibid.
6 Robert Jackson calls this formal-legal construction of sovereignty, negative sovereignty. In contrast, positive sovereignty refers to a condition in which states not only to enjoy the status of juridical statehood but also possess the means to provide “the good life” to its citizens. This notion of sovereignty confers what Jackson calls empirical statehood. See Robert H. Jackson, Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 21-31. It should be noted that neorealism it entirely dependent on a negative conception of sovereignty. If states were required to demonstrate empirical statehood, Waltz’s work would cease to be a theory of international politics since only a small minority of states can presently exceed the positive sovereignty threshold.
7 Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 88-93.
seeking to survive; units which are most successful in this endeavor are emulated and reproduced while those which are not eventually perish. Thus, anarchy produces functionally similar units which, in turn, further reinforces the condition of anarchy. As long as the system remains anarchic, the second tier of structure falls from consideration.8

Although units are functionally undifferentiated in anarchic systems, this is not to suggest that all units perform all tasks equally well. Possessing the capability to perform certain tasks distinguishes units which are great powers from those which are not; the distribution of capabilities explains the position which units occupy in the system and represents the third, and most visibly discernible, source of structural variation.9 Units which possess the greatest capability, or power, take on the special responsibility of managing the system, however, the idea of exercising power for the sake of other-regarding responsibility, duty, or justice is conspicuously absent from Waltz’s theory. Waltz’s notion of responsibility, which includes preserving the peace, maintaining the integrity of the system, and managing common and other economic problems, is guided by the national interests of the great powers and by the shaping forces of distributive power.10

Waltz combines this notion of power with functional similarity and the condition of anarchy to obtain an international structure that purportedly socializes state behavior to

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9 Capabilities are unit-level attributes; the distribution of capabilities is a system-wide concept which illustrates how states are differently placed by their power. See Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 97-99.

10 Waltz asserts that great powers act out of consideration for the common good but that the common good is defined by the great powers. See Ibid., 199-210.
the extent that the primary features of international politics remain ubiquitously constant despite significant and frequent changes in unit attributes over long periods of time. The constancy of these outcomes supports Waltz’s claim that structure is the principal causal force in international politics. For Waltz, war, peace, stability, arms racing, and other common features of the international environment are the product of structural constraints imposed on state actors seeking to ensure their survival. The outcomes which result from the interaction of structure and unit-level processes leads Waltz to conclude that in an anarchical international system, the notion of self-help informs the methods by which foreign policy decisions are made, the conditioning and disposing forces of structure explain the repetitive nature of international politics, and the balance of power explains the outcomes which result from the self-help imperative and the forces of structure.\(^\text{11}\)

The balance of power is a central explanatory concept in a competitive international realm where self-help is the paramount operative principle of behavior and providing for security is the foremost way in which states help themselves. Balance of power politics, according to Waltz, “prevail wherever two, and only two, requirements are met: that the order be anarchic and that it be populated by units wishing to survive.”\(^\text{12}\) The balance of power explains the structural constraints imposed on the decisions and activities of states seeking to ensure their survival in an international realm marked by

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 117.

\(^{12}\) Kenneth N. Waltz, “Toward Nuclear Peace,” \textit{Strategies for Managing Nuclear Proliferation: Economic and Political Issues}, Dagobert L. Brito, Michael D. Intriligator, and Adele E. Wick, eds. (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1983), 117; Waltz, \textit{Theory of International Politics}, 121. Waltz’s use of the term “survival” is somewhat ambiguous since he does specify when a state “dies.” Survival can refer to the territorial expression of a state, its legal-political structure, or its governmental regime. The territorial expression of Germany has been altered on several occasions and it has existed as one state and at other times two. Likewise, Poland disappeared from the map entirely only to return nearly 150 years later. Survival is interpreted here to mean the preservation of the territorial expression and the legal-political structure of the state.
significant power inequalities. In the absence of a super-ordinate authority that can consistently and fairly enforce the rules of the system, states compensate for their weaknesses by participating in power balancing activities. The results of this balancing activity provides insight into the expected relations among states and into the advantages and limitations of the system's organization as a whole.

The expectation of particular outcomes in international politics varies with the system's organization, or polarity. In anarchical realms, systems may be multipolar or bipolar in organization; where there are fewer than two great powers, the system ceases to be anarchical as the ordering principle becomes one of hierarchy. Apart from the difference in the number of principal parties in the system, the essential distinction between bipolar and multipolar power structures is the balancing behavior required of the system's participants. In multipolar power structures, states manage their security interests by externally balancing power. Alliances are forged between states which share similar interests in an effort to offset opposing states and coalitions, and greater security is afforded by the increased number of possible dyadic relationships resulting from alliance participation. Multipolarity essentially destroys zero-sum logic by creating cross-cutting alliances which dissipate antagonism between potential contenders. It is precisely these cross-cutting, non-zero-sum relationships that Waltz finds problematic.


Particular qualities which are characteristic of bipolar systems provide sufficient ground, Waltz argues, to privilege bipolarity over multipolarity as the preferred method of global organization.

The principal disadvantage of multipolar power structures, according to Waltz, is that external balancing creates uncertainty among alliance partners.\textsuperscript{15} The fluidity of alliance formation makes the estimation of present and future relations difficult, particularly since “[d]angers are diffused, responsibilities blurred, and definitions of vital interest obscured.”\textsuperscript{16} Competing notions of national interest, which may not be satisfied all of the time, provide powerful incentives for alliance realignment in this indeterminate condition.\textsuperscript{17} Defection by a significant alliance member may have profound consequences for the remaining members, especially if the sum total of significant powers is relatively small. The ever-present possibility of defection, the difficulty in accurately ascertaining the strength of opposing coalitions, and persistent doubts concerning the reliability and cohesion of one’s own coalition are the chief sources of miscalculation in multipolar systems.\textsuperscript{18} This is particularly worrisome, Waltz observes, since miscalculation is a cardinal precipitant of war.

\textsuperscript{15} Waltz does not offer any empirical evidence to support this claim as is evidently a product of deductive analysis rather than historical analysis. The Concert of Europe immediately comes to mind as an example which would contradict Waltz’s postulate.

\textsuperscript{16} Waltz, “The Spread of Nuclear Weapons,” 2.

\textsuperscript{17} Richard Rosecrance, “Bipolarity, Multipolarity, and the Future,” \textit{International Politics and Foreign Policy: A Reader in Research and Theory}, James N. Rosenau, ed., (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 329. This ostensible weakness of multipolar systems is somewhat problematic since it is unlikely that the national interest of any given state will be satisfied all the time regardless of the system type.

\textsuperscript{18} Waltz, “The Spread of Nuclear Weapons,” 2.
In contrast to multipolar systems, the great powers in bipolar systems do not rely upon like-minded states or coalitions to manage their security concerns but instead rely disproportionately on their own capabilities and resources to balance power. Self-dependence, or internal balancing, yields more reliable and precise results which, in turn, provides a measure of certainty not enjoyed in multipolar systems. Interests and threats are never in doubt, calculations are more exact, and responses to changes in the balance of power are made more easily in bipolar systems. The simplicity of relations in bipolar systems provides substantial rewards for moderate behavior. At a minimum, great powers in bipolar systems strive to maintain the status quo rather than pursue policies which would fundamentally alter the balance of power; immoderate behavior may harm a state’s position in the system or may ultimately result in its own destruction. It is these structural incentives of bipolarity, which produce moderate behavior and a desire to maintain the integrity of the system, that Waltz finds so attractive.

Using the logic of neorealism, Waltz contrasts multipolar and bipolar power structures, and in particular the advantages of internal balancing as opposed to external balancing, and concludes that bipolarity is a superior type of structural organization in the international context. The relative high level of certainty and precision found in bipolar systems make them more peaceful, though less stable, than their multipolar counterparts. All powers, great and small, benefit from the certainty and clarity of bipolar systems,

19 Ibid.

Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 170-76; and Rosecrance, “Bipolarity, Multipolarity, and the Future,” 326. This statement is indicative of an overemphasis on the predictive power of structure. In the context of the Cold War, Waltz’s theory does not allow for, nor can it explain when one side decides to quit or give up.

although systemic organization is defined solely by great powers. In contrast, the uncertainty associated with multipolarity—conflicting national interests, fear of defection, and the difficulty of accurately ascertaining the strength of opposing coalitions—make multipolar power structures highly stable, but overly prone to the ravages of war.\textsuperscript{22} For adherents to neorealist theory, these basic conclusions provide a greater understanding of the nature of international politics which may be used to explain the past and present as well as to predict certain aspects of the future.

While the explanatory and predictive power of neorealism is explicitly linked to the conditioning and disposing forces of structure, Waltz is equally explicit on which states have to contend most with the forces of structure. In constructing his theory, Waltz does not treat all units the same, although they are all functionally alike and are all juridically sovereign equals. Waltz is most interested in the great powers of a system and consequently, these states assume a special role in the construction of neorealist theory. As a theory of international politics, neorealism is constructed in terms of the great powers in the system.\textsuperscript{23} Waltz argues that,

\[\text{[i]n international politics, as in any self-help system, the units of greatest capability set the scene of action for others as well as for themselves. In systems theory, structure is a generative notion; and the structure of the system is generated by the interactions of its principal parts...A general theory of international politics is necessarily based on the great powers.}\textsuperscript{24}\]

\textsuperscript{22} Waltz cautions against the conflation of peace and stability. Stability, in this instance, refers to a system's ability to survive major wars. In bipolar systems, the elimination of a great power through war automatically denotes a change in system, whereas in multipolar systems, great powers may be eliminated without necessarily forcing a change in system. Therefore, systems may be simultaneously stable and war-prone or unstable and peaceful. See Waltz, “The Emerging Structure of International Politics,” 45.

\textsuperscript{23} Waltz, \textit{Theory of International Politics}, 72.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 72-3.
Indeed, many of the essential features of neorealism are intimately dependent on the great powers of the system. For there to be a transformation of the system there must be a consequential variation in the number of principal parties that constitute the system. Determining the system's polarity is accomplished by locating the greatest concentrations of power in the system by using the concept of distributive power; and notions of systemic stability are intrinsically linked to the actions and fate of the great powers.\(^{25}\)

Neorealism is a systemic theory of international politics; and more specifically, it is a systemic theory of the great powers in international politics. In neorealist terms, states in a condition of anarchy are, at a minimum, motivated primarily by their desire to survive; this quest for survival is facilitated by the concept of self-help, the system's operative principle. Great powers operating in multipolar power structures help themselves by entering into coalitions with other great powers, while those operating in bipolar power structures adjust their military strength and/or economic capabilities with the intention of ensuring their security while promoting other national interests. The constraining and disposing forces of structure condition all of these actions, and balance of power theory explains their results. It is the logic of this theoretical process which accounts for the behavior of the system's great powers, followed by the actions of the lesser powers, and ultimately explains the uniform texture of international politics.

\(^{25}\) As long as the system remains anarchic, the only source of systemic change is a significant change in the number of great powers. A change in the system's ordering principle from anarchy to hierarchy would constitute a systemic change and would necessitate the construction of a new theory. See Ibid., 88-101, 161-62.
Neorealism, Nuclear Weapons, and the Nuclear Peace

The purpose of Waltz’s theoretical project is to explain, using systems theory, the recurrent features of international politics. By definition, systems theory explains the common and ordinary features of its object of study. Indeed, it is ironic that Waltz wrote Theory of International Politics while in the midst of one of the great anomalies of world politics: the Long Peace.26 The fifty years of great power peace which have elapsed since end of the Second World War does not comfortably fit into Waltz’s project. Evidently, something other than, or in addition to, the conditioning forces of structure may be responsible for the absence of great power war for such an extended period of time. Waltz believes that the advent of nuclear weapons, in conjunction with structural theory, accounts for the Long Peace. The prevalence of peace and the fighting of relatively limited wars indicates that “features found in the post-war system that were not present earlier account for the world’s recent good fortune. The biggest changes in the post-war world are the shift from multipolarity to bipolarity and the introduction of nuclear weapons.”27 The interaction between a particular power structure, bipolarity, and the intrinsic characteristics of nuclear weapons provides the foundation for Waltz’s view that horizontal nuclear proliferation is not detrimental to global peace and stability.

By arguing that slow horizontal proliferation is beneficial, Waltz categorically rejects the widespread belief that nuclear proliferation is inherently dangerous and asserts that efforts to prevent the diffusion of nuclear weapons are misguided—albeit well


intentioned—in that they deny states the security which they would otherwise be afforded by the possession of nuclear weapons. As well, Waltz also challenges the assumption that preventing the use of nuclear weapons is dependent on maintaining the smallest number possible of high quality nuclear powers. He counters this fear by arguing that the increasing number of nuclear weapons states and their specific characteristics point less to “likelihoods” of nuclear catastrophe than to “dangers;” likelihoods are more accurately informed by deducing expectations from the structure of the international system and by inferring from the past experiences of existing nuclear powers.28

The structural source of Waltz’s optimism for a peaceful nuclear future is taken directly from neorealist theory. The structural element of the nuclear peace argument rests on the two principal beneficial properties associated with bipolar systems which are not similarly exhibited by multipolar systems: self-dependence of the system’s major powers and the clarity of threats facing these powers. Supporting this view, Waltz asserts that “[b]ecause responsibility is clearly fixed, and because relative power is easier to estimate, a bipolar world tends to be more peaceful than a multipolar world.”29 The addition of a nuclear weapons capability employed in a deterrence strategy with a secure second-strike capability does not alter this view, nor does it change the system since only a change in the number of great powers may effect a systemic change. Simply acquiring a nuclear capability does not force a change in structure by suddenly catapulting lesser

28 Waltz makes a very fine distinction between dangers and likelihoods. Dangers refers to identifying some of the many detrimental possibilities associated with nuclear proliferation without learning how they are likely to unfold. Likelihoods refers to obtaining knowledge of how certain possibilities will probably manifest themselves. See Ibid., 1.

29 Ibid., 3.
powers into the ranks of the great powers. Great powers are defined by Waltz as those states which are strong militarily, economically, socially, and control large resource endowments. The relative size of new nuclear arsenals does not affect the constitution of the system since nuclear forces do not add up. Nuclear weapons foster peace and stability once a second-strike capability is attained; the size of a nuclear arsenal holds little relevance since second-strike capabilities must be seen in absolute terms. Although the exceptional characteristics of nuclear weapons figure prominently in the nuclear peace argument, they do not erode the structural logic of bipolarity or the integrity of bipolar systems. The unmistakable absolute power of nuclear weapons only serves to reinforce the clarity and precision of bipolar power structures which ultimately contribute to international peace and stability.

