STRUCTURAL REALISM: THE IMPERIALISM OF GREAT POWER[1]

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How can we apply structural-realist theory to understand the causes of the US invasion of Iraq? There are three steps: theory, application, and testing. First, one must understand the theory. Thus I begin this chapter by providing an overview of structural-realist theory and discussing its central concepts and causal claims. Second, I consider whether and how these claims can be applied to the invasion of Iraq. Finally, I test the ability of hypotheses derived from these claims to explain commonly-agreed facts about the invasion, as well as other US attacks on Iraq from 1991 to 2003. From the structural-realist point of view, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 is just one of many great power attacks on and interventions in weak states made possible by international anarchy. In other words, it is a case of the imperialism of great power.

Situating Structural-Realist Theory

The central claim of structural-realist theory is that the anarchic international-political system is a permissive environment that enables states to behave as they like (Waltz 1959: 233; 1979: 92). This argument, which has long been implicit in realist writings, was first made explicit by Kenneth N. Waltz, who developed structural-realist theory in *Theory of International Politics* (1979). Structural realism is positivist, realist, deductive, and systemic. In this section, I explain these categories and demonstrate why I characterize structural realism as I do.

Positivists argue that there is an objective reality that exists and can be known, if only imperfectly, by developing and evaluating theories. Theories can be developed to answer particular causal questions, applied to specific historical situations, and tested and compared in terms of their explanatory power. In this way, one can gain insight into why things happen, what to expect in the future, and how to prepare for or alter expected outcomes.

Both classical and structural realists are positivist. In fact, positivism is one of the main reasons they call themselves "realist." As Hans J. Morgenthau, a classical realist, explains, "Realism … believes … in the possibility of distinguishing … between what is true objectively and rationally, supported by evidence and illuminated by reason, and what is only a subjective judgment" (1978: 4).

Yet realists differ in the extent to which they believe that "fact," "truth," or "reality" exist apart from our perceptions of them. At one extreme are unconditional positivists, who take for granted both the existence of a real world and our ability to identify that world. Stanley Hoffmann, a classical realist, exemplifies this approach when he claims that some theoretical accounts are close to reality, while others are "far removed from reality" and even "mutilate reality" (1970: 392; 1959: 350).

At the other extreme are contingent positivists, like Waltz, a structural realist, who argues that the notion of a "reality that is out there," entirely separate from and knowable by the observer, is constructed. According to Waltz, "If we could directly apprehend the world that interests us, we would have no need for theory" (1979: 4-5). By developing concepts to describe

the kind of events we seek to explain, and by developing, applying and testing theories about the causes of these outcomes, we can understand, at least in general terms, why certain outcomes recur (1-2, 6, 8, 14).[2]

Realism is not the only positivist IR theory. Most liberal and Marxist theories, as well as many constructivist and feminist theories, are also positivist. What further unites realists is their claim that knowledge of "reality" does not necessarily result in control over it and, therefore, the ability to change it to conform to our preferences. In particular, realists agree, it is unlikely that international relations can be transformed from its conflictive past and present, in which war has been a recurring outcome, to a future marked by what Immanuel Kant called "eternal peace" (1914). Instead, realists argue that "the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must" (Thucydides 1993: 290). Thus international law is the "law of the jungle" (Kipling 2008: 186-9). The only way to restrain great powers is to balance their power.

Although realists agree that conflict, war, great-power interventions in weak states, and balances of power are likely to recur, classical and structural realists disagree about the causes of these outcomes. These differences are the result of their different approaches to theory building. Classical realists take an inductive approach that focuses on cataloging specific acts by specific humans. Thus they attribute the outcomes of conflict, war, intervention, and power balancing to human nature and intelligence (Morgenthau 1978: 3, 6-7, 42-6). By contrast, Waltz and other structural realists take a deductive approach that abstracts from all of the variety and complexity of the world to develop a mental picture of causes and effects within a conceptual "international political system" that consists of a structure (anarchy and relative capabilities) and interacting units (states). According to structural realists, conflict, war, and intervention occur because there is no international sovereign to prevent them. Moreover, balances of power recurrently form because, in the absence of a world government, states worry about how other states will use their capabilities (Waltz 1979: 8, 68, 102, 126).

According to Waltz and other structural realists, no amount of attention to the actors and processes of international relations will elicit understanding of international-political outcomes. Instead, one must build IR theory by using creative thought to depart from reality and imagine the unobservable organization of the international realm (1979: 9). Specifically, one must build a systemic theory because reductionist (unit-level) approaches that focus on the nature of men and states repeatedly run into the same problems. These problems are equifinality and unintended consequences. In international relations, equifinality is evident in the fact that statesmen and states of all types engage in war (58, 78). Unintended consequences, too, are widely apparent. For example, in what is known as the "security dilemma," actions by one state to enhance its security inadvertently threaten others, who then act in ways that reduce the first state's security (Herz 1950; Jervis 1978; Waltz 1979: 65, 186-187).[3] Equifinality and unintended consequences demonstrate that something more than the attributes and motivations of states affect outcomes. That "something" must have to do with the environment in which states operate. Thus systemic theories, which focus on that environment, are needed.

Because structural realism is a deductive theory, it offers a parsimonious explanation for conflict, war, and other international outcomes. In other words, its explanation is spare and can

be applied across a variety of cases. This broad applicability comes at the expense of historical detail in particular times and places. For structural realists, since the policies and motives of states are "endlessly varied," the challenge is not to enumerate policies and motives in all of their detail but to investigate whether they arise from similar causes and have similar effects (Waltz 1979: 69, 91, 122). According to them, the answers to these questions lie in the anarchic structure of the international political system.