The second element of Waltz’s nuclear peace argument is based on the intrinsic qualities of nuclear weapons. Security is enhanced, Waltz insists, by the possession and appropriate employment of nuclear weapons; the absolute power of nuclear weapons diminishes the probability of war insofar as they help approach an unassailable “defensive ideal” which raises the potential costs of war to unacceptably high levels. Consequently, the immense threat conveyed by deterrent strategies contributes more to a

30 Barry Buzan draws a more precise distinction from the term “strong state.” For Buzan, strength can refer to a state’s power or its degree of cohesion. Therefore, the Soviet Union, and now Russia, can be described as being weak states but strong powers. Waltz conflates this distinction. For a detailed discussion, see Barry Buzan, People, States and Fear, (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 96-107.

31 It should be noted that, for Waltz, the threshold for achieving a second-strike capability and a stable deterrence relationship is extremely low. Waltz, “The Spread of Nuclear Weapons,” 3, 18.

32 The term “defensive ideal” refers to defenses which are so strong that no potential adversary will attempt to destroy or overcome them. It is interesting to note that while Waltz utilizes the exceptional qualities of nuclear weapons to support his nuclear peace argument, he does not allow a weapon that approaches the defensive ideal to possibly alter the system. See Kenneth N. Waltz, “A Response To My Critics,” Neorealism and Its Critics, Robert O. Keohane, ed., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 327; and Waltz, “The Spread of Nuclear Weapons,” 4.
state's security than to its offensive ability to conquer territory. This ostensible non-provocative posture significantly alters the purposes for which strategic power may be used: the frightening prospect of nuclear war remarkably circumscribes the utility of conquest, preemptive and preventive war, and coercive threats as tools of national policy. Therefore, the specific characteristics of nuclear weapons, Waltz concludes, encourage peace by helping states achieve their principal goal of providing for their security without resorting to force.

Non-proliferation advocates who do not share Waltz's optimism place less faith in the characteristics of nuclear weapons and place greater emphasis on the unit level characteristics of potential nuclear powers. The fear that new nuclear states may not be able to maintain control over their arsenal, that domestic weakness and instability will precipitate the use of nuclear weapons, that enduring rivals may use nuclear weapons in regional conflicts, and that nuclear weapons may fall into the hands of irrational or tyrannical leaders are all advanced as cogent reasons for stemming the spread of nuclear weapons. All of these concerns, Waltz counters, are not supported by the experiences of existing nuclear powers and are therefore unfounded. First, there is no reason to believe that new nuclear states will not be able to control their nuclear arsenals as well as existing nuclear powers have. Second, nuclear weapons have little utility in domestic struggles and their use in such conflicts would constitute a national tragedy rather than an international tragedy. And third, statesmen—tyrannical, irrational, and otherwise—are

34 Waltz, "Toward Nuclear Peace," 117.
sensitive to costs and are unlikely to run the risks associated with nuclear war. Despite protestations to the contrary, Waltz claims that new nuclear weapons states, even lesser developed countries, do not present a manifest danger to world peace because they “will confront the possibilities and feel the constraints that present nuclear states have experienced”.

The fundamental conclusion of Waltz’s nuclear peace argument—that the spread of nuclear weapons will promote peace—remains essentially unchanged despite the disintegration of the Cold War order. Waltz is not yet ready to concede the passing of the bipolar era; bipolarity, he contends, “continues because militarily Russia can take care of itself and because no other great powers have yet emerged.” Russia’s nuclear arsenal ensures that its position in the system will go unchallenged until a sufficiently strong third great power arises to displace it; until then, Russia will remain a great power because its large population, geographical expanse, and vast resource endowment compensate for its economic and political weaknesses. What is changed in this modified conception of bipolarity, Waltz concedes, is that the power of the United States may no longer be held in check by any individual or coalition of states.

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36 Ibid. It should be noted that from a theoretical perspective, concerns associated with the internal attributes of states are of no consequence to Waltz since what really matters in the international realm is the conditioning and disposing forces of structure.


38 Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," 52.

39 Waltz argues that nuclear weapons decouple military power from economic capability insofar that a second-strike force provides security without being contingent on economic capacity. Therefore, Russia’s nuclear weapons guarantee security, allow a diversion of attention and resources to economic difficulties, and secure its position in the international system. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," 50-53; and "The New World Order," Millennium, 22.2 (1993): 191.

40 Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," 52.
Although most scholars reject the notion of a modified bipolar system, Waltz maintains his favorable view of nuclear proliferation even in a multipolar world since the chief negative byproduct of multipolar systems, uncertainty, may be substantially ameliorated by the presence of nuclear weapons. Since nuclear weapons are the dominant category of weapons, strategic comparisons are simple to perform and war through miscalculation is all but ruled out once a secure second-strike capability is achieved. Increased complexity, combined with the destructive power of nuclear weapons, raises uncertainty to such high levels that contemplation of a nuclear first-strike is unfathomable. Supporting this view, Richard Betts posits that if all possible risks are compounded, odds are less favorable than if a decision is based on a single risk; thus, the potential gains resulting from the use of nuclear weapons are very small in multipolar systems when measured against potential risks. This apparent transmutation of multipolar systemic properties suggests that in Waltz's final analysis, nuclear weapons will continue to play a significant and beneficial role in the post-Cold War era, whether the international system is bipolar or multipolar.

LIMITATIONS OF THE NUCLEAR PEACE ARGUMENT

Waltz combines the explanatory power and logic of neorealism with what are undeniable characteristics of nuclear weapons and how they have been employed by nuclear powers to argue that slow nuclear proliferation contributes to international peace

42 Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," 72-73.
43 Betts, "Compound Deterrence vs. No-First-Use," 708-10.
and stability. Despite the ostensible breadth of neorealism and the empirical knowledge obtained from the experiences of the existing nuclear weapons states, both elements of Waltz’s nuclear peace argument suffer from substantial flaws. First, neorealism, as constructed, may not be as universally useful as Waltz believes: in the context of nuclear proliferation, some states in the international system may be immune to the conditioning and disposing forces of systemic structure because their security concerns are relatively isolated from those of the great powers. Second, although Waltz explores the exceptional characteristics of nuclear weapons and how they strengthen deterrence, he does not adequately explore the relationship between nuclear weapons and how they satisfy a given state’s security concerns.

The structural component of Waltz’s nuclear peace argument is problematic because it lacks a sufficient degree of analytical precision for assessing the impact nuclear proliferation may have in the post-Cold War era. Neorealism is a theory of great powers and as such, expectations in the system are contingent on the actions of the principal parties of the system. Waltz insists that “[c]oncern with international politics as a system requires concentration on the states that make the most difference.”44 Since Waltz infers expectations from a specific historical period, namely the Cold War, his optimism for a peaceful nuclear future should come as no surprise: the system’s two principal concentrations of power were also home to the most consequential nuclear arsenals. Waltz’s theoretical framework, which is deliberately constructed around great powers, precludes serious consideration of lesser power. Neorealism, as Waltz presents it, is

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44 Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 73.
essentially blind to lesser nuclear power whose nuclear motivations are not tied to the actions of the system's great powers. Though structure may have a profound effect on the behavior of some states, nuclear weapons states which do not have vast global interests, do not represent a systemic locus of power, and whose nuclear ambitions are not sufficiently linked to the system's great powers, are not meaningfully located in Waltz's theoretical perspective.

In exploring the peculiar qualities of nuclear weapons, Waltz incorrectly assumes that they enhance a state's security when employed in a deterrence strategy with a secure second-strike capability. He does not, however, consider that similarly deployed nuclear weapons may have a benign or malign impact on a state's overall security. This is due to the fact that Waltz explores how nuclear weapons enhance deterrence strategies and why states want them without giving consideration to the equally important question of when they may be used. Considering when nuclear weapons may be used illuminates whether or not they contribute to a state's security. Nuclear weapons may, in some instances, contribute to a state's security, however, their tangible uses are extremely limited; nuclear weapons have little or no utility in matters concerning ethnic and religious based internal conflict, refugee flows, environmental degradation, trade imbalances and other similar security concerns. Moreover, that several technologically capable states willingly forgo, or in the case of South Africa, gave up the nuclear weapons option seems to confirm that in some instances, nuclear weapons have marginal utility and that they may be detrimental to security. Determining when nuclear weapons may be used will provide a more insightful explanation of why states desire nuclear weapons and how they impact state security, both at the national and international level.
Both defects contained in Waltz’s nuclear peace argument may be corrected by reformulating, and in some instances, expanding, the terms which Waltz uses to define and demarcate international structure. Waltz’s first error, the failure to include lesser nuclear powers, is attributable to the contention that all states are functionally alike. The subsequent closure of the second tier of structure leaves only differences in unit capabilities to distinguish political units from one another. By exploring essential factors which are absent from neorealism, namely the technological and normative issues which pertain to nuclear weapons, it is evident that the nuclear powers may perform specialized functions, particularly when it is considered that nuclear weapons have significantly conditioned the international system. Undoubtedly, nuclear weapons transcend the boundaries of unit-level military capability; the technological exceptionalism of nuclear weapons and the normative statements against them attest to the qualitative systemic change they have effected. Therefore, the second tier of structure should be modified to accommodate unit-level attributes which are not properly part of structure, but qualitatively change the system nonetheless. The systemic impact of nuclear weapons is sufficiently important to justify differentiating states by their nuclear status in an effort to construct a more precise analytical framework for evaluating the effects of nuclear proliferation.

The second flaw, the failure to fully consider how nuclear weapons impact a state’s security, can be partially corrected by modifying the third tier of structure, the distribution of capabilities. By combining a state’s total capabilities to facilitate the estimation and comparison of power, Waltz implicitly suggests that the utility of nuclear weapons is fungible across all sectors of power. On the contrary, nuclear weapons have
very specific and narrowly defined military and political applications which are constricted to the extent that it is questionable if nuclear weapons have any meaningful use at all. Therefore, the composite measure of power as conceived by Waltz should be disaggregated so that nuclear weapons are considered only in contingencies in which they are relevant and useful. Disaggregating the notion of composite capabilities and opening and expanding the differentiation tier of structure will yield a more comprehensive theoretical approach for considering the effects of nuclear weapons in the post-Cold War era and which is also sensitive to the particular uses of nuclear weapons and to all the states that possess them.

Several scholars take issue with the nuclear peace argument by challenging it from outside its theoretical framework. However, taken on its own terms, Waltz’s contention that nuclear proliferation is desirable is indeed a formidable proposition. That the Cold War competition between the United States and the Soviet Union ultimately resulted in fifty years of great power peace, despite intense ideological hostility and an excessively costly nuclear arms race, lends further credence to Waltz’s position. Nevertheless, investigating the apparent shortcomings of the nuclear peace argument suggests that the Waltz’s fundamental conclusions may need to be revised in some cases. This is most effectively accomplished by constructing a neorealist theoretical framework which is sensitive to the lesser nuclear weapons states and challenging the assumption that appropriately deployed nuclear weapons automatically contribute to a state’s security.
Waltz’s assertion that nuclear proliferation is conducive to international peace and stability rests upon two fundamental pillars: the logic of neorealist theory and the extraordinary characteristics of nuclear weapons. A comprehensive understanding of the latter pillar—the characteristics intrinsic to nuclear weapons—is critically important in an attempt to correct the errors in Waltz’s nuclear peace argument which were identified in the previous chapter. For Waltz, nuclear weapons exhibit two outstanding qualities: the enormous destructive power of nuclear weapons raises the potential costs of war to an unacceptably high level and they help approach an unassailable defensive ideal without similarly enhancing offensive capabilities. Despite the elemental importance these exceptional features hold for Waltz’s nuclear peace argument, they are not investigated to their fullest potential.

This relationship between limitless destructive power and enhanced defensive capabilities raises two important questions which are the focus of this chapter. First, are political units that possess such exceptional weaponry in any way functionally different from those who do not? And second, since nuclear weapons enhance only defensive capabilities, do they exhibit any other limitations which are relevant to their use in a state’s security strategy? Obtaining answers to these questions is simplified by reviewing and integrating into the present piece some of the work of Waltz’s critics; these scholars raise the possibility of unit-level attributes acting as catalysts for systemic change. By
exploring specific technological and normative themes regarding nuclear weapons, it is evident that nuclear weapons states are functionally different from non-nuclear weapons states. Further still, the unparalleled power of nuclear weapons ironically circumscribes their defensive utility and their value as instruments of power. Considered in this context, nuclear weapons may be viewed as unit-level attributes which have changed the essential nature of the international system.

Recognizing the systemic importance of nuclear weapons ominously transforms key elements of Waltz’s neorealism. In a nuclearized world, units must be differentiated on the basis of their nuclear status. As well, the intrinsic limitations of nuclear weapons must be reflected by disaggregating Waltz’s notion of capabilities into discrete sectors. The modification of these basic neorealist terms of structure opens promising theoretical space for evaluating the potential effects of nuclear proliferation in the context of a subsystem. A subsystemic approach permits the construction of a unit of analysis which is sensitive to all units in the system and which may be used to parsimoniously identify areas where nuclear proliferation is an issue among states who share meaningful strategic interaction. The relationship between nuclear weapons and the primary security concerns of specific states may be appraised without blindly assuming that the proliferation experience of all states will be necessarily congruent with the experiences of existing nuclear powers. In the final analysis, the use of a subsystem will yield greater insight in the endeavor of evaluating the impact of nuclear proliferation on international peace and stability.
NEOREALISM, SYSTEMIC CHANGE, AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

As a sparse and elegant theory, neorealism has attracted a great deal of criticism for its reputed inability to explain systemic change without resorting to unit-level processes and for its indiscriminate blindness to cogent non-state actors in world politics. Deflecting this criticism, Waltz insists that

any theory leaves some things unexplained, and no theory enables one to move directly and easily from theory to application. A theory can be written only by leaving out most matters that are of practical interest. To believe that listing the omissions of a theory constitutes a valid criticism is to misconstrue the theoretical enterprise.¹

Notwithstanding this defense of the theoretical enterprise, several prominent scholars not satisfied with Waltz’s neorealism note the possibility that factors Waltz relegates to the unit-level, in fact, acting as catalysts of change for the entire system. This prospect raises new theoretical opportunities which promise a more thorough understanding of nuclear proliferation and how it affects global peace and stability.

The absence of an identifiable source of significant change in world politics and the concomitant failure to ascertain any determinant of change are, for John Ruggie, the principal shortcomings of neorealism. Ruggie argues that in an attempt to construct a causally productive system, Waltz places unit-level processes, capable of effecting substantial systemic change, on the margins of neorealist theory, thus denying the possibility that they too, may be productive beyond the unit-level.² Durkheim’s notion of
dynamic density, defined as "the quantity, velocity, and diversity of transactions that go on within society," best represents the unit-level processes to which Ruggie refers. Dynamic density, according to Ruggie, represents the missing agent of change in neorealism; the pressures of a unit-level process may trigger a sufficiently extensive change to effectively alter the structural integrity of the system as well.

Robert Keohane, like Ruggie, also regards unit-level processes to be more important than Waltz allows. While Keohane accepts fundamental neorealist premises—the importance of international structure, the centrality of the state, and the assumption of rationality—he envisions a greater emphasis on the role of non-state actors, intergovernmental organizations, and transnational and transgovernmental relations as being an improvement over Waltz's neorealist formulation. The development and growth of mature institutions which promote higher levels of communication and the sharing of information can mitigate, to some extent, the uncertainty of world politics; systems sufficiently rich in these institutions can expect higher levels of cooperation and positive interdependence. "Information that reduces uncertainty is therefore an important factor in world politics," concludes Keohane, and should be included in the neorealist research project.

Barry Buzan builds upon the penetrating and insightful work of Ruggie and Keohane and ultimately constructs a modified neorealism, called structural realism,

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3 Ibid., 148.
5 Ibid., 196.
which successfully incorporates the non-state attributes that are missing from Waltz’s theory. Buzan integrates non-state actors into structural realism by clarifying the distinction between, and location in neorealism of absolute capabilities and relative capabilities.\(^6\) Relative capabilities—relational power—are found in both the unit and structural levels of neorealism; relational power informs comparative state power and defines the structural polarity of the system. In contrast, absolute capabilities—attributive power—are placed solely at the unit-level; they simply indicate what tasks a state can and cannot do.

Buzan argues that placing absolute capabilities solely at the unit level “does not encompass the full nature of attributive power” and that “there are still substantial elements of attributive power that cannot be located in the unit level without seriously straining the sense of what ‘unit level’ means.”\(^7\) Buzan recognizes, as have Ruggie and Keohane, the possibility of a unit level attribute or process having a system-wide effect; capabilities and attributes such as technological capacity, shared norms and values, and transnational organizations are clearly systemic in scope for Buzan and profoundly affect the interaction component of the system. Indeed, “Waltz has lost sight of the systemic interaction element that is essential to give the notion of system meaning.”\(^8\) By truncating the placement of absolute capabilities, neorealism cannot explain those

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\(^6\) Absolute capabilities refer to the capacity of a state to perform certain tasks based on its attributes; absolute capabilities are non-zero-sum as all states can increase or decrease, through economic activity and collective identity, their capability level. Relative capabilities, on the other hand, are considered in a positional context, are measured in zero-sum terms, and inform the distributive pattern of power in a system. See Barry Buzan, Charles Jones, and Richard Little, *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to structural realism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 67-68.

\(^7\) Ibid., 69.

\(^8\) Ibid.
attributes which are not structural in nature, but are, nevertheless, central to the interaction and ultimate function of the international system.

Buzan corrects this problem by adding a third level of analysis, interaction capacity, to Waltz's original unit and structural levels of analysis in the effort to include these systemically relevant absolute capabilities. Technological innovation in the fields of communication and transportation positively increase the interactive capacity of the system; likewise, shared norms and values which presuppose organizational institutions also condition the capacity and caliber of unit interaction. Buzan concedes that these capabilities may be located in individual units, however, they are also distinctly "system-wide in their deployment, as well as in their effects;" interaction capacity, Buzan adds, captures the "absolute quality of technological and societal capabilities across the system." By adding this additional level of inquiry, the analytical logic of neorealism is reordered: rather than saying that the interaction of units and structure produce outcomes, structural realist logic asserts that the synergistic action of units, structure, and the system's interaction capacity produce outcomes in the international environment.

The inclusion of systemically important unit attributes and non-state actors raises some interesting possibilities for exploring the effects of nuclear proliferation which may

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9 While Buzan does not make any explicit statement about moral considerations, he does implicitly indicate that relevant moral values are legitimately included in his notion of interaction capacity. For Buzan, systems with mature interaction capacities demand more in the way of obligation from its members and that such systems exhibit qualities of international society as defined by Hedley Bull and Martin Wight. Surely Waltz would reject the inclusion of moral considerations, in spite of their critical importance in understanding how nuclear weapons have affected international politics. See Buzan, Jones, and Little, 69-70. Waltz rejects Buzan's elevation of certain unit-level attributes to the systemic level by arguing that factors such as dynamic density are not part of a theory of any society, but are social forces within societies which may act as disrupting or transformational forces; these types of factors are not part of theory; good theory facilitates an understanding and an explanation of them. See Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory," 30.

10 Buzan, Jones, and Little, 69-70, 79.
ultimately compel a fundamental reassessment of Waltz's nuclear peace argument. The most important question raised by Buzan's reformulation of neorealism is whether or not nuclear weapons have effected such a systemic change as to warrant their placement at the unit and interaction capacity levels of analysis. Have nuclear weapons triggered a qualitative change in the international system? To adequately answer this question, Waltz's theoretical location of nuclear weapons, and the reasons for this placement, must be interrogated. An affirmative answer to the question would suggest that nuclear weapons have qualitatively changed the system and that the states which possess them are qualitatively different from those that do not.

Waltz considers nuclear weapons to be, without exception, a unit level attribute; he concedes that nuclear weapons have system-wide effects, however, he does not recognize this impact a signaling change in system. The simple possession of nuclear weapons does not, he argues, create great powers and the invention of nuclear weapons did not create the condition of bipolarity after the Second World War; nuclear weapons only reinforce the pattern of power relations which would exist in their absence.\(^{11}\) The international system has been affected by nuclear weapons to the extent that they make war between the great powers less likely; this represents, Waltz insists, the mitigation or lessening of a structural effect rather than a change in system.\(^{12}\) Despite this inchoate

\(^{11}\) Waltz contends that the possession of nuclear weapons does not equalize differentials in state power because they do not concomitantly change the economic base of a state's power. Great power status is not conferred based simply on military capability. Great powers are distinguished by their ability to mobilize and combine political, social, economic, military, and geographic assets more effectively than other states can. See Kenneth N. Waltz, Theory of International Politics, (New York: Random House, 1979), 180-81; and Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons," Adelphi Paper No. 171. (London: IISS, 1981), 3.

\(^{12}\) Kenneth N. Waltz, "A Response To My Critics," Neorealism and Its Critics, Robert O. Keohane, ed., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 327. It is interesting to note that Buzan also assigns nuclear weapons to the unit level; he agrees with Waltz that they are selective unit capabilities which have system-wide effects. See Buzan, Jones, and Little, The Logic of Anarchy, 72.
conclusion, a more useful theoretical placement may be obtained by investigating, within
the context of Buzan’s interaction capacity, the technological impact of nuclear weapons—
how they have altered commonly held conceptions of war—and by appraising the
normative response to these changes—the global values which pertain to nuclear weapons
and to their deterrence strategies.

THE EXCEPTIONALITY OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND SYSTEMIC CHANGE

The essential nature of nuclear weaponry has been a matter of intense debate and
conjecture since the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, 1945. Are nuclear
weapons “just another bomb” as former U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff, General Curtis
LeMay, suggests? 13 Despite the view of LeMay and others like him, nuclear weapons are
usually viewed as a revolutionary, as opposed to an evolutionary, change in military
weaponry and ideas of the past. 14 In fact, this exceptionality was recognized before the
first atomic bomb was even tested; Otto Frisch and Rudolf Peierls, two of the first
scientists to theorize about the feasibility of nuclear weaponry, observed in 1940, that
“the bomb could probably not be used without killing large numbers of civilians, and this
may make it unsuitable as a weapon by this country.” 15 Indeed, the technological
implications of nuclear weaponry transform significantly axiomatic suppositions
regarding war and strategy.

13 Hans J. Morgenthau, “The Fallacy of Thinking Conventionally About Nuclear Weapons,” Arms Control and

14 Bernard Brodie, “War in the Atomic Age,” The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order, Bernard Brodie,

As early as 1946, Bernard Brodie perceived that “the shadow of the atomic bomb would so govern the strategic and tactical dispositions of either side as to create a wholly novel form of war [and that] war will be vastly different because of the atomic bomb whether or not the bomb is actually used.” Technologically speaking, nuclear weapons are relatively small devices, which may be delivered over great distances to produce cataclysmic devastation on a scale heretofore unknown to humanity. The enormous destructive power of nuclear weapons fundamentally alters the relationship between military opponents; in a condition of war, nuclear weapons obscure the distinction between winning and losing by simultaneously permitting warring states to utterly destroy each other as organized societies in a single swift blow. The absolute destructive capacity and the mutual vulnerability associated with nuclear weapons hinders any meaningful calculation of the absolute and relative prudential advantage of war.

This disruption of the traditional calculations pertaining to war is unmistakably evident when nuclear weapons are considered in the context of classical theoretical conceptions of the nature of war. In the seminal volume, *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz declares that “the very nature of war impedes the simultaneous concentration of all forces,” thus preventing the destruction of an enemy in a single instantaneous blow. Marshaling all of the means of war—military forces, economic capacity, population

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16 While true in core regions of the world, this statement must be qualified to be applicable only to conflict involving nuclear armed states; conflict remains essentially unchanged in non-nuclear peripheral areas where the nuclear powers express little or no interest. Bernard Brodie, "Implications for Military Policy," *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order*, Bernard Brodie, ed., (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946), 83.


18 Ibid., 10.

resources, and alliance partners—may be superfluous in a nuclear world where possession of nuclear weapons permit the destruction, with little or no preparation, of an adversary in one decisive strike. Therefore, nuclear war is no longer necessarily a complex series of successive actions; it is an irreducible condition of perpetual vulnerability for which there is no defense.

The profound vulnerability of states and the rapidity in which they may be extinguished with nuclear weapons indicates that outcomes in war may be decisive and irreversible. This sense of finality contrasts remarkably with traditional notions of war. Referring again to Clausewitz, a traditional understanding of war suggests that "the ultimate outcome of a war is not always to be regarded as final. The defeated state often considers the outcome merely as a transitory evil, for which a remedy may still be found in political conditions at some later date."20 Obviously, the outcome of all-out nuclear war between second-strike capable states obviates any remedy to complete and wanton societal destruction; the results of nuclear war must be considered final. This stark reality leads Hans Morgenthau to conclude that "the magnitude of its destructiveness, as compared with the limited character of the political purposes which are the proper object of foreign policy, render nuclear force unusable as an instrument of foreign policy."21 This estimate follows even in the context of what is often referred to as limited nuclear war. Waltz sets the threshold for unacceptable damage at a level which is much lower than what would be result from total nuclear war. He suggests that the destruction of just

20 Ibid., 80.
one or two cities is enough to dissuade aggression and to prohibit the use of nuclear weapons. Indeed, it is evident that the technological characteristics of nuclear weapons change the fundamental meaning of war insofar as there is no prudential advantage in resorting to war where nuclear weapons may be involved. More importantly, this change may support the contention that nuclear weapons have qualitatively altered the international system.

**THE NORMATIVE DIMENSION: THE JUST WAR DOCTRINE AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

The moral intelligibility of nuclear deterrence is noteworthy since Waltz’s nuclear peace argument is heavily predicated on the possession of a second-strike capable nuclear capability. The exceptionality of nuclear weapons strains the technological ingenuity of humanity while also severely straining the moral practice of war. With the exception of pure pacifism, the normative rejoinder to nuclear weapons and their associated deterrence strategies is most appropriately considered within the principles and discourse of the just war tradition. Appraising the morality of nuclear deterrence is particularly difficult because it threatens to destroy the very thing it is intended to defend; elements of this paradox conflict greatly with many of the basic fundamentals of utilitarian and deontological philosophical thought. To threaten evil to protect a community is inconsistent with Kantian principles; refusing to convey an immoral threat in the interest

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22 Waltz, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons," 16. Although the emphasis of Waltz’s argument is focused on how nuclear weapons strengthen deterrence, he argues that in the event that deterrence fails, the early use of a small number of very small warheads would most likely stop further escalation. He argues further that the deployment of low-yield nuclear weapons in a defensive posture may further reduce the probability of war. Ibid., 7.
of preserving civilization violates utilitarian principles. Preeminent moralist, Michael Walzer, deals with this deterrence dilemma by asserting that “[n]uclear weapons explode the theory of just war.” An examination of the principal modes of deterrence: mutual assured destruction (MAD) and counterforce war-fighting confirms that nuclear deterrence is, in fact, immoral.

The just war tradition judges the morality of war in two components: the *jus ad bellum* serves the ends for which a war may be prosecuted and the *jus in bello* restrains the means of war. Principally, the *jus ad bellum* deals with questions of self-defense and when the concept of self-defense may be invoked by a state to wage war on another state. As the notion of the *jus ad bellum* has developed over the centuries, self-defense has come to mean the resistance of aggression; states have a basic right to resist aggression, however, since war is a rule-governed activity, this right is restricted by moral and legal notions of justice. War may be waged only after all available peaceful means of resolving the dispute have been exhausted; equally, war is justifiable only if it is prosecuted by an appropriate authority and if the good to be obtained in war outweighs the possible harm. This notion of proportionality correlates the use of force in self-

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defense with the severity of an aggressive action. Taken together, the aforementioned principles of the *jus ad bellum* establish the circumstances under which waging war may be considered morally just.

Once the conditions of the *jus ad bellum* have been satisfied, the conduct of war is governed by the *jus in bello*, or the justice in war. As Walzer cogently argues, "[i]t is perfectly possible for a just war to be fought unjustly." Two primary principles guide the *jus in bello*: proportionality and discrimination. Proportionality appeals to the idea that the good of an action should outweigh its evil consequences. In Bruce Russett's words, the concept of proportionality can be described: "the harm done by an act, even unintentionally, may not be disproportionate to the good intended to be achieved or the evil to be avoided."

Complementing the proportionality principle, the concept of discrimination refers to the assumption that noncombatants should be immune from direct attack. Respecting the concept of discrimination is extremely difficult in the era of total war where the often obscure distinction between combatants and noncombatants greatly erodes the conceptual foundation of the discrimination principle. Recognizing the dilemma presented by the notion of discrimination, the principle of double intent is often invoked to alleviate this problem. Double intent refers to an action which results in good and evil consequences; under the double intent principle, evil consequences may be excused if the resulting evil

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28 The converse of this statement is also true: an unjust war may be fought by just means. Walzer, 21.