Structural Realist Theory: Concepts and Claims

The central concept in structural-realist theory is the international-political system. Waltz abstracts from all of the particulars of international politics to arrive at this concept, which he defines sparely in terms of "a structure and interacting units" (1979: 79). According to Waltz, the structure of the international-political system has three attributes. First, the system is anarchic. There is no authoritative world government with enforcement power (88). Second, the system is composed of two or more "like units" (independent, sovereign states) that, in general, seek to survive but have different material capabilities to do so (91, 118). The major actors or "great powers" are those with the most capabilities (93-6). Third, particular international systems can be differentiated according to the number of major actors or the "distribution of capabilities" across units. Systems with three or more great powers are multipolar, systems with two or more roughly equal major powers are bipolar, and systems with one state whose power is unmatched by any other are unipolar (1979: 97-98; 2000: 27-8).

From these concepts, Waltz and other structural realists deduce how the international-political system will operate. The first proposition structural realists derive from the concept of the anarchic international-political system is that states can behave as they like. Because there are no restrictions on what states can do deliberately or inadvertently to harm one another, states must help themselves if they are to survive and obtain any other goals they may have (1979: 91-2). At a minimum, states must attend to their internal survival (ability to avoid revolution, disintegration, and collapse) and external survival (ability to avoid conquest and union) (Adams 2000: 83; 2006: 18-19). Thus, states must develop a broad range of material capabilities, including "population and territory, resource endowment, economic capabilities, military strength, political stability, and competence" (Waltz 1979: 131).

As states develop capabilities, they empower themselves to take the offense and deliberately attack other states or otherwise intervene in their affairs. International anarchy makes it possible for any state to initiate such behavior. In the absence of a world government to prevent, stop, or punish such behavior, attacks, conquests, and other interventions "occur because there is nothing to prevent them." In other words, international anarchy is their permissive or ultimate cause. By contrast, the immediate or proximate cause of a particular attack or intervention is the match that lights the fire laid by international anarchy at a certain time and place. Among the proximate causes of conflict and war are the motives of states that initiate them. According to Waltz, these motives "are endlessly varied." At the extreme, a state's ambition may be to "conquer the world" (1959: 232; 1979: 91). Wars initiated by states seeking to expand their influence can be characterized as wars of ambition.

From the combination of international anarchy and differences in relative capability, Waltz and other structural realists deduce that great powers are especially tempted to attack and intervene in other states, especially states weaker than themselves. When great powers do so, their actions are best understood not in terms of their particular motives but in terms of what makes the behavior possible: their great power. Differences in capitalist, socialist, authoritarian, and liberal imperialism are interesting and important, but they are all permutations of "the imperialism of great power," defined as the whole set of efforts on the part of great powers to "manag[e], control[…], and direct[…] world or regional affairs" (Waltz 1979: 26-7, 62-4, 205). Among these efforts may be attempts to impose or enforce international law. But because international "authority … reduces to …capability," international law is likely only to be enforced on the weak, not on the strong (Waltz 1979: 88).

Because there is no world government to regulate how states in general and great powers in particular use their capabilities, structural realists argue that the fundamental condition of international politics is "insecurity – [or] at the least, uncertainty of each about the other's future intentions and actions." According to them, this insecurity is likely to manifest in a concern with relative gains. In other words, states do not ask, "'Will both of us gain?' but 'Who will gain more?'"(Waltz 1979: 105).

This concern with relative gains has three effects. First, concern with relative gains manifests in the emergence of conflicts and wars "that nobody wants" (Waltz 1979: 107-8). For example, a state seeking simply to better defend itself may develop new military capabilities. But because there is no world government to enforce the purely defensive use of the state's new capabilities, other states may worry that the state is preparing to attack them, and they may attack the state before it can attack them. This is an example of the security dilemma. According to structural realists, this dilemma is a result of the anarchic structure of the international-political system, which poses incentives for states to heed to other states' capabilities more than their stated intentions (Waltz 1979: 186-7). The security dilemma is at the root of structural realists' pessimism about the prospects for eternal peace and cooperation. Even if all states had only the purest of motives, conflict and war would remain constant possibilities because the security dilemma is "produced not by their wills but by their situation" (113, 187). Wars triggered by uncertainty about how states will use their relative capabilities can be characterized as unintended wars or wars for security or defense.

Second, concern with relative gains makes cooperation difficult, regardless of the "character or immediate intention of either party." As Waltz explains, "Even the prospect of large absolute gains for both parties does not elicit their cooperation as long as each fears how the other will use its increased capabilities." Concern with relative gains does not make international cooperation impossible. Instead it influences which states will cooperate on which matters and how long their cooperation will last (Waltz 1979: 105, 126; Grieco 1988). Structural-realist expectations about cooperation are expressed in such maxims as "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" and "war winning coalitions fall apart."

This leads us to the third effect of states' concern with relative gains: the recurrent formation of balances of power. As differences in relative capabilities emerge among states,

great powers find themselves more able than middle powers and weak states to survive and achieve any other goals they may have. This tempts or emboldens them to act in one of two ways. Either they act to "conquer the world" or "extend their control," or they identify their interests with "the maintenance of a certain order" and therefore act in ways that advance "the common good," however they define it (Waltz 1979: 91, 132, 200-1, 205). Despite their differences, both are examples of the imperialism of great power.

In the absence of a world government to prevent great powers from carrying out such policies, it is always possible that they will do so – unless they fear reprisals from other strong states. Thus, the structural-realist expectation is that when one great power acts aggressively in a multipolar or bipolar system, the other great power(s) will "attempt to counter this move" sooner or later (Waltz 1979: 125). Similarly, the expectation of unipolarity is that at least one middle power will sooner or later develop the capabilities it needs to protect its interests from and thereby balance the power of the unipole (Waltz 2000). "Since detailed inferences cannot be drawn from the theory, we cannot say just when" these outcomes will occur. The expectation is not that an imbalance will never occur but that "a balance, once disrupted" will sooner or later, and in one way or another, "be restored" (Waltz 1979: 125, 128).