30 Fisher, 16.
was not intended.\textsuperscript{31} However, a war cannot be considered just if it is known in advance that the means to be used will result in immoral consequences. Together, the principles contained in the \textit{jus in bello} and the \textit{jus ad bellum} provide a useful framework through which the ends and means of nuclear deterrence may be analyzed.

The doctrine of MAD, one of the earliest nuclear deterrence strategies, conveys a retaliatory threat of assured destruction to prevent an opponent from taking a certain action. Proponents of MAD assume it is effective because assured destruction—the indiscriminate devastation of an opponent’s cities as opposed to its military assets—constitutes a level of unacceptable damage which destroys any incentive for serious contemplation of aggressive behavior.\textsuperscript{32} As a strategy, MAD entails no defense: it is deterrence by punishment. Retaliation, in the context of targeting large segments of an opponent’s population clearly violates the discrimination principle contained in the \textit{jus in bello}; indiscriminate killing of civilians is considered murder in the just war tradition and is, therefore, an illegitimate means of prosecuting a war.\textsuperscript{33} Although the end goal of preserving peace and stability is good, intending to murder tens of millions of people in the name of maintaining the peace cannot be justified or used to rehabilitate MAD’s immoral means.

\textsuperscript{31} Nye, 56.


\textsuperscript{33} Those who support MAD argue that conveying the evil threat of killing large numbers of civilians does not entail the evil action of actually killing them. The Kantian philosophical tradition rejects this defense by invoking the wrongful intentions principle which states that good ends may not be realized through evil means and that the intention to do evil is never justified. See John Finnis, Joseph M. Boyle, and Germain Grisez, \textit{Nuclear Deterrence, Morality, and Realism}, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 79; and Nye, 54.
The inherent inflexibility of MAD suggests that the morality of assured destruction is also suspect on grounds that it violates the proportionality principle. MAD is an "all or nothing" strategy which threatens massive and catastrophic retaliation to deter aggression. In the face of a limited nuclear attack, a deterrent is faced with the choice of retaliating by destroying an opponent's civilization or capitulating. Such a response is grossly disproportionate to the original, though evil, action, and it recklessly invites further escalatory retaliation. In effect, MAD is a doctrine of suicide. MAD is not intended to defend territory, institutions, or population; in fact, that MAD defends nothing is precisely why it is assumed to work. MAD is a doctrine of institutionalized revenge which violates the \textit{jus ad bellum} since it serves no defensive purpose and thus may not be utilized in the name of just cause. In the final analysis, MAD must be rejected as immoral on grounds that it falls entirely outside the parameters the just war tradition, it violates all notions of proportionality, discrimination, and concomitantly serves no legitimate defensive purpose.

Recognizing the operational inflexibility and the moral dilemmas associated with MAD, nuclear strategists shifted toward a more flexible war-fighting–deterrence by denial–strategy in order to respond to a wide array of contingencies.\textsuperscript{34} Since war-fighting is a true–and very destructive–form of defense, it cannot be rejected on the \textit{jus ad bellum} grounds as was MAD. Although this doctrine solves the "all or nothing" dilemma of MAD, the employment of a war-fighting doctrine in war presents a particularly difficult

\textsuperscript{34} Deterrence by denial is a defensive variant of deterrence which seeks to physically prevent, by opposition, an attack. It should also be noted that war-fighting strategies entail a higher risk of nuclear weapons being used thus raising additional moral dilemmas. See Buzan, \textit{An Introduction to Strategic Studies}, 135, 193-96.
dilemma for the principles contained in the *jus in bello*. In contrast to countervalue targeting, war-fighting strategies target an opponent’s instruments of war and the facilities which can reconstitute those instruments. While the counterforce targeting scheme is theoretically consistent with the principle of discrimination, in practice, the destructive power of nuclear weapons inevitably kills a large number of noncombatants. Avoiding targeting a city in the interest of noncombatant immunity but targeting military sites within the city violates the discrimination principle, especially when it is certain that this indiscriminate destruction would be known beforehand. In this instance, the evil of millions of deaths would be disproportionate to the good achieved by the destruction of military targets. This type of counterforce targeting, while marginally better than countervalue targeting, must rightly be labeled as immoral because of the disproportionate number of collateral deaths it causes. While a war-fighting strategy is consistent with some of the tenets of the just war doctrine, the indiscriminate and disproportionate consequences of counterforce targeting demand that the strategy also be identified as immoral.

Given the strong normative response to nuclear weapons and to nuclear deterrence, it is clearly evident that nuclear weapons are qualitatively different from conventional weaponry and should be considered exceptional. The revolutionary destructive power of nuclear weapons increases, on an unparalleled scale, the capacity of states to inflict harm on one another. This single technological innovation fundamentally alters the conceptual foundations of one of the universal features of world politics: war. So exceptional are nuclear weapons that they are widely viewed as “instruments of suicide and genocide;” normative statements confirming these qualities declare nuclear

Waltz tacitly acknowledges the exceptionality of nuclear weapons by arguing that “[t]he longest peace yet known rested on two pillars: bipolarity and nuclear weapons,”\footnote{Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Emerging Structure of International Politics,” \textit{International Security}, 18.2 (1993): 44.} however, he fails to follow this path to its logical conclusion. Instead, he confines nuclear weapons to the unit level, arguing that they do not alter the structure of the system. Waltz ultimately ignores a crucially important explanatory element of the nuclear proliferation problem. One cannot escape the conclusion that nuclear weapons are qualitatively different from conventional weapons and that states which possess them are qualitatively different from those who do not. It is ironic indeed, that Waltz sets out to construct a theory of international politics in order to explain the recurrent features of world politics, such as war, yet he fails to recognize the full systemic importance of a weapon which alters the very recurrent feature that he seeks to explain. If, as Waltz argues, nuclear weapons are partly responsible for the Long Peace, it then logically follows that they are at a minimum, partially responsible for systemic change. Therefore, nuclear weapons should be located at both the unit and interaction capacity levels of the
system. This conclusion necessarily alters how structure is defined and changes the fundamental nature of the international system.

CAPABILITIES, NUCLEAR WEAPONS, AND USABLE POWER

The spectacular American failure in Vietnam and the equally humiliating Soviet defeat in Afghanistan is instructive on the elasticity of power, its uses, and its limitations. Indeed, in terms of power resources, neither North Vietnam nor Afghanistan commanded the power of the United States or the Soviet Union respectively; nevertheless, neither superpower could achieve its objective despite vast economic capabilities, rich resource endowments, and world class military establishments which included astounding nuclear arsenals. These two failures clearly demonstrate that absolute power advantages do not always prevail in the realm of international politics. On the contrary, the wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan confirm that power resources are not perfectly fungible as are hard currencies in the global economy, but instead suggest that they are selective capabilities which may be applied to certain problems and that their use is contingent on specific complimentary circumstances.

Waltz fails to show an appreciation for the limitations of nuclear weapons in asserting that their spread promotes peace and stability. This error is attributable to his conception of unit-level capabilities and how they are used to construct international structure. Waltz maintains that all political units are functionally alike since they all

\[37\text{ In setting the terms and the rationale for the distribution of capabilities, Waltz does not indicate that the uses of power are limited, however, he does concede that the American failure in Vietnam was not due to weakness, but to the limits of military power. See Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 189-90.}\]
perform the same tasks, but that they are, however, distinguished by their greater or lesser ability to perform their functional duties.\(^{38}\) States which possess and utilize their combined capabilities most effectively are the most consequential members of the system; those who command lesser capabilities assume a subordinate role to the great powers. By defining power in terms of combined capabilities, Waltz is able to compare the relative power of a group of states and by evaluating the distribution of capabilities across units, he is able to discern the distributional structure, or polarity of the system. Although aggregating capabilities eases the task of identifying and locating the systemic position of the great powers, combining capabilities obscures the issue-specific uses of a power resource such as nuclear weapons.

Waltz rejects attempts to disaggregate power, arguing that “[t]he economic, military, and other capabilities of nations cannot be sectored and separately weighed,” because certain states are great powers on account of the fact that they excel in all, rather than some, of the cogent capability sectors.\(^{39}\) Moreover, he contends that capabilities may be used to promote interests across different sectors; for example, “[s]tates use economic means for military and political ends; and military and political means for the achievement of economic interests.”\(^{40}\) Waltz’s unambiguous and unyielding position on power aggregation strongly suggests that, in neorealism, capabilities are fungible across

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 97.

\(^{39}\) Waltz cites size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability, and competence as the most important capability sectors. See Ibid., 131.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 94. This view of capabilities and great powers directly contradicts Waltz’s contention that Russia remains a great power by virtue of its nuclear arsenal, which ostensibly decouples military power from economic capability. Waltz, “The Emerging Structure of International Politics,” 50-53; and Kenneth N. Waltz, “The New World Order,” Millennium, 22.2 (1993): 191.
all sectors of power. This view of homogeneous power is particularly problematic since Waltz is equally insistent that nuclear weapons are not a feature of the system, but are unit-level attributes which mitigate a structural effect. It follows logically that in Waltz's terms, nuclear weapons are a unit-level capability, or attribute of power, which are fungible across all sectors of power. Obviously, the historical record does not support this view; on the contrary, nuclear weapons have severely circumscribed military purposes and the moral aversion to nuclear weapons and to their deterrence strategies indicates that their non-use, or deterrent utility, may be marginal too.

Recognizing the difficulties of viewing power as a homogeneous commodity, Keohane suggests relaxing the fungibility assumption by disaggregating power along issue-areas at various levels of aggregation in order to achieve a more discriminating, albeit less parsimonious, power model. This modification is based on a contradiction in Waltz's original work: on the one hand, states are distinguished by their greater or lesser ability to perform certain tasks while on the other hand, Waltz qualifies his view of power by stating that "[d]ifferences in strength do matter, although not for every conceivable purpose."41 This inconsistency in neorealist logic leads Keohane to infer that "any given system is likely to have several structures, differing by issue-areas and according to the resources that can be used to affect outcomes [italics in original]."42 Indeed, nuclear weapons are relevant to the paramount issue-area of international politics, that of survival

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41 Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 189. Buzan also views the disaggregation of power as an improvement of neorealism, however, he, unlike Keohane, believes that Waltz's insistence on combining capabilities is not in the interest of theoretical rigor, but in the interest of constructing a sparse and elegant theory. See Buzan, Jones, and Little, 57.

and security, and are power resources which have very specifically defined purposes that may be used to affect certain outcomes.

If a structure is to be constructed on the basis of security concerns and nuclear weapons, it is essential to first disaggregate Waltz’s notion of capabilities into discrete sectors of power and, second, to identify the uses of nuclear weapons and to correlate them with the appropriate sector of power. Buzan recommends factoring power attributes into four areas: military, economic, political cohesion, and ideology. Distributional structure, he adds, should be interrogated in terms of these overlapping areas which may mutually reinforce, dissipate, or aggravate one another.43 The disaggregation of power into dissimilar sectors and the casting of these sectors in distributional terms “opens up clearer possibilities for a considerable range of more precisely defined structural hypotheses,” which does not affect the boundaries of distributional structure nor the fundamental integrity of neorealism.44 Ultimately, the disaggregation of power facilitates a more advantageous exploration of unit-level power resources, such as nuclear weapons, which may or may not impact certain sectors of power, in a more intelligible and systematic manner.

Notwithstanding Waltz’s certainty that nuclear weapons make at least part of the world more secure, the utility of nuclear weapons is still highly contested among scholars and policy-makers alike. For example, former U.S. Secretary of Defense, Robert

43 Buzan, Jones, and Little, 64. Political cohesion refers to the notion of strong and weak states, or states whose societies are more or less integrated and stable. See Barry Buzan, People, States and Fear, (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 57-109.

44 Buzan, Jones, and Little, 61.
McNamara, asserts that "nuclear weapons serve no military purpose whatsoever. They are totally useless—except only to deter one's opponent from using them." Less rigid than McNamara, William O'Brien claims that just cause for nuclear war is contingent on the "commitment to the defense of certain polities and values but must also include the practical circumstances in which a just cause is proclaimed and defended." Generally speaking, nuclear weapons may be conditionally used to defend the integral parts of a nation, such as its territorial expression, its fundamental institutional structure, and the basic freedoms of its population from catastrophic and irreversible destruction. Moreover, the resort to nuclear weapons must, according to just war principles, be reserved until all other alternatives have been exhausted. Nuclear weapons, in O'Brien's terms, may be employed to defend the most fundamental aspects of society and in the most extraordinary and extreme circumstances.

On a more specific level, Nina Tannenwald argues that there are two principal methods for assessing the roles of nuclear weapons: politically and militarily. From these two perspectives, she suggests that nuclear weapons deter the use of other nuclear weapons, induce a measure of caution in the interactions of nuclear armed adversaries, help forge domestic consensus on foreign and defense policy issues, buttress alliance

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47 The political approach assumes that nuclear weapons are more than military instruments; they are useful for communicating intent, reflecting threats, and signaling political resolve. Proponents of the military approach maintain that nuclear weapons may be used as a deterrent instrument and to affect—either strategically or tactically—the outcome of a conflict. See Nina Tannenwald, "The Changing Role of U.S. Nuclear Weapons," *Nuclear Weapons After the Cold War*, Michele A. Flourney, ed., (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 37-38.
commitments, and contribute to national prestige. Although Tannenwald divides these uses into political and military categories, it is evident that nuclear weapons are squarely a component of military power. Nuclear weapons may solidify alliances or enhance prestige because of their implicit and innate military potential; the elementary utilitarian substance of nuclear weapons is found in their military content rather than in some intrinsic political content. Fundamentally, nuclear weapons are an extremely limited military mean which may be used to serve either a military or political end, and are therefore most appropriately situated within the military sector of Buzan’s taxonomy of power.

Neorealism’s inability to cope with unexpected outcomes, such as the U.S. defeat in Vietnam, is significantly relieved by disaggregating power. To be meaningful in an explanatory context, a power resource must be usable; there must exist the possibility of utilizing a capability as a mean to achieve a certain end. Indeed, Morgenthau insists that the quantitative increase in power gained from the possession of nuclear weapons does not translate into a corresponding increase in national power and that there is an “inverse relationship between the degree of destructiveness of nuclear weapons and their rational usability.” It is clearly evident that nuclear weapons have very limited uses which may be applied only in the most extraordinary circumstances. By accepting the modifications to neorealism offered by Keohane and Buzan, a distributional structure may be generated

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49 To say that nuclear weapons are located in the military sector of power is not to say that they are necessarily and universally useful in a military context.

50 Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, 140.
which is specifically suited to analyzing the effect nuclear proliferation has on peace and stability. Deriving this structure from distributive military power and utilizing it only in issue-areas where nuclear weapons are relevant represents a vast improvement over neorealism insofar as it is sensitive to the limitations of nuclear weapons and it delineates the cogent patterns of strategic interaction within the system.

**Toward a More Efficient Analytical Unit**

The modification of Waltz's second and third tiers of structure permits considering nuclear proliferation in a subsystemic context without simultaneously forfeiting the explanatory power of structural logic or precluding the possibility of using the systemic approach as advocated by Waltz. The idea of a subsystem is not foreign to Waltz's work; he is emphatic in criticizing Morton Kaplan's notion of a subsystem dominant system, asserting that "[a] subsystem approach is no system at all."51 Buzan observes, however, that a subsystem of states is theoretically sustainable since a minimum level of interaction must be present before a system of units exists; a subsystem is a useful and descriptively accurate analytical device because history did not move directly from a Rousseauian state of nature to a system of globally interacting states.52 More specifically, a subsystem is particularly useful for analyzing security issues since "most threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, thus giving

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51 In Kaplan's systems theory, individual states are subsystems which comprise a larger global system. Although Waltz does not speak directly to the possibility of a subsystem of states, his work clearly indicates that anything short of a global system is unacceptable. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 58; Morton A. Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics*, (New York: Wiley, 1964), 125-29.

52 Buzan, Jones, and Little, 73-6.
regional security relations a particular priority within the global pattern." Given their exceptional nature, nuclear weapons are a notable source of strategic interaction and threat in the international system, however, the proliferation of nuclear weapons in specific regions does not inevitably affect, in a strategic context, all states in the system equally. A subsystemic approach to nuclear proliferation takes into account important factors, such as the nuclear motives and security concerns of the principal states involved while retaining the power of a systems theory.

The first step toward constructing a nuclear proliferation subsystem requires a modification of Waltz's second term of structure, the differentiation of units. The exceptional qualities of nuclear weapons suggest that the few states which possess them are qualitatively different from those states which do not. This view of state differentiation is inadvertently supported by Waltz's own contention that nuclear weapons, in addition to bipolarity, are responsible for fifty years of peace among the great powers and for sparing the entire world from the calamitous destruction of great power conflict. Since only a small fraction of the world's states are nuclear powers, it then follows that on the global scale, these nuclear weapons states must be in some capacity, net providers of security, while those who are not nuclear powers, must be net consumers of security. Therefore, for the purposes of evaluating the impact of nuclear proliferation on peace and stability, states should be differentiated by their nuclear weapons status.

53 Ibid., 77.

54 This idea is developed from Helen Milner's notion of a hierarchy of power. For greater detail, see Helen Milner, "The Assumption of Anarchy in International Relations Theory: A Critique," Review of International Studies, 17 (1991): 76.
The second step toward constructing a nuclear proliferation subsystem requires a modification of Waltz’s third term of structure, the distribution of capabilities. Disaggregating capabilities into discrete sectors of power is also conducive to adopting a subsystemic unit of analysis. Basing distributional structure on military power which has been contextualized by the uses of nuclear weapons, yields a structure that explicates the quality and scope of strategic interaction in the international environment and is also issue specific and precise. Defining the scope of strategic interaction serves the purpose of delimiting the boundaries of the subsystem. To be sure, the intensity of strategic interaction between India and Pakistan is much higher and consequential than the strategic interaction between either South Asian state and Mexico. For analytical purposes, limiting distributional structure to military power as conditioned by the uses of nuclear weapons would identify South Asia as an important area for study while Mexico would rightfully be excluded. It is exactly this level of specificity which Waltz’s analytical approach lacks.

A subsystem for considering the impact of nuclear proliferation on peace and stability is constructed by first, differentiating states by their possession of nuclear weapons and second, by discerning the nuclear proliferation driven strategic environment of these states. This bottom-up construction, as opposed to Waltz’s top-down approach, will produce an analytical unit which includes all nuclear powers, regardless of systemic importance, and which is sensitive to the limitations of nuclear power. As an initial point

55 The logic of this idea is heavily influenced by Barry Buzan’s notion of a security complex which identifies a group of states whose security concerns are sufficiently linked so that they may be considered apart from one another. See Barry Buzan, “Third World Regional Security in Structural and Historical Perspective,” The Insecurity Dilemma: National Security in the Third World,” Brian Job, ed., (Boulder: Lynne Reinner, 1992), 167.
of inquiry, opting for a subsystemic unit of analysis, in lieu of the entire system, will help elucidate the prospects for peace in regions where nuclear weapons are present and where member states do not legitimately constitute a principal component of the global system. Equally, this subsystemic approach is intrinsically parsimonious and flexible: it identifies important areas which Waltz's theoretical construction does not and it can grow into a systemic mode of analysis when the strategic interaction of certain states command a global presence. The adoption of a subsystemic unit of analysis, the disaggregation of unit capabilities, and the addition of the interaction capacity tier of structure will enable a more accurate assessment of how nuclear weapons impact state security and will permit a more comprehensive evaluation of how nuclear proliferation may affect global peace and stability.
CHAPTER THREE

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION AND ITS IMPACT ON PEACE AND STABILITY IN SOUTH ASIA

The cessation of the superpower rivalry dramatically reduces the centrality nuclear weapons have heretofore occupied in international politics. While the prospect of nuclear war is no longer an ever present threat in much of the world, these post-Cold War dividends are not enjoyed everywhere. The most ominous threats of nuclear war are now located in regions marked by chronic instability and conflict; several states in the Middle East, East Asia, and South Asia have already developed a nuclear weapons capability or are actively engaged in acquiring one.

Former CIA director, James Woolsey, testified before the US Congress in 1993 that given the intensity and durability of the Indo-Pakistani rivalry, South Asia is the most likely area for the future use of nuclear weapons. Indeed, South Asia is one of the most conflict prone regions of the world. India and Pakistan have fought three major wars since gaining independence in 1947; the wars of 1948 and 1965 were fought over the bitterly contested state of Jammu and Kashmir and the third resulted in the dismemberment of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. This distressing record is largely the legacy of Mohammed Ali Jinnah’s insistence that Hindus and Muslims could not be accommodated within the same political unit since they constitute two separate and distinct nations which are “separated by vast and unbridgeable

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India's history of poor relations with China buttresses and considerably complicates Indo-Pakistani animosity. After nearly a decade of relatively robust ties during most of the 1950s, the spirit of unity and cooperation exhibited by Nehru and Zhou Enlai at the Bandung Conference rapidly deteriorated; China's invasion of Tibet, road-building activities in Indian claimed Aksai Chin, and rejection of the McMahon Line ultimately precipitated war in 1962. India's humiliating defeat and loss of territory marked the beginning of a long period of hostility which has only recently improved. The resumption of high-level state exchanges in 1988 and the expansion of economic and cultural links have dramatically improved bilateral relations, however, more cautious analysts observe that there are several outstanding issues which may hamper a complete Sino-Indian reconciliation.

The fact that extensive nuclear proliferation punctuates these regional and extra-regional conflict dynamics leads non-proliferation advocates to suggest that South Asia is inherently unstable and prone to being engulfed by nuclear war. Waltz dispels these concerns by arguing that "[t]hose who dread a world with more nuclear states do little more than assert that more is worse and claim without substantiation that new nuclear states will be less responsible and less capable of self-control than the old ones have been." This statement is indicative of an erroneous assumption that the experiences of

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new nuclear states will match those of existing nuclear powers and that the possession and appropriate deployment of nuclear weapons will automatically satisfy a state’s security concerns. However, a more fundamental question presupposes those which probe the responsibility and self-control of new nuclear states: will appropriately deployed nuclear weapons satisfy basic Indian and Pakistani security concerns to the extent that the pattern of chronic conflict in South Asia will be ultimately stabilized?

This chapter seeks to explore this question by first defining the extent of the South Asian proliferation issue, which is, for some scholars, a challenge in itself. Using the subsystemic unit of analysis which was developed in the previous chapter, it will become evident that the South Asian proliferation problem includes an extra-regional state, namely China. Second, the relationship between the motives for acquiring nuclear weapons and a state’s primary security concerns must be problematized so as to ascertain more clearly the impact nuclear weapons have on national security and the overall condition of peace and stability. This process will reveal that there is an insufficient identity between the motives for nuclearization and the security threats which nuclear weapons are meant to mitigate. More importantly, this conclusion necessarily demands a fundamental reassessment of Waltz’s general proposition that the slow spread of nuclear weapons is conducive to global peace and stability. After correlating Chinese, Indian, and Pakistani nuclear motives with their principal security concerns, it will be evident that nuclear weapons do not combine with structural forces to promote peace and stability. On the contrary, even when deployed in a deterrence strategy with a secure second-strike capability, nuclear weapons do not satisfy the most pressing security
concerns facing China, India, and Pakistan, they actually erode the level of peace and security enjoyed in South Asia.

**DEFINING THE SCOPE OF SOUTH ASIAN NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION**

In addition to a volatile mix of religious, ethnic, and geo-strategic issues, satisfactorily resolving the South Asian proliferation equation continues to be elusive because of the failure of nonproliferation scholars to fully appreciate the role of China in the regional nuclear environment.\(^5\) Brahma Chellaney attributes this failure to a myopic regional definition of South Asia and to a tendency to view the Indo-Pakistani rivalry as the only consequential issue in the region. Chellaney observes that traditional nonproliferation scholars “find it somewhat analytically problematic to introduce an ‘outside’ country into their regional framework. China is not seen as belonging to South Asia.”\(^6\) The exclusion of China from the South Asian proliferation context is indeed troublesome because India continues to link explicitly its nuclear program to China’s by asserting that curtailing its nuclear activities would place India in an inferior strategic and global position vis-à-vis a nuclear armed China. Chellaney’s cogent point is amply illustrated by reviewing two representative examples of regional or subsystemic analytical units.

A region is commonly defined by a group of states which share a degree of homogeneity; that is, they have in common similar geographical, cultural, and political patterns. In an attempt to identify areas which may be predisposed toward integration or

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\(^5\) Unless otherwise indicated, the term South Asia refers to the traditional geographical definition of the region.

conflict, Bruce Russett operationalizes the notion of a region by differentiating spatially proximate areas of social and cultural similarity that display a degree of economic interdependence, supranational institutional development, and which share common political attitudes or external behavior. It is immediately evident that China is not included in a South Asia defined by these criteria. China and South Asia are socially and culturally dissimilar, enjoy no political integration, share relatively insignificant economic interaction and interdependence, and, apart from the enduring Sino-Pakistani relationship, hold widely divergent political attitudes. At best, Russett can identify what amounts to the traditional geographic notion of South Asia and describe it as an area which may be prone to conflict because of its lack of integrative potential. While Russett progresses toward a unit of analysis which vaguely resembles an issue-specific subsystem, descriptive inaccuracy and unsatisfactory analytical precision renders his regional approach unsuitable for evaluating nuclear proliferation in South Asia.

In contrast to Russett’s regional construction, Barry Buzan’s security complex is a purposive analytical unit dedicated to analyzing security issues in a subsystemic context. Recognizing that security concerns influence and assist in defining regional identities, Buzan constructs his security complex by identifying durable patterns of amity and enmity which are driven by national security imperatives. Thus, a security complex may be defined as a group of states who mutually perceive a substantial level of threat or who enjoy a high level of strategic cooperation to the extent that their “primary security

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concerns are sufficiently linked that their national security cannot be considered apart from one another. 8

Although Buzan's work represents an advance over Russett's regional construction, he explicitly rejects the inclusion of China in the South Asian security complex. The South Asian security complex is, Buzan insists, defined by the Indo-Pakistani rivalry; China falls outside the security complex because it does not perceive India as posing a substantial threat despite the fact that China plays a central role in the Indian security equation. 9 Because Buzan fails to incorporate issue specificity in setting the parameters for defining a security complex, the resulting analytical unit cannot reconcile an aggregate national threat assessment with a more realistic hierarchical ordering of security threats. In other words, matters concerning nuclear weapons would surely place at the top of a hierarchy of security concerns and Beijing is certain to view a nuclear armed India with greater trepidation and anxiety than it would a non-nuclear India. While the security complex is a useful analytical unit for considering more generalized security questions, its lack of precision, in terms of issue specificity, demands that it be rejected for considering South Asian nuclear proliferation issues. An analytical unit which retains Buzan's use of strategic interaction to set subsystem boundaries and which is constructed along a second dimension, namely nuclear weapons related security issues, transcends the constraints of geography and the problems associated with an aggregate threat assessment as opposed to an ordered set of national security interests.


Constructing a dedicated nuclear proliferation subsystem, such as that described in the previous chapter, remedies the insufficient descriptive accuracy of Russett’s operationalized region and the imprecise nature of Buzan’s security complex. Using the traditional geographic conception of South Asia as a starting point, all states should be queried for the possession of nuclear weapons. Having identified India and Pakistan as the region’s only nuclear powers, it is then necessary to discern their principal strategic interaction patterns which are a product of nuclear proliferation related security concerns. Given New Delhi’s keen interest in Beijing’s nuclear arsenal, this second step would rightfully identify and include China, in addition to several other non-nuclear weapons states, in the South Asian nuclear proliferation subsystem. Hence, India, Pakistan, and China constitute the core of a South Asian nuclear proliferation subsystem; the subsystem incorporates non-nuclear weapons states insofar as they interact strategically, in the context of nuclear proliferation, with the core of the subsystem.

The basic structure of this subsystem bears a remarkable resemblance to the Cold War order global power structure. Most striking is the subsystem’s bipolar organization. Characterizing the subsystem as bipolar—despite its accounting for the China factor—duplicates what Chellaney describes as a fundamental error in the treatment of nuclear proliferation in South Asia. Chellaney argues that one of the principal failings of the non-

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10 India and Pakistan are not recognized as official and legitimate nuclear weapons states, however, they are *de facto* nuclear powers. India demonstrated its nuclear prowess by testing a nuclear device in 1974. Although Pakistan has not tested a device, it is widely acknowledged that Pakistan has the wherewithal to produce nuclear weapons. Nawaz Sharif, confirmed this in August 1994 when he announced that Pakistan has developed nuclear weapons during his tenure as Prime Minister. See Brahma Chellaney, “The Challenge of Nuclear Arms Control in South Asia,” *Survival*, 35.3 (1993): 121-22; David Albright and Mark Hibbs, “Pakistan’s Bomb: Out of the Closet,” *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 48.6 (1992): 39-42; and Giles Tremlett, “Bhutto Says Nuclear Program Peaceful,” *United Press International* 9 September 1994.
proliferation community is its application of the Cold War superpower competition “to a much more complex multipolar situation.”\textsuperscript{11} Notwithstanding Chellaney’s view to the contrary, determining polarity by simply counting the number of nuclear powers in the subsystem is inconsistent with neorealism premises. Waltz contends that a bipolar system is one “in which no third power is able to challenge the top two.”\textsuperscript{12} By this definition, the structure of the South Asian nuclear proliferation subsystem is most definitely bipolar since Pakistan is in no position to challenge the subsystem’s preponderant powers, China and India; by every measure, the capabilities of India and China outstrip those of Pakistan. Though it would be a mistake to assume that South Asia’s nuclear future will form a perfect identity with the experiences of the superpowers, one may reasonably expect somewhat congruent outcomes given the conditioning forces of bipolarity which transcend varying temporal and spatial settings.