As we have seen, all of the major causal claims of structural-realist theory are deduced from the concept of international anarchy. Because there is no world government to provide security to states, international conflict, war, and balances of power are recurring features of international life, and cooperative efforts to change these outcomes recurrently fail.

Applying Structural-Realism: The International-Political System in 2003

Having reviewed structural-realist concepts and causal claims, we can turn to their application in the case of Iraq. In applying a theory, one asks "to what extent" the concepts or "conditions contemplated by the theory obtain" in a particular time and place. In doing so, it is important to remember that theoretical concepts "are idealizations, and so they are never fully borne out in practice" (Waltz 1979: 91, 123-4; 2003: ix). Thus, as physicist Steven Weinberg argues, the primary consideration one should have in applying a theory is "not … that a theory is true, but … that it is worth taking seriously" (Weinberg 1992 as quoted in Waltz 1997: 93).

As discussed, the central structural-realist concept is the international political system, which is composed, on the one hand, of an anarchic structure with a certain polarity and, on the other hand, of at least two interacting units, states, that are alike in their sovereignty and survival motives but differ in their material capabilities. In 2003, the year that the US invaded Iraq, this vision of international relations was "worth taking seriously," for three reasons.

First, in 2003, there was no sovereign world government. The closest thing to a world government was the UN. According to the UN Charter (1945), only Security Council resolutions are binding on states. General Assembly (GA) resolutions are simply recommendations, and the Secretariat exists only to assist the Security Council and GA with their work. The Charter further stipulates that Security Council resolutions can be vetoed by any one of the permanent

five (P5) members of the Council: the US, UK, France, China, and Russia. Thus binding resolutions are unlikely ever to be passed against one of the P5. How did these states become permanent members of the Council? Each was a great-power member of the United Nations Alliance against the Axis powers during World War II. When these states won the war, they established a new international organization and named after their alliance. The purpose of the organization was to maintain international peace and security, however they defined them (Adams 2011c).

The second reason it is worthwhile to apply structural realism to the US invasion of Iraq is that at the time of the invasion, there were at least two sovereign states. In 2003, the UN had 191 members (UN 2011). Although this figure includes entities (such as Somalia) that were not empirically sovereign and excludes *de facto* states (such as Taiwan) that certain UN members did not wish to recognize (Adams 2003a; 2010), the large UN membership does confirm that there were, as structural-realist theory assumes, two or more independent states.

Third, it is worthwhile to apply structural realism to the US invasion of Iraq because, in 2003, the US was clearly the most powerful state in the world. In other words, the international-political system was unipolar. Structural realists rank states based on "how they score on *all* of the following items: "size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence" (Waltz 1979: 131). As shown in Table 1, before the 2003 invasion, the US ranked among the top five states in population and territory, natural gas reserves, coal reserves, gross domestic product (GDP), GDP per capita, military spending, and military personnel. Only in terms of oil reserves was the US not in the top five; even there, however, it was in the top 13.

[TABLES 1 AND 2 ABOUT HERE]

As shown in Table 2, in 2003, the US was the only state that was at the top of the heap across all of these measures. Of the nine categories listed in Table 1, the US was in the top five in eight of them. The states that came closest to the US in capabilities before the invasion were China and Russia, each of which was in the top five in five of the categories. But neither Russia nor China ranked in the top five in GDP, which is a critical indicator of a state's ability to maintain its military capabilities, as well as its domestic political legitimacy and international political influence (Kennedy 1984; 1987). The US had both the largest economy in the world (producing 33% of all goods and services worldwide) and the largest military budget (spending 38 cents of every military dollar worldwide). In fact, in 2002, US military spending was larger than that of the next 10 highest spenders combined (IISS 2002: 332-7).[4] This gulf between the US, on the one hand, and the next most capable states in the world, on the other, is why structural realists characterize the international political system in 2003 as unipolar.

In sum, the structural-realist characterization of the international-political system applies well to international relations prior to the US invasion. In 2003, there were many independent states in an anarchic, unipolar system. Thus let us proceed to see how structural-realist theory explains the 2003 attack and others like it.

Table 1
Distribution of Capabilities among Major States in 2003
(Top Five States in Each Category)[5]

Population
1. China (1.3 billion)
2. India (1.0 billion)
3. *United States (278 million – 4.5% of world population)*
4. Indonesia (212 million)
5. Brazil (170 million)

Territory
1. Russia (17 million square miles, of which 1 million is arable)
2. Canada (10 million, 500,000 arable)
3. *United States (9.8 million, 1.8 million arable)*
4. China (9.6 million, 1.44 arable)
5. Brazil (8.5 million, 600,000 arable)

Resource Endowment – Oil Reserves
1. Saudi Arabia (263 billion barrels)
2. Venezuela (211 billion)
3. Canada (175 billion)
4. Iran (137 billion)
5. Iraq (115 billion)
(US ranked 13th with 21 billion)

Natural Gas Reserves
1. Russia (48 trillion cu m)
2. Iran (30 trillion)
3. Qatar (25 trillion)
4. Saudi Arabia (7.8 trillion)
5. *United States (7.7 trillion)*

Coal Reserves
1. *United States (237 million tons)*
2. Russia (157 million)
3. China (115 million)
4. Australia (76 million)
5. India (61 million)

Economic Capabilities – GDP
1. *United States ($10,082 billion – 33% of world production)*
2. Japan ($4,176 billion)
3. Germany ($1,855 billion)
4. United Kingdom ($1,427 billion)
5. France ($1,312 billion)
(China ranked 6th with $1,159 billion)

GDP per capita (world average was $5,931)
1. Luxembourg ($43,608)
2. Norway ($37,226)
3. *United States ($35,320)*
4. Switzerland ($33,881)
5. Japan ($32,854)
(China ranked 114th with $908)

Military Strength – Military Spending
1. *United States ($322 billion – 38% of world military spending)*
2. Russia ($64 billion)
3. China ($46 billion)
4. Japan ($40 billion)
5. United Kingdom ($35 billion)
(France and Germany ranked 6th and 7th, respectively)

Military Personnel
1. China (2.3 million)
2. *United States (1.4 million – 6.7% of world total)*
3. India (1.3 million)
4. North Korea (1.1 million)
5. Russia (1.0 million)

Table 2
Overall Ranking of Major States before the US Invasion of Iraq in March 2003

Rank	State	Number of Times the State is Ranked 1-5 in Table 1 (of 9 categories)	Type of Capability					Known Nuclear Weapons
			Pop	Terr	Res	Econ	Mil	
1	United States	8	x	x	xx	xx	xx	x
	China	5	x	x	x		xx	x
	Russia	5		x	xx		xx	x
	India	3	x		x		x	x
	Japan	3				xx	x	
	Brazil	2	x	x				
	Canada	2		x	x			
	Iran	2			xx			
	Saudi Arabia	2			xx			
	United Kingdom	2				x	x	x
	Australia	1			x			
	France	1				x		x
	Germany	1				x		
	Indonesia	1	x					
	Iraq	1			x			
	Luxembourg	1				x		
	North Korea	1					x	
	Norway	1				x		
	Qatar	1			x			
	Switzerland	1				x		
	Venezuela	1			x			

Testing Structural-Realism: Do Anarchy and Differences in Relative Capabilities Create a Permissive Environment for Attacks?

The next step in applying structural realism is to operationalize the causal claims of the theory in hypotheses (testable statements about causation). When this is done, structural realism's explanatory power can be tested by considering how well the expectations articulated in the hypotheses match up with commonly-agreed facts of the US invasion of Iraq. In the remainder of this chapter, I infer and test four structural-realist hypotheses related to the causes of the US invasion. I number these hypotheses H1, H2, etc. to clarify where each is articulated and tested.

There are two types of hypothesis. The first type articulates an overarching causal claim that is relevant to a variety of cases. In the first part of this section, I test that kind of hypothesis by examining the history of great power attacks worldwide from 1800 to 1997, as well as US attacks since the end of the Cold War. The second type of hypothesis tests a theory's expectations with regard to a particular case or set of cases. I test that kind of hypothesis in the second section, where I examine the history of US attacks on Iraq. In testing theories, it is important to test both kinds of hypothesis, for three reasons. First, because individual cases are unique in their particulars, aggregate studies are needed to get a sense of historical trends. Second, because correlations found in aggregate data may not reflect causation, case studies are needed to confirm causal connections. Third, when testing systemic theories such as structural realism, one must test nested hypotheses about causal frameworks, which is most easily done by examining particular cases (Gerring 2001: 137; Adams 2010).

Testing Structural Realism on Aggregate Data:
Great Power Attacks from 1800 to 1997 & US Attacks from 1989 to 2011
One of the central claims of structural-realist theory is that, unless their power is balanced by other states, great powers are tempted to engage in imperial policies of attacking and otherwise intervening in weak states. One hypothesis we can derive from this claim and test on aggregate data is that (H1) *great powers are more likely to attack less-powerful states than they are to attack other great powers*. This hypothesis is relevant to the US invasion of Iraq because, as shown in Table 2, when the US attacked Iraq, the US was an unrivaled great power, and Iraq was a much less powerful state. Thus if H1 is supported by aggregate data, the structural-realist interpretation of the invasion would be strengthened.

To test the hypothesis (H1) that great powers are more likely to attack less-powerful states than they are to attack other great powers, we must operationalize the terms it incorporates so we know what facts to look for in the "real world." Having already defined and operationalized the structural-realist concept of power, or capabilities, here we simply need to define attack. I consider one state to attack another if it conducts offensive military operations against military or nonmilitary sites in the territory of a state that has not previously attacked it (Adams 2003/04: 69).

Now, let us proceed to test H1. In the following section, I do so in two ways. First, I evaluate the extent to which H1 is supported by historical trends in great power attacks from

1800 to 1997. Then I consider the US record of attacks since 1989, when the Soviet Union fell from great power status and the US became a unipole.

Great Power Attacks from 1800 to 1997: In a recent project, I identified 13 states that were great powers or nuclear states for at least one year between 1800 and 1997. I found that, from 1800 to 1997, these 13 states were responsible for 31 attacks on one another. In addition, between 1800 and 1994, they were responsible for 105 attacks on less-powerful states.[6] From these figures, one gets a sense of strong historical support for H1.

To determine whether this impression is statistically significant when other factors, such as prevailing military technologies and state identity, are held constant, I analyzed the data using the statistical technique of multivariate event history analysis. I found that in all technological eras and across all great powers, the probability that a great power will attack a non-great power is higher than the probability that it will attack one of its peers. Moreover, although nuclear weapons have reduced the probability that powerful states will attack one another (due to fear of massive retaliation), they have had little effect on the propensity of great powers to attack less-powerful states. From 1946 to 1997, the probability that a great power or nuclear state would attack a nonnuclear state was 30 times larger than the probability that it would attack another great power (Adams 2003/04: 69-72, 81). Thus from 1800 to 1997, there is strong support for the structural-realist claim (H1) that great powers are more likely to attack less-powerful states than they are to attack other great powers.