While considering the bipolar structure of the South Asian nuclear proliferation subsystem, it may be further reasoned, using Waltz’s nuclear peace argument, that overt Indian and Pakistani nuclear weaponization and the development of secure second-strike capabilities will stabilize the chronic pattern of conflict in South Asia and will contribute toward lasting regional peace and stability. Is there sufficient evidence to sustain this optimistic proposition and to simultaneously validate Waltz’s nuclear peace argument? Using the subsystemic analytical device, it is possible to obtain a more thoughtful assessment of South Asian nuclear proliferation and its impact on peace and stability.

\textsuperscript{11} Chellaney, “South Asia’s Passage to Nuclear Power,” 43.
\textsuperscript{12} Kenneth N. Waltz, Theory of International Politics, (New York: Rand McNally, 1979), 98.
Toward this end, it is necessary to explore the incentives for the development and retention of the Chinese, Indian, and Pakistani nuclear programs and to correlate these incentives with their most clear and present security concerns.

INCENTIVES FOR NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION IN SOUTH ASIA

Scholarly work routinely portrays the spread of nuclear weapons in South Asia as purely a competitively driven phenomenon between China, India, and Pakistan. Indeed, Waltz characterizes it as a simple chain reaction effect or a nuclear lineage which starts with the Cold War superpowers, moves to China, then to India, and ends with Pakistan. Nuclear proliferation, according to Waltz, may be attributed to several explanatory factors which may be all linked to identifiable endogenous systemic security concerns; considerations of nationalism, prestige, and glory are less important since "the nuclear military business is a serious one, and we may expect that deeper motives than desire for prestige lie behind the decision to enter it."15 Investigating the incentives for nuclear proliferation in South Asia serves two useful purposes: first, it explicates the sources of insecurity which nuclear weapons are meant to assuage, and second, it validates the suitability of a subsystemic unit of analysis which does not include the system's great powers. This investigation confirms the suitability of the subsystemic unit of analysis, and it also reveals that perceived and readily identifiable security threats are less significant in fueling regional proliferation than Waltz suggests.

As the first nuclear weapons state in the subsystem, the factors that led China to acquire nuclear weapons are of particular interest. Undoubtedly, national security considerations profoundly affected China’s decision to pursue a nuclear weapons capability. Most significant in this regard is China’s relationship with the United States (US); frequent crisis and conflict punctuated a tumultuous and often violent association in the period immediately following the communist takeover in 1949. From a strategic perspective, Washington viewed Maoist China as an aggressive and expansionist power which threatened vital US interests throughout Asia. This perspective was confirmed in the eyes of US policy-makers by China’s role in the Korean War, the 1954 Geneva Conference on Korea and Indochina, and the Taiwan Straits crisis in 1954-55. Believing that military power could stem the rising tide of communist influence in Asia, China became a focal point of the Eisenhower Administration’s “New Look” defense policy and the US repeatedly and openly threatened China with nuclear weapons to achieve policy objectives. Frequent threats of nuclear retaliation, skepticism regarding the reliability of the Soviet nuclear umbrella, and relative military weakness—all of which became increasingly evident during the Korean, Indochinese, and Taiwanese crises—galvanized China to initiate its nuclear weapons program in 1955 with Soviet support. The subsequent rupture of Sino-Soviet relations later in the decade seemingly confirmed the wisdom of this decision. Given the intense hostility of the Sino-American

15 Outlined in NSC 162/2, the “New Look” increased reliance on nuclear weapons in the effort to contain the Soviet Union and its allies. As well, the document specifically cited Taiwan as an area of vital interest and indicated that conflict with China may warrant the use of nuclear weapons. The “New Look” later became analogous with the doctrine of massive retaliation. See Lewis and Xue, 16-20.
16 Ibid., 12, 22-35.
relationship and the break with the Soviet Union, it is at once evident that immediate
security concerns considerably influenced China's decision to develop a nuclear
capability and to test a nuclear device in 1964.

Strategic imperatives also significantly affected India's decision to develop
nuclear weapons. The rapid collapse of Sino-Indian ties in the late 1950s, after nearly a
decade of relatively close relations, culminated in a disastrous war for India. The
humiliating defeat suffered by India in the 1962 Himalayan War left an indelible mark on
Indian defense planning; in the wake of this defeat, India embarked on an ambitious
conventional arms modernization and began to contemplate refocusing its civilian
oriented nuclear power and space programs as their military potential became more
widely appreciated. Shortly after China's initial nuclear test in 1964, active efforts
toward developing nuclear weapons commenced; enthusiasm for the Indian nuclear
weapons program was sustained by superpower support for the NPT, an unwillingness to
rely exclusively on Soviet guarantees to protect vital Indian security interests, the
incursion of the USS Enterprise into the Bay of Bengal during the 1971 Indo-Pakistani
war, and Chinese threats of intervention in support of Pakistan during the 1965 and 1971
Indo-Pakistani wars. Since the successful detonation of a nuclear device in 1974,

17 Chris Smith, India's Ad Hoc Arsenal: Direction or Drift in Defense Policy?, (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

18 In August 1971, India and the Soviet Union concluded the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace and Friendship for a duration
of twenty years. The treaty's security-related clauses cemented a remarkably robust relationship that endured until
the collapse of the Soviet Union. The security clauses were removed when the treaty was renewed by the Soviet
Union's successor, Russia, in 1991. During the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war, the American nuclear-powered aircraft
carrier USS Enterprise entered the Bay of Bengal in what India interpreted as a show of force in support of Pakistan.
See P.K.S. Namboodiri, "Perceptions and Policies in India and Pakistan," India and the Nuclear Challenge, K.
Subrahmanyam, ed., (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1986), 221; Ashok Kapur, "India and Pakistan: Nature and
Elements of Nuclear Deterrence Between Two Regional Rivals," Occasional Paper #28, Centre for Defence and
Security Studies, University of Manitoba, 1995; Raju G.C. Thomas, "South Asian Security in the 1990s," Adelphi

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India’s “keeping the nuclear option open” policy has been fueled by Pakistan’s drive toward a nuclear capability and by a principled rejection of the discriminatory NPT regime. However, “the impetus for an Indian ‘device’ clearly came from the defeat in 1962, followed by the Chinese nuclear test in 1964.”

Pakistan’s nuclear ambitions, like those of China and India, can be easily linked to identifiable external security concerns. India’s decisive victory in the 1971 war, which resulted in the dismemberment of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh, fundamentally altered the South Asian strategic environment. In 1972, while facing growing and seemingly irreversible strategic inferiority, Pakistan launched a determined drive to develop a nuclear capability with the intent of neutralizing India’s burgeoning regional dominance. Once started, terminating this project became an untenable proposition, particularly after the Indian nuclear test in 1974. Robert Wirsing observes that “this unambiguous display of Indian nuclear prowess sent political shockwaves through Pakistan and gave powerful impetus to Islamabad’s fledgling nuclear weapons program;” in the final analysis, Pakistan could not countenance an Indian nuclear monopoly. This chain of events reasonably supports the claim that Pakistan’s nuclear program is driven

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19 Shekar Gupta, “India Redefines Its Role,” Adelphi Paper No. 293, (London: IISS, 1995), 45. It is interesting to note that the precise timing of India’s nuclear test may have had little to do with external security threats. The test is widely suspected to have been Indira Gandhi’s attempt to boost her sagging political fortunes. See Thomas, “Should India Sign the NPT?,” 140.


21 Ibid., 114.
by strategic considerations and is in no small part, a direct response to Indian strategic and nuclear superiority.

Two basic conclusions may be drawn from this brief exploration of the incentives which propel the nuclear programs in the South Asian nuclear proliferation subsystem. First, the desire for nuclear weapons and consequent regional nuclear proliferation is a function of perceived and concrete strategic imperatives; and second, there is an action-reaction incentive linking the China-India-Pakistan nuclear triangle. In more specific terms, it may be said that nuclear and conventional military inferiority in China, India, and Pakistan, whether real or perceived, is most responsible for nuclear proliferation in the South Asian nuclear proliferation subsystem. Although conclusions of this sort structure a large proportion of work dedicated to analyzing proliferation in the subcontinent, a more sensitive and insightful explanation would reject this view as overly simplistic and crude. Internal factors, which are separate from concrete external security concerns, are pivotal in explaining the development of nuclear weapons in China, India, and Pakistan; the forces of nationalism, the rigors of nation-building, and the legacy of history provide enormous incentives for the proliferation. The inclusion of these domestically derived incentives significantly erodes the integrity of explanations which are based solely upon action-reaction imperatives and identifiable external strategic threats. Therefore, it is worthwhile and indeed necessary to reconsider Waltz’s simplistic view of proliferation in the South Asian subsystem to include both internal and external incentives for acquiring a nuclear weapons capability.
Internal incentives appear to be particularly important in influencing Chinese and Indian nuclear ambitions, and to a lesser extent, those of Pakistan. In the case of China, the development of nuclear weapons is in large part, attributable to a particular strategic culture and to the brand of nationalism which imbued China's communist leadership. Lewis and Xue note that Mao Zedong and the communist revolutionary elite came to power intent on redressing the humiliation suffered by China at the height of western imperialism. Though China was never colonized, affirming national sovereignty and independence was a principal objective for the new communist regime in Beijing; Mao believed that the display and command of national military power was an indispensable aspect of statehood. In consonance with this view, Mao also believed that the possession of nuclear weapons dramatically underscored Chinese sovereignty and independence insofar as they symbolized a measure of equality with the great powers, distinguished the People's Republic from its weak and divided predecessors, and restored lost prestige and status. When these internally generated incentives for proliferation are considered, the importance of identifiable external security threats becomes less apparent; in fact, one may sustain a convincing argument suggesting that China would have developed a nuclear weapons capability independent of specific instances of American nuclear diplomacy.

Nationalist proclivities have also had a commensurate impact on the evolution of the nuclear weapons program in India. The beliefs of Jawaharlal Nehru, among them, a

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22 Lewis and Xue, 35.

religious-like faith in the emancipatory promise of scientific innovation, provided the developmental impulse for post-colonial India. Perhaps no other enterprise better represents this commitment to "big science" than nuclear research. Chellaney notes that this emphasis on science and technology is connected to the problems of nation-building; nuclear weapons provide an incentive for political elites who are "determined not to fall prey again to the ravages of foreign rule, and from an internal desire to transcend the ignominy of past history."  

As is the case with China, developing a nuclear capability represented for India an important symbol of sovereignty, independence, and technological and military prowess. Although the timing of India's nuclear weapons program and the underground test in 1974 seem to undermine this view, initial nuclear restraint in India may be attributed to Nehru's ideological aversion to nuclear weapons rather than to a general lack of interest.

Interest in nuclear weapons can be traced back to the founding of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) in 1948. Homi J. Bhabha, the director of the AEC until his death in 1966, was intent on seeing India develop a nuclear weapons capability. Using his extensive control over the AEC and his considerable political influence, Bhabha was able to preserve India's nuclear weapons option during the period when Nehru remained steadfastly opposed to them. Shortly after Bhabha gained exclusive control over the AEC in 1958, "the record suggests an increasing interest in the military applications of

24 Chellaney, "South Asia's Passage to Nuclear Power," 59-60.

25 By the end of the 1950s, Bhabha dominated the AEC by achieving sole control over the planning and implementation of policy. As well, Bhabha enjoyed an extraordinarily close relationship with Nehru which enabled him to consolidate his control over the AEC and to sustain his determination that India would be the world's sixth nuclear power. After India's defeat in the 1962 war, Nehru recognized the latent military potential of a nuclear energy program. See Sharma, "India's Lopsided Science," 32-3; and Smith, 179-80.
nuclear energy. Bhabha’s role in this shift was decisive—he was able to convince Nehru of the diplomatic and strategic importance of nuclear energy.  

Clearly, India did not acquire a sudden interest in nuclear weapons after its war with China; the history prior to the 1962 war suggests that India’s interest in nuclear weapons predates its poor relations with China. Notwithstanding the specific events which lead to the decision to develop nuclear weapons, India’s nuclear evolution bears a great deal of congruence with China’s: strategic imperatives are less consequential in explaining nuclear ambitions than is often expected. The war with China provided the catalyst for developing a capability whose potential already existed and it also forced Nehru to soften his ideological opposition to nuclear weapons.

Although nationalism appears to be an important element in the Pakistani nuclear equation, it figures somewhat differently than it does in the experiences of China and India. There can be no doubt that it was India’s nuclear activities that prompted Pakistan’s nuclear weapons initiative; shortly after Pakistan’s devastating defeat in the 1971 war, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto authorized nuclear weapons research with the purposive intent of developing a nuclear bomb. Nevertheless, Stephen Cohen is careful to point out that it is wrong to describe the Indian and Pakistani nuclear programs as being purely competitively driven. Nationalism has been an important force in propelling the Pakistani nuclear program through daunting technological hurdles and long periods of financial and diplomatic hardship. Advances in nuclear research are perceived to enhance

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26 Sharma, “India’s Lopsided Science,” 35.
Pakistan's global standing, particularly among Islamic countries, and to buttress a
national identity whose legitimacy is openly questioned by Pakistan's arch-rival, India. 28
This linkage is evidenced by widespread domestic support for the nuclear weapons
program across the entire political spectrum in a country which is otherwise deeply
divided along several lines. 29 While nationalism cannot be credited with providing the
initial impulse for the Pakistani nuclear weapons program, it can be credited with
sustaining a program whose strategic utility is often in doubt.