US Attacks on Middle Powers and Weak States from 1989 to the Present: Another test of H1 is to consider which, if any, of the states listed in Table 2 have been attacked by the US since it became a unipole in 1989.[7] Here again, we find strong support for the structural-realist claim that great powers are tempted by weakness and deterred by strength. Moreover, it is evident that even less-powerful states that have nuclear weapons can deter attacks by the most powerful state in the history of the world. In the 22 years between 1989 and 2011, the US initiated offensive military operations in the territory of just *one* of the states whose capabilities placed it in the top rank in any one of the dimensions of capability considered important by structural realists. That state was Iraq, which in 2003 ranked fifth in oil reserves but was not in the top five on any other dimension of power.

2003 was not the first time the US attacked Iraq. As discussed below, each of the first three post-Cold War US presidents did so. In addition, each of the first four post-Cold War US presidents has attacked at least one other, even less-powerful state. George H.W. Bush attacked Panama, Bill Clinton attacked Serbia, George W. Bush attacked Afghanistan, and Barack Obama attacked Libya. This list is not exhaustive. Here again, we have found strong support for H1.

The record of great power attacks from 1800 to 1997 and of US attacks from 1989 to 2011 provides strong support for the structural-realist claim that international anarchy and differences in relative power are the ultimate causes of conflict and war because they create a permissive environment in which there is nothing to stop great powers from attacking less-powerful states.

Testing Structural Realism in a Particular Case or Set of Cases:
US Attacks on Iraq, 1991-2003
Now that we have tested hypotheses about overarching trends, we can turn to the second type of
hypothesis. When we examine particular cases of conflict and war, do we also see the
permissive effects of anarchy and relative capability? In this section, I elaborate and test three
hypotheses:

> (H2) *When an attack occurs, it is likely to be initiated by a great power and carried out*
> *against a less-powerful state.*
> (H3) *The great power's motives for the attack and others like it are likely to be*
> *"endlessly varied" and may be difficult to discern, but they can be plausibly*
> *summarized either in terms of ambition or security. Great powers are especially*
> *likely to be motivated by ambition.*
> (H4) *In planning and carrying out the attack, the great power is likely to meet resistance*
> *from other states but is unlikely to be deterred from proceeding with the attack*
> *unless the opposing states are also great powers.*

H2 is an application of H1 to a particular case; it encapsulates the structural-realist argument
about the role of relative weakness in making a particular state an aggressor and another state a
target. H3 articulates structural-realism's expectations about the aggressor's motives. Given
international anarchy, it may seek to reorder the world, or it may simply be responding to a
security dilemma. Finally, H4 lays out the theory's expectation about the effects of international
anarchy and unipolarity in creating a permissive environment for particular great power attacks.

In this section, I test these hypotheses in five steps. First, I establish that the US
repeatedly attacked Iraq from 1991 to 2003. Second, I establish these were primarily US attacks,
not attacks by a new type of international coalition in which great power was less important than
it has been in the past. These first two steps demonstrate that H2, H3, and H4 are applicable to
US-Iraqi relations from 1991 to 2003 and should therefore be tested.

Third, I test H4 by demonstrating that, although all but the first attack violated
international law, the US had no peer competitor to deter it from attacking Iraq. Fourth, I test H2
by comparing US and Iraqi capabilities before the US invasion to determine whether Iraq's
relative weakness tempted the US to attack and conquer it. Finally, I test H3 by considering US
motives for repeatedly attacking Iraq. I conclude that the US attacks on Iraq from 1991 to 2003
are best understood not as unintended results of the security dilemma but as deliberate efforts by
the US to use its unipolar position to impose its will on Iraq and the world.

Post-Cold War US Attacks on Iraq from 1991 to 2003: The first step in testing H2, H3,
and H4 is to establish that the US did in fact attack Iraq. As mentioned, each of the first three
post-Cold War US presidents carried out such attacks. First, in 1991, George H. W. Bush
attacked more than 535 military, infrastructure, and leadership sites in Iraq during the Gulf War,
when the US led an international coalition of ground forces to expel Iraq from Kuwait (Keaney
and Cohen 1995: 55). Although Iraq had attacked Kuwait, a US ally, it had not attacked the US.
Thus the US initiated the US-Iraq phase of the Gulf War. In 1993, Bush also fired cruise

missiles at a military-industrial complex in Baghdad when Saddam Hussein "restrict[ed] the movement" of the UN weapons inspectors authorized by the Security Council after the war and refused to guarantee their safety (Lewis 1993).

Bill Clinton also attacked Iraq. In fact, he did so three times. First, in 1996, Clinton authorized the CIA to sponsor two coup attempts, one by Iraqi government insiders and another by Kurdish forces. The CIA used the UN weapons inspection teams for cover (Kirk 2001; Ritter and Hersh 2005; Fisk 2006: 720-1, 724-7; Zenko 2010: 38). Second, in December 1998, the Clinton administration used intelligence obtained by weapons inspectors to bomb 51 Iraqi military installations and 49 leadership sites (Arkin 1999). In explaining this attack, the US said Hussein had evicted the inspectors and, when they were in the country, severely limited their ability to work. But this was not the case.[8] Even if it were true, evicting UN weapons inspectors would not constitute an attack on the US; thus once again it was the US that attacked. Finally, in 1999, Clinton expanded the attacks in the "no-fly zones" that the US had established at the end of the Gulf War to protect Iraq's Shi'a and Kurdish populations and carried out attacks to kill or weaken Hussein (Mooney 2002; Zenko 2010: ch. 3).

Throughout 2002, George W. Bush bombed Iraq to weaken it before the 2003 invasion; in the month before the invasion, the US bombed 391 targets (Zenko 2010: 47-8). On 20 March 2003, Bush launched a ground invasion. The US led one phalanx from Kuwait towards Baghdad, and the UK led another towards Basra (Sanger and Burns 2003; Tyler 2003a). These attacks, too, were clearly initiated by the US. Iraq had not attacked the US. In fact, since 1990, Iraq had attacked no other state.

The US Role in Post-Cold War Attacks on Iraq: Thus far I have established that one state, the US, repeatedly attacked another state, Iraq. The next step in determining whether H2-H4 apply to and can therefore be tested in the case of Iraq is to consider the role of the US in the international coalitions that carried out the attacks. In this section, I demonstrate that in each of the coalitions, the US played the dominant role. As a result, the coalitions should not be taken as indications that the old world of international conflict and concern with relative gains has been replaced by a new world in which perpetual peace and absolute gains are possible. Instead, they should be seen as new chapters in the old book of great power imperialism.

In 1990, in Resolution 677, the Security Council authorized UN member states to take "all necessary means" to evict Iraq from Kuwait. The ability of the Council to pass this resolution after decades of inaction on collective security matters reflected two facts. First, after 1989, the Soviet Union was no longer a great power. President Gorbachev needed US trade and aid to prevent economic collapse, so Russia's vote for the resolution was essentially bought (Fuller 1991: 69; Cooper 1993: 449-50). Second, in 1990, Iraq had attacked and conquered a neighboring state that had not previously attacked it. Although Iraq may have done so in part because before the attack April Glaspie, the US ambassador to Iraq, showed little interest in Iraq's dispute with Kuwait (Kessler 2008), there was strong sentiment against Iraq's action worldwide.

By contrast, the US took none of its post-1991 attacks to the Council for approval. In the

aftermath of the Gulf War, there was no longer an international consensus about the situation in Iraq. The US-led coalition had evicted Iraq from Kuwait, so the original *casus belli* no longer existed. Moreover, during the Gulf War, the US had alienated other states by exceeding the Security Council's mandate to evict Iraq from Kuwait (Russett and Sutterlin 1991: 76-77; Fuller 1991: 73). In addition, when Clinton expanded the purpose of US attacks in the no-fly zone to kill or weaken Hussein and when George W. Bush further expanded them to prepare for the 2003 invasion, other states – even US allies such as France, Turkey, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia -- began to act in just the way structural realists expect: they began to criticize the US and refused to help the coalition.[9]

In 2003, the US invasion of Iraq was ostensibly carried out by a "coalition of the willing," but the US so dominated the coalition that the attack is best understood as a US effort. US dominance can be seen in many ways, including personnel, spending, and combat participation.[10] US dominance can also be seen in Prime Minister Blair's pledge to George W. Bush that "we are going to be with you" (Burns and Cowell 2010) – in other words, the UK would not attack Iraq alone but would assist if the US attacked. The wording of this statement was not simply a diplomatic nicety among friends. It reflected a fundamental fact: given the relative weakness of the UK, the success of the British attack on Basra depended on the success of the US attack on Baghdad. Thus in explaining the causes of the 2003 invasion, as well as the many other attacks on Iraq from 1991 to 2002, the key is to explain why the US attacked.

Testing H4: The Role of Unipolarity: Because one state, the US, repeatedly attacked another state, Iraq, the three hypotheses specified above about the causes of particular attacks are relevant to and thus worth testing on US-Iraqi relations from 1991 to 2003. Let us begin by testing H4, that *in planning and carrying out an attack, the great power is likely to meet resistance from other states but is unlikely to be deterred from proceeding with the attack unless the opposing states are also great powers.*

The US did meet resistance in its efforts to weaken and depose Hussein. But due to its unrivaled power, the US was not deterred by this resistance. From 1991 to 2003, Russia and China correctly and repeatedly pointed out that US attacks in the no-fly zones had never been authorized by the Security Council and therefore violated the UN Charter. But because they were so much weaker than the US, each of the first three post-Cold War US presidents simply ignored their criticisms (Goshko 1998). In 2003, when Russia, France, and China made it clear that they would veto a resolution authorizing the invasion, the US and UK pulled the resolution from Security Council consideration and proceeded to go it alone (Glennon 2003, DePalma 2003). Thus, as expected, unipolarity created a permissive environment for the US attacks.[11]

Testing H2: The Role of Relative Power: The next step is to test H2, that *when an attack occurs, it is likely to be initiated by a great power and carried out against a less-powerful state.* This hypothesis, too, is clearly confirmed.

As discussed, in 2003, the US was among the top five states in all but one of the nine types of capability shown in Table 1. The only category in which it was not among the top five was proved oil reserves, the one category in which Iraq placed in the top five. Even there, the

US was not far behind, ranking 13th in oil reserves compared to Iraq's rank of 5th. Moreover, given the US's wealth, the fact that most of the US' imported oil came from Canada and Mexico, and the US's vast and high-ranking endowments of other energy resources such as natural gas, coal, nuclear, hydroelectric, wind, geothermal, and solar, the US had no long-term vulnerability and little short-term sensitivity to Iraqi oil sanctions or other market disruptions (US Energy Information Administration 2011). By contrast, Iraq was extremely dependent on oil production and sales and, therefore, very vulnerable to sanctions and other changes in world oil markets.