The comprehensive set of incentives which fuel nuclear proliferation in China,
India, and Pakistan clearly suggest that identifiable strategic imperatives, which can be
traced back to the actions of the US and the Soviet Union, are far less important than
Waltz believes. In the cases of China and India, it is most likely that internally generated
incentives, which are manifested in expressions of nationalism, ultimately would have
lead to a nuclear weapons capability even in the absence of compelling external
incentives; American nuclear diplomacy and the 1962 Sino-Indian war simply accelerated
nuclear weapons development in these states. This supposition is supported by Waltz's
contention that it would be a structural anomaly for a state to choose not to become a
great power. 30 Likewise, it would be equally anomalous for an emerging or aspiring great
power, such as China and India, to choose not to acquire all of the attributes of a great
power. Waltz concedes this much by observing that one of the reasons states want
nuclear weapons is because, "great powers always counter the weapons of other great

28 Chellaney, "South Asia's Passage to Nuclear Power," 60.
powers, usually by imitating those who have introduced new weapons." The conclusion that the driving force behind the Chinese and Indian nuclear weapons programs originated from within the state is crucially important because it ruptures the hard linkage Waltz draws between the nuclear activities of the Cold War superpowers and the nuclear initiatives of China, India, and Pakistan. Fundamentally, Waltz's nuclear proliferation lineage does not exist. Therefore, it is most appropriate to adopt the subsystemic unit of analysis, whose analytical focus is trained specifically on China, India, and Pakistan, rather than Waltz's systemic approach which unavoidably ties outcomes in South Asia to the actions of the system's great powers.

This investigation of the motivations for nuclear proliferation also explicates the sources of perceived insecurity which nuclear weapons are intended to mitigate. While it would be ill-advised to ignore the significance of external security threats in this regard, Waltz does not give sufficient attention to insecurities which emanate from within the state. His apparent disinterest in these issues is most likely a function of the rigid separation of the international and domestic realms. Waltz relegates factors which are closely associated with nationalism, such as, the desire for greater prestige, the rigors of nation building, the legacy of history, and affirming national identity, to the domain of the less important because they do not constitute "real" security issues. Though more abstract than Waltz's notion of a security threat, these expressions of nationalism are tangible manifestations of internal insecurity. Enhancing prestige and affirming national

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31 Waltz, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons," 7. India's motives seem to confirm this procession as New Delhi views the possession of nuclear weapons as an essential element to achieving great power status. See Chellaney, "The Challenge of Nuclear Arms Control in South Asia," 128.
identity through the possession of nuclear weapons are examples of how states like China, India, and Pakistan cope with these insecurities; nuclear weapons make them feel more secure without necessarily providing any material security. Therefore, in addition to mitigating security threats that come from outside of the state, nuclear weapons also have an important internal or domestic security dimension which Waltz essentially ignores.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND THE EVOLVING SOUTH ASIAN SECURITY CONTEXT

The security climate within the South Asian subsystem has undergone a remarkable transformation since the birth of India and Pakistan in 1947 and the accession of Mao Zedong’s communists in 1949. The Indo-Pakistani rivalry and China’s history of hostile relations with the US and the Soviet Union have long defined the security environment throughout much of Asia. The details of these hostile relationships need not be recounted here as they are both well-known and extensively documented. What is of interest is the recent shift in the focus of national security theory; seeing that there has been a conspicuous decline in the incidence of inter-state conflict, scholars are focusing greater attention on the problems which emanate from within states while paying less attention to the problems that come from outside states. Security threats which originate from within the state are increasingly coming to define the security agendas in China, India, and Pakistan. While commenting on South Asian security issues, Raju Thomas notes that “[i]t is becoming increasingly clear that the greatest threats to the

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security and stability of South Asia arise from within its own states rather than from without.\textsuperscript{33} The consequences of internal insecurity are not, however, confined to their state of origin, they also significantly affect the security of neighboring states. It is worthwhile considering that internal insecurities like separatism and fundamentalism do not respect the authority of national boundaries and as a result have profound foreign policy implications.\textsuperscript{34} This is not to say that there has been an evaporation of more traditional inter-state national security concerns; the Indo-Pakistani rivalry and China’s relations with its neighbors will continue to be immensely important in shaping the future of Asia. Nonetheless, internal security threats represent the most immediate threat to overall regional security and to the basic integrity of the Chinese and Indian states, and to a lesser extent, the Pakistani state.

Having emerged from the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, China is on the threshold of becoming the world’s next great power. According to the International Monetary Fund, China presently ranks as the world’s second largest economy, and by some estimates, it will surpass the US by early 2010 as the largest.\textsuperscript{35} While the world marvels at the Chinese economic miracle, Henri d’Antoine warns that too little attention is being paid to the “political and economic rifts that are threatening to tear apart the fabric of China.”\textsuperscript{36} Principally, the legitimacy of the present regime is contingent on

\textsuperscript{33} Thomas, “South Asian Security in the 1990s,” 19.

\textsuperscript{34} Waltz would most likely argue that as domestic attributes, internal security threats are of no consequence since his theory is one of international politics, not national politics.


continued economic prosperity; this is particularly important when it is considered that communism, the ideological cement of China, has been discredited.\textsuperscript{37} While economic liberalization and market-based reforms have produced spectacular growth, it has also caused several unintended and potentially threatening consequences. Ultimately, the future of the communist regime in Beijing and its great power ambitions rest on its ability to pacify a complex set of economic, political, social, and environmental forces.

The most ominous outgrowth of Deng Xiaoping’s economic liberalization policy is the re-emergence of regionalism in China. Fueled by the establishment of trade- and investment-friendly special economic zones, the impressive growth of coastal provinces creates enormous national disparities in wealth and power, and erodes the cohesion of the Chinese state.\textsuperscript{38} Beijing is finding it increasingly difficult to assert its authority over these regional economic engines; Gerald Segal notes that several provinces have defied Beijing by using their own \textit{de facto} currencies, buying energy resources on the international market, and using provincial military force to secure food commodities.\textsuperscript{39} This pattern of disparity between wealthy and poor provinces is duplicated among China’s population. The benefits of economic liberalization have not positively affected the lives of the most Chinese, particularly those that live in ethnically unstable areas such as Tibet, Xinjiang, and Mongolia. Despite the statistics, most Chinese must contend with a society fraught with rampant inflation, corruption, rising unemployment, and an erosion of social

\textsuperscript{37} Arthur Waldron, “After Deng the Deluge,” \textit{Foreign Affairs}, 74.5 (1995), 149; and Segal, 44.

\textsuperscript{38} Segal, 48.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibidx., 45-7.
benefits. These problems are exacerbated by what some scholars regard as a looming disaster in China: environmental degradation. Vaclav Smil contends that the costs of demographic pressures, deforestation, soil erosion, water shortages, and pollution may depress development and eventually grow into inter-provincial or regional conflict. Notably, these internal security themes—regionalism, social problems, ethnic unrest, and environmental degradation—all have in common the possibility of catalyzing the disintegration of the Chinese state; this may prove to be prophetic when it is considered that “when China has disintegrated [in the past] it was at least initially for internal reasons, with foreigners taking advantage of subsequent weakness.”

As the foreign threat to India recedes, it is increasingly evident that internal insecurity and weakness is the most salient feature of the Indian security environment. Fundamentally, the Indian state is in a period of decline: the institutional structure of the state is in decay; the territorial integrity of the state is threatened by multiple secessionist claims and the secular-pluralist identity of the state is under attack from religious nationalism. The decay of India’s institutions may be attributed to the excesses of political elites and, ironically, to the increased politicization and enfranchisement of India’s population. Indira Gandhi’s propensity to personalize power and to concentrate

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42 Segal, 57.
power at the center significantly eroded the basic integrity and health of India’s state institutions and party system.\(^4\)\(^3\) Equally, increasing levels of political awareness, education, and social mobility have led to intensified competition among ethnic, religious, linguistic, and caste groups; the demands of these groups have overloaded the capacity of the political system to arbitrate conflicts and have contributed to significant civil unrest.\(^4\)\(^4\) Institutional decay has also contributed to the separatist movements which threaten the territorial integrity of the state. Sumit Ganguly argues that the steady erosion of the “autonomy and integrity of key political institutions” and greater political consciousness best explains the growth of separatist violence in the crucially important states of Kashmir and Punjab.\(^4\)\(^5\) Moreover, the travails of modernization and the dislocation caused by Bangladeshi migration abet separatist sentiments in the eastern states of West Bengal, Assam, Mizoram, and Nagaland.\(^4\)\(^6\)


\(^5\) Although the separatist movement in Punjab has been controlled to some extent by brutal Indian repression, the fighting in Kashmir continues. According to Indian government reports, 10,000 people have died since the 1989 Kashmiri uprising. Hospital and police sources claim that 17,000 people have died and Mohammed Salahuddin, leader of the Hizbul mujahideen group, claims that Indian forces have killed 42,421 Kashmiris. See “U.S. Congressmen Visit Kashmir,” United Press International 16 November 1994; Jawed Naqvi, “Force Useless in Kashmir—Paramilitary Chief,” Reuters 16 November 1994; Anwar Iqbal, “Kashmiri Militant Sees No Hope for Peace,” United Press International 15 November 1994; Sumit Ganguly, “Ethno-Religious Conflict in South Asia,” *Survival*, 35.2 (1993): 88, 90-6. The Kashmir insurgency has an important international facet as Pakistan is known to be providing support for certain separatists groups. For a detailed discussion, see Robert G. Wirsing, *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute: On Regional Conflict and Its Resolution*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 111-142.

Long festering separatist movements have greatly facilitated the rise of the third corrosive force which threatens the Indian state: Hindu nationalism. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—India’s most prominent Hindu organization—has succeeded in transforming itself from a relatively insignificant political party into the principal opposition of India’s leading political organization, the Congress Party. The BJP has built its political fortunes by capitalizing on the general decay of Indian political institutions and by exploiting the dislocations created by modernization and human migration; these weaknesses and dislocations are manipulated by the BJP to promote the perception that minorities are benefiting disproportionately at the expense of Hindus. In a society marked by copious ethnic, religious, and linguistic cleavages, the BJP’s anti-minority discourse presents a distinct danger to the integrity of the Indian state as it is likely to provoke intense communal upheaval, particularly between Hindu and Muslim communities. To underscore this point, one only needs to look at the dramatic destruction of the Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhya, in 1992, by a large mob mobilized by Hindu nationalists and the reactionary violence which followed the incident. It is likely that the India of the future will be marked by weak and ineffective governments, chronic crisis, and social upheaval given the mutually reinforcing qualities of Hindu nationalism, institutional decay, and secessionist impulses.

47 Sandy Gordon, The Search for Substance: Australia-India Relations into the Nineties and Beyond, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1993), 59-64; and Ganguly, 89. It is interesting to note that the BJP has also built its fortunes by advocating for a strong military establishment, including nuclear weaponization. See Sandy Gordon, “Indian Security Policy and the Rise of the Hindu Right,” South Asia, 27 Special Issue (1994): 191.

Although most scholars agree that Pakistan's overall security condition has declined, despite the end of the war in Afghanistan, the termination of the Cold War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, internal insecurity is no less important in Pakistan than it is in India and China. Pakistan, like India, suffers from prevalent civil unrest. In the province of Sindh, nationalist agitators decry the migration of non-Sindhis into the province, some of whom receive preferential treatment from the government. Former President, Zia ul-Haq, established a quota system for the military which favored Punjabis and Pathans, two groups which are already over-represented in this, the most important and influential institution in Pakistani society.\footnote{Ganguly, 100-2.} The Afghani war has also left a legacy of civil unrest in the frontier province of Baluchistan; ethnic tensions between Pathan refugees who are unwilling to return to Afghanistan and the native Baluch population have escalated precipitously since the Soviet withdrawal.\footnote{Maqsudul Hasan Nuri, “Pakistan’s Security Perceptions in the Post-Cold War Era,” \textit{South Asia After the Cold War: International Perspectives}, Kanti P. Bajpai and Stephen P. Cohen, eds., (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 72; and Ganguly, 94.} On a broader level, the 2.3 million Afghani who took refuge in Pakistan have become a major burden on Pakistani society; Pakistan's economy, which suffers from major structural problems, is unable to assimilate such a large group of poor and under-educated people.\footnote{Marvin G. Weinbaum, “Post-Communist Afghanistan: Implications for Pakistan and the Region,” \textit{South Asia After the Cold War: International Perspectives}, Kanti P. Bajpai and Stephen P. Cohen, eds., (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 220-21; and Robert E. Looney, “Budgetary Dilemmas in Pakistan: Costs and Benefits of Sustained Defense Expenditures,” \textit{Asian Survey}, 34.5 (1994): 418.} This problem is further confounded by a rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism and a drug-and-gun culture which have “no doubt made their deep inroads in [Pakistani] society and cannot be reversed anytime soon.”\footnote{Weinbaum, 221.} To be sure, ethnic unrest, refugee flows, and the drug-and-gun
cultures have contributed to a level of lawlessness in Pakistan which is rarely seen elsewhere; overcoming these internal insecurities will be a profound challenge in a country which is noted for weak and ineffective governments and prolonged periods of military rule.

It is clearly evident that internal security issues are the most important facet of the security equation in the South Asian subsystem. India's rapprochement with China, though not a compete resolution of differences, makes war between these two Asian giants unlikely. Equally, India's preponderance of power, compared to Pakistan, and Islamabad's increased strategic, economic, and diplomatic isolation markedly reduce the probability of a fourth Indo-Pakistani war. On the other hand, ethnic conflict, fundamentalism, separatist claims, distribution of wealth disparities, and environmental degradation represent the most likely causes of future conflict and suffering in China, India, and Pakistan. These security threats are all the more important when it is considered that in addition to their internal dimension, internal security threats enormously impact foreign policy decisions and the quality of relations between states. Admittedly, the disintegration of China, India, or Pakistan is unlikely if for no other reason than that successful secessions are indeed uncommon and states rarely die. The point, however, is that at the present time, internally derived security concerns are more likely to be the source of major conflict than threats that come from outside the state.
MOTIVES, THREATS, AND THE DESIRABILITY OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

This chapter began by posing the question: will appropriately deployed nuclear weapons satisfy basic Indian and Pakistani security concerns to the extent that the pattern of chronic conflict in South Asia will be ultimately stabilized? To answer this question, it was necessary to overcome the conceptual limitations of regions theorizing which has circumscribed the usefulness of much work concerned with proliferation in South Asia. Using the subsystemic unit of analysis which was developed in Chapter Two, it was determined that China is a central actor in the South Asian nuclear proliferation equation and that it must be included in the analytical framework. Second, the motives and incentives which prompted the nuclear weapons programs in China, India, and Pakistan were explored and it was concluded that identifiable strategic imperatives are less important in fueling these programs than is usually acknowledged; that internally generated incentives, manifested in the form of nationalism, would have led to the development of a nuclear weapons capability even in the absence of compelling external incentives; and that there is structural logic to support these claims. Third, the most prominent feature of the emerging security environment in the South Asian subsystem, namely the growth of security threats which originate from inside the state, was examined and it was evident that threats of this nature represent the greatest, though not the only, threat to the basic integrity of the Chinese, Indian, and Pakistani states.