Because Iraq was not among the top five states in any other measure listed in Table 1, in testing H2 about the role of relative power in causing repeated US attacks, it is necessary to compare US and Iraqi capabilities more directly. As shown in Table 3, the US simply dwarfed Iraq in terms of population, territory, economic capabilities, and military strength. Before the invasion, the US population was 12 times greater than Iraq's, and US territory was 22 times larger. Moreover, US GDP was a whopping 388 times greater, and US military spending was 230 times larger.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Because the US attacked Iraq repeatedly over a 13-year period, it is also important to consider how their capabilities changed over time. From 1989 to 2001, US GDP rose 40% (IMF 2003c). By contrast, between 1989 and 2001, the Iraq experienced a 20-30% decline in GDP and a 70% decline in GDP per capita.[12] Moreover, in 2002, the Iraqi army was estimated to be at just 50% combat effectiveness.[13] This reflected a number of factors, including the US-enforced no-fly zones, which meant that Iraqi pilots were inexperienced; international sanctions, which left Iraq with spare parts for just half of its military equipment; and Hussein's fear of uprisings, which meant that he constantly reorganized the military and restricted its ability to train (IISS 2002: 105-6; MacFarquhar 2006).

<u>Table 3</u>
Comparison of US and Iraqi Capabilities before the 2003 Invasion[14]

	US	Iraq
Population	278 million	23 million
Territory (sq km)	9.8 million	438,317
Economic Capabilities		
GDP	$10,082 billion	$26 billion
GDP per capita	$35,320	$1,130
Military Capabilities		
Military spending	$322 billion	$1.4 billion
Military personnel		
Active	1.4 million	424,000
Reserve	1.2 million	650,000
Paramilitary	0	43,000
Conventional Weapons		
Main Battle Tanks	8,023	2,600
Artillery Pieces	6,909	2,300
Armed Helicopters	1,987	164
Combat Aircraft	4,841	316
Anti-Aircraft Missiles	7,000	unknown[15]
Delivery Vehicles for Unconventional Weapons		
Bombers	115 (long range)	6
Surface-to-surface missiles		
Short and intermediate range	unknown	56
ICBMs	550	0
SLBMs	432	0
Air-to-surface missiles	unknown	unknown
Unconventional Weapons[16]		
Nuclear gravity bombs	1,300	0
Nuclear Tomahawk cruise missiles	320	0
"Active" nuclear warheads for ICBMs	1,700	0
"Active" nuclear warheads for SLBMs	3,120	0
"Inactive" nuclear weapons	2,700	0

In comparing US and Iraqi capabilities, it is important to look beyond the numbers to consider other factors, including whether either or both had unconventional weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction. Conventional or "relative" weapons (such as tanks, artillery, aircraft, and anti-aircraft missiles) fight other weapons. By contrast, unconventional weapons (such as biological, chemical, nuclear, and radiological weapons) target entire populations or geographic areas. Of these, nuclear weapons are – and biological weapons have the potential to become -- "absolute weapons" or weapons of mass destruction (WMD). What sets WMD apart is that, regardless of how they are targeted, their destructive effects cannot be limited.[17] As a result, innovation and superiority in WMD numbers and quality are meaningless. Once a state has a second-strike capability, others are deterred from attacking its territory and vital interests by the possibility of massive retaliation (Brodie 1946; Waltz 1990a; Adams 2003/04).

Unconventional weapons can be delivered in various ways, including by artillery, aircraft, and missiles. As shown in Table 3, before the 2003 invasion, Iraq had a plentiful supply of each. Although its ability to pilot and repair them was in some doubt, if Iraq was known to possess -- or was even suspected of possessing -- nuclear or biological weapons to load onto these delivery vehicles or to deliver in other ways, it would have been foolish for any state to attack Iraq or its vital interests. Doing so would have run a risk of massive retaliation (Betts 2003).

Whether Iraq had or was trying to develop chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons was a point of contention between Iraq and the US before the 2003 invasion. In the absence of a world government to make Iraq and the US reveal the truth about these matters, each was free to say whatever it liked. Both departed quite far from what they and informed observers knew to have been the facts.

On the Iraqi side of things, the facts and the fabrications were as follows: After the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq terminated its nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons programs. But, to deter Iran and Israel from attacking Iraq, Hussein wanted to create the impression that the programs remained in force. As a result, he refused to give UN inspectors unrestricted access to Iraqi military sites (Battle 2009a; MacFarquhar 2006).

The US also played with the facts. When George W. Bush announced the beginning of the invasion, the first reason he gave and the one he emphasized was to "disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction" (Bush 2003).[18] According to Bush and other administration officials, there were other reasons, as well, but the administration "settled on the one issue that everyone could agree on which was weapons of mass destruction as the core reason" ("Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Interview" 2003).[19] This is not to say that administration officials believed Iraq had WMD. They knew their *casus belli* did not exist (Ritter and Hersh 2005; Mazzetti and Shane 2008; US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence 2008; Pillar 2011a: 84-85).

Once the decision to emphasize WMD was made,[20] the Bush administration began what career CIA officer Paul Pillar, who was the National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia from 2000 to 2005, has since described as a propaganda campaign (Pillar 2011a: 64; 2011b).[21] Administration officials were proud of their efforts. According to Karl Rove, a senior

advisor to President Bush, "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality" (Suskind 2004b, Danner 2007: 23).

Part of the administration's propaganda campaign was characterizing Iraq as part of an "Axis of Evil" populated also by Iran and North Korea, two states whose nuclear programs were known to be much further along. In his state of the union address in January 2002, Bush warned that the US would militarily preempt any effort to obtain nuclear weapons (Bush 2002). If ridding the world of nuclear weapons was the administration's goal, the preemption doctrine should have applied first to North Korea, whose nuclear program was most advanced. But administration officials told investigative journalist Seymour Hersh that their goal was simply "to mobilize public opinion for an invasion of Iraq" and that they "knew that the North Koreans had already reinvigorated their programs and were more dangerous than Iraq" (Hersh 2003; Adams and Hannon 2007; FAS 2009).