These conclusions portend ominously for Waltz’s contention that the slow spread of nuclear weapons contribute to international peace and stability. Fundamentally, there is a lack of congruence between the motives for acquiring nuclear weapons and the
prevailing security concerns that they are intended to mitigate. Even if it were conceded that a stable mutual deterrence relationship between China, India, and Pakistan satisfied all external insecurities, nuclear weapons are patently irrelevant in satisfying the most pressing security concerns which presently affect the members of the South Asian nuclear proliferation subsystem. Nuclear weapons have little, if any, utility in mitigating internal insecurities such as ethnic conflict and environmental degradation. The fact that nuclear weapons deter nuclear weapons, and as such, are instruments of power to be used between states, rather than within states, compels the conclusion that they have marginal value in the South Asia security context.
CONCLUSION

According to the precepts of Waltz’s nuclear peace argument, the establishment of a stable three-way mutual deterrence relationship in South Asia would stabilize the pattern of conflict which has collectively resulted in four major wars between China, India, and Pakistan. Indeed, the China-India-Pakistan nuclear triangle is an unusually useful case study when it is considered that, structurally, the South Asian nuclear proliferation subsystem bears a remarkable correspondence with the Cold War global order that provides the basis for Waltz’s analysis. When viewed through the lens of Waltz’s nuclear peace argument, it would appear that nuclear proliferation is conducive to regional peace and stability.

The most notable similarity between the Cold War and South Asian power structures is a bipolar pattern of organization. By Waltz’s logic, one may expect the subsystem’s predominant powers, China and India, to rely on internal capabilities to balance power and to promote their interests rather than depending on like-minded states and coalitions to manage their security concerns. The enhanced certainty and clarity associated with a bipolar system should foster a measure of security in a relationship that has been marked by high levels of mistrust and which may in the future evolve into a great power rivalry. The addition of nuclear weapons to the Sino-Indian relationship would, Waltz suggests, undoubtedly reinforce and buttress the favorable properties of the bipolar power structure. The terrifying power of nuclear weapons would compel cautious behavior and diminishes the probability of war insofar as it raises potential costs of war to
unacceptably high levels. Likewise, nuclear weapons reduce uncertainty because the threat they convey contributes more to a state’s security than to its ability to conquer territory.\(^1\) Therefore, the possibility of war precipitously declines when the use of military force to resolve outstanding differences, such as the Sino-Indian border dispute, may invite disproportionate and catastrophic nuclear retaliation.

The addition of a third nuclear decision-making center, namely Pakistan, would not adversely affect the integrity of subsystemic bipolarity or its conditioning influence on Sino-Indian behavior. Waltz insists that simply possessing nuclear weapons does not alter a state’s systemic position however, the possession of a secure second-strike capability would mitigate Pakistan’s security concerns with its arch-rival, India.\(^2\) The same dissuasive qualities of nuclear weapons which would induce cautious behavior and increased certainty in the Sino-Indian relationship would also promote similar outcomes in Indo-Pakistani interaction. Furthermore, the stabilization of subsystemic interaction would not be disrupted by historical patterns of amity and enmity; Pakistan’s enduring and unusually close ties with China should not be construed as being a threat to India’s security because there is no advantage gained by combining nuclear arsenals. “Nuclear forces do not add up,” Waltz contends, what matters most is not the size of an arsenal, but the quality of its warheads, delivery vehicles, surveillance and detection devices, and

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\(^2\) Waltz argues that deterrence of the large by the small is not problematic because a successful deterrence strategy is contingent on a secure second-strike capability. Building such a force is relatively easy, even for minor powers, since nuclear weapons are easy to hide and only a very small number of warheads are needed to inflict unacceptable damage. Ibid., 13-19.
command and control systems. Also of little concern would be the religious-based intensity of Indo-Pakistani animosity; Waltz would surely counter this fear by arguing that even the most virulent Islamic fundamentalists and Hindu nationalists are sensitive to the costs of nuclear retaliation.

In the final analysis, Waltz’s nuclear peace argument is indeed forceful when it is taken on its own terms. The anomaly of fifty years of great power peace during the Cold War is a difficult phenomenon to explain otherwise. Equally, the undeniably horrific destructive capacity of nuclear weapons makes any serious contemplation of using war as an instrument of national policy an irrational, if not suicidal, proposition. One may reasonably conclude that the nuclearization of South Asia will promote peace and stability by pacifying the security concerns which have led to war in the past and by making the future use of force unacceptably risky.

In spite of the attraction of Waltz’s deductive logic and the congruence between the South Asian subsystem and the Cold War order, his contention that the slow spread of nuclear weapons is conducive to peace and stability is highly problematic both theoretically and empirically. The nuclear peace argument contains two consequential theoretical errors. First, neorealism, as constructed by Waltz, lacks a sufficient degree of analytical precision to meaningfully assess the impact of nuclear proliferation on peace and stability in many parts of the world. Since Waltz argues that the fate of lesser powers requires paying most attention to actions of great powers, aspiring nuclear weapons states

\[3\text{Ibid., 3.}\]
whose ambitions are not adequately linked to the conduct of the great powers are essentially written out of his theoretical perspective. Second, Waltz incorrectly assumes that appropriately deployed nuclear weapons impact positively on a state’s overall security. On the contrary, it is evident that nuclear weapons are not perfectly fungible instruments of power; they have certain limitations and characteristics which may have a benign or malign effect on a state’s security situation.

These errors can be corrected by modifying Waltz’s second and third definitional terms of international structure and by adopting Buzan’s notion of systemic interaction capacity to develop a subsystemic unit of analysis which departs somewhat from Waltz but is still sustainable in the broader neorealist/structural realist theoretical framework. Theoretical space for a subsystem was created by exploring the technological and normative aspects of nuclear weapons. This process revealed that nuclear weapons states are functionally different from non-nuclear weapons states and that limitless destructive power ironically limits the utility of nuclear weapons as purposive instruments for addressing national security concerns. These conclusions enable the construction of a subsystem which retains the explanatory power of a systems theory, includes all states irregardless of their systemic position, and which is sensitive to the limitations of nuclear weapons as instruments of power.

The utility of this subsystemic approach was tested by using it to assess how the overt nuclearization of South Asia would impact regional peace and stability. After constructing a subsystem comprised of China, India, and Pakistan, it was then necessary
to explore the relationship between the motives and incentives for developing a nuclear weapons capability and the principal sources of insecurity which nuclear weapons are ostensibly intended to mitigate. Contrary to Waltz's assertion that a lineage links the nuclear ambitions of China, India, and Pakistan with the actions of the US and the Soviet Union, it is apparent that domestic incentives, rather than external strategic imperatives, are most responsible for the development of nuclear weapons in China and India, and to a lesser extent in Pakistan. Equally, while it is evident that external security concerns continue to be important in the South Asia subsystem, security threats which come from within the state represent the most clear and present danger to the integrity of China, India, and Pakistan. This obvious lack of consonance between the motives for acquiring nuclear weapons and the most importunate security concerns which presently threaten China, India, and Pakistan compels the judgment that nuclear weapons cannot contribute to South Asian peace and stability to the degree that Waltz suggests.

Fundamentally, the nuclear peace argument, which is constructed on the conditioning and disposing forces of international structure and the intrinsic characteristics of nuclear weapons, fares rather poorly when applied to an empirical case study such as South Asia. Even when considered on the most favorable terms, Waltz's argument cannot comprehend the most imminent threat to peace and stability in South Asia, internal insecurity. Waltz essentially banishes these concerns to the realm of the less important; he notes that the internal use of nuclear weapons "would produce a national tragedy, not an international one."\(^4\) This type of reasoning is not only fallacious,

\(^4\) Ibid., 11.
it is the product of a false dichotomy in which Waltz rigidly separates the international sphere from the national sphere. He does not, however, similarly dichotomize the practical application of his nuclear peace argument. Without qualification, Waltz argues that the “slow spread of nuclear weapons will promote peace and reinforce international stability,” and “nuclear weapons are...a tremendous force for peace and afford nations that possess them the possibility of security at reasonable cost [italics added in both].”\(^5\)

Notwithstanding his certainty, the outcomes of internal security issues rarely respect the authority of international borders. For example, resurgent separatism in Kashmir is a domestic dispute with an enormously important international facet; likewise, Bangladeshi migration to Assam is at the outset an international problem which manifests itself in India as domestic separatist problem. If it were conceded that nuclear weapons alleviate all external sources of insecurity, Waltz’s nuclear peace argument is still of dubious value because nuclear weapons cannot meaningfully affect internal sources of insecurity.

Accepting Waltz’s national-international dichotomy does little to enhance the rigor of his nuclear peace argument because there is a large and convincing body of literature which argues that the overt nuclearization of South Asia would adversely affect existing external security conditions along both the Sino-Indian and Indo-Pakistani axes. Sino-Indian relations, as evidenced by Rajiv Gandhi’s visit to Beijing in 1988 and Li Peng’s visit to New Delhi in 1991, are at a positive level unknown since the 1950s. The outgrowth of this rapprochement, the Sino-Indian Joint Working Group, has realized

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\(^5\) Ibid., 28; and Kenneth N. Waltz, “Nuclear Myths and Political Realities,” *American Political Science Review*, 84.3 (1990): 731.
tangible, albeit modest, success in discussions covering an array of bilateral concerns including, troop levels, trade affairs, environmental issues, confidence building measures, and military exchanges. At the present time, China is not especially concerned with the Indian military threat and it does not pose an immediate military threat to India in spite of the fact that several outstanding issues continue to be a source of tension between Beijing and New Delhi. The border dispute, the Tibet problem, and Beijing’s extremely close political and military ties with Pakistan may preclude a permanent and lasting reconciliation; as well, great power aspirations may eventually come into conflict and ultimately evolve into a competitive rivalry.

Despite sources of tension, Sandy Gordon argues that “neither India nor China have any interest in destabilising the relationship. Each has significant domestic problems to solve. Each has other, more pressing and imminent foreign policy issues to deal with.” Surely, the overt deployment of nuclear weapons by India would destabilize Sino-Indian relations. Bonnie Glaser observes that “China’s only direct security concern regarding India is the possibility of New Delhi deploying a long-range delivery capability for nuclear weapons.” The acceleration of nuclear proliferation in South Asia would

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9 Gordon, The Search for Substance, 76.

10 Glaser, 267.
certainly constitute a gross magnification of a security threat which is otherwise not very significant. In fact, Gordon argues that weaponization in South Asia may very well precipitate a nuclear arms race between China and India.\textsuperscript{11} India’s deployment of nuclear weapons would without a doubt reverse recent gains and return the Sino-Indian dialogue to one marked by profound mistrust and suspicion. Any development which would lead India to deploy nuclear weapons would be viewed in Beijing with the greatest concern and would most likely result in an absolute erosion of security between China and India.

It is equally doubtful whether the overt deployment of nuclear weapons will positively affect Indo-Pakistani security. The enormous asymmetry of power which characterizes the Indo-Pakistani rivalry would make establishing a stable mutual deterrence relationship extremely difficult, if possible at all. Although a Pakistani nuclear capability is often viewed as the great equalizer to India’s military superiority, it is most unlikely that, over the long-run, Pakistan will be able to balance India’s preponderance of power.\textsuperscript{12} India perceives itself as the strategic equal of China, not Pakistan, and will not accept the stabilization of nuclear weapons at levels which resemble a sense of parity with the latter.\textsuperscript{13} Furthermore, once the threshold for nuclearization is breached, pressure for improving and refining nuclear weapons and their delivery systems will most likely


intensify. The foreboding obstacles will probably prevent the institutionalization of a stable mutual deterrence relationship between India and Pakistan. Given the difficulties associated with establishing a stable mutual deterrence relationship, in addition to the political and economic costs which would unquestionably accompany overt nuclearization, one may reasonably assert that further Indian and Pakistani nuclear proliferation will erode what is an already tenuous level of security in South Asia.

The benefits of nuclear proliferation in South Asia are indeed elusive. While it may be conceded that nuclear weapons prevent the outright conquest and absolute destruction of states which possess them, this concession speaks to a question which no one is asking. In both bilateral relationships—China-India and India-Pakistan—there is an absence of political will and military capability to conquer and occupy. When considered in more realistic terms, Waltz’s nuclear peace argument is far from convincing. Nuclear weapons employed in a stable mutual deterrence relationship do nothing to satisfy what are now the most troublesome sources of insecurity in South Asia. The particular causes and effects of growing regionalism in China, separatism in India, and fundamentalism in Pakistan, dramatically underscore the limitations of nuclear weaponry. In a more conventional inter-state context, nuclear weapons appear to increase uncertainty in South Asia rather than decrease it. Overt Indian and Pakistani nuclearization is certain to strain vastly improved Sino-Indian ties and the problems of founding a stable Indo-Pakistani deterrence relationship is at odds with the nuclear future promised by Waltz.

14 Chris Smith, *India’s Ad Hoc Arsenal: Direction or Drift in Defence Policy?*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 199.
When viewed through a South Asian lens, one cannot sustain an argument which posits that the interaction between international structure and the intrinsic qualities of nuclear weapons necessarily promotes international peace and stability. From a theoretical perspective, the failure to include all relevant states, regardless of systemic position, severely circumscribes the explanatory scope of Waltz's nuclear peace argument. A further theoretical weakness is his inability to make intelligible security threats that come from within states but which, nonetheless, have a tremendous impact on peace and stability outside of states. Waltz also misinterprets how the exceptional characteristics of nuclear weapons affect a state's security. Nuclear weapons are not, as Waltz treats them, universal power resources. In fact, the precise opposite is true; nuclear weapons, because of their exceptionality, are remarkably limited power resources which appeal to a very narrowly defined set of national security concerns. These problems point to a more general problem in Waltz's theoretical perspective: he pays too much attention to the conditioning and disposing forces of international structure and not enough attention on unit level attributes and processes. As a perspective in the nuclear proliferation debate, Waltz's nuclear peace argument, though theoretically interesting, does not appear to address the most important questions and should be rejected in favor of a more traditional approach to the issue.
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