Before the US invasion, the US had an extensive nuclear stockpile. The legality of these forces depends on one's interpretation of the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In ratifying the NPT, the US and the other declared nuclear weapons states at the time (Russia, the UK, France, and China) promised to disarm in exchange for other countries forswearing the weapons. In the intervening 40 years, the authorized members of the "nuclear club" have made no progress on general and complete nuclear disarmament (Adams 2011b). In 2003, the US also had an active and illegal biological weapons program,[22] as well as a stockpile of chemical weapons.[23] But, unlike Iraq, the US could use its veto on the Security Council to avoid international inspections.[24]

Thus far, we have found strong support for H2. The attacks from 1991 to 2003 were initiated by the US, a state with great material power, and carried out against Iraq, a much weaker state. According to Waltz, however, we must consider two more dimensions of material capability: political stability and competence. Political stability refers to the prevalence of internal opposition within a state, in other words its vulnerability to death by revolution, disintegration, or collapse. Since the Civil War, the US has enjoyed considerable stability. The government has functioned under the same constitution over the whole period, and leadership transitions have generally been smooth and uncontested. In 2003, Iraq's political stability was shorter lived, but Hussein had managed to rule the country for 30 years despite considerable internal and external opposition. Yet from post-invasion interviews with Hussein and from the way he deployed Iraqi forces during the invasion, we know he was concerned about coups and other domestic unrest (MacFarquhar 2006). In terms of political stability, Iraq was clearly weaker than the US.

Finally, we must assess the competence of Iraq and the US. In applying structural realism to understand this aspect of capability, we must consider what it would have been advisable for states in their relative power positions to do. As discussed, structural realists deduce from the anarchic structure of the international system that states may do as they like and that, because each state may do so, states that wish to survive must develop capabilities to help themselves and use these capabilities in ways that minimize the risk that their actions will precipitate security dilemmas and balancing efforts against them (Waltz 1959: 222). Given the

absence of a world government to make states reveal all of their capabilities and to rule out their use in ways that harm others, there is no way to eliminate the security dilemma. But competent or prudent states try to act in ways that minimize their contribution to it. In particular, competent states do not amass so many offensive capabilities that others wonder how they will use them, and they do not use their capabilities to press their will on the world. These structural-realist policy prescriptions apply both to weak and to strong states. But, as Waltz points out, the weak must take these maxims more seriously than the strong because the strong will not hesitate to punish them if they act in ways that threaten great-power interests. By contrast, great powers have more room for error because they have the capabilities to deter or mitigate retribution (1979: 194). Although it is not advisable, great powers can afford to be less competent, at least in the short term.

From this point of view, Hussein, the leader of a weak state, should have understood the dangers of standing up to a unipole and should have minimized as much as possible the extent to which he did so. At the same time, however, as the leader of a state with vast oil wealth, Hussein should have realized the extent to which his country would be an attractive target. Thus Hussein had to walk a fine line between developing capabilities to retain Iraqi sovereignty and looking too threatening to others. From Hussein's speeches as president and from FBI interviews with him after he was captured by US forces, it is clear that he had a good understanding of international anarchy, unipolarity, and the security dilemma (Quandt 1990/1991: 50; Battle 2009a).[25] In addition, from the questions he asked of Ambassador Glaspie before invading Kuwait, it is clear that he knew the success of his conquest would depend on the US reaction. Where Hussein miscalculated was in taking the ambassador's answer at face value. Before the invasion, the US had no interest in disputes between Iraq and Kuwait. But once Iraq had attacked and conquered Kuwait, the situation looked different. The George H.W. Bush administration sought not only to expel Iraq from Kuwait, but also to weaken Hussein so he could be deposed (Gordon and Trainor 1995: 477; Bush and Scowcroft 1998: 486-7). This is the danger of anarchy for weak states. Great powers get to define what is of interest to them, and their definitions can change dramatically from one moment to the next.

In the decade after his expulsion from Kuwait, Hussein's record was, as realists John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt pointed out in an article published several months before the US invasion, "far from reckless" and "hardly demonstrates that he …[was] either irrational or prone to serious miscalculation" (2003: 52-3). But Hussein did repeatedly criticize the US, and he called for Arab, OPEC, and other states to unite to balance its power.[26] Moreover, although successive US administrations exaggerated Hussein's record of non-compliance with UN weapons inspectors, Hussein did refuse to give inspectors unlimited access to political and military sites.

From US interviews with Hussein during his incarceration and trial, it is clear that his unwillingness to provide unrestricted access was motivated in part by international anarchy and the security dilemma. On the one hand, if he did not give inspectors full access, the US might amp up its attacks. On the other hand, if Hussein revealed Iraq to have no WMD, Iran and other states might not be deterred from attacking Iraq. Since the US had used intelligence from the inspections to develop target lists, and since the US had made it clear that, even if he did open

up, it would still seek regime change and might try him for war crimes (Jervis 2003: 324-5; Battle 2009b: 2), Hussein chose the option that seemed to have the greatest odds of his and his government's survival: disarming but creating uncertainty about Iraq's capabilities. Because this option meant that international inspectors would never find WMD, it reduced the odds of a full-scale invasion. In addition, it meant that Iran and other states would think twice before attacking and, if they did attack, would have incomplete information about Iraq's military capabilities and Hussein's hiding places. Given both the situation Iraq was in and the US record of stopping well short of invasion from 1991 to 2002, this was not an irrational calculation.

Hussein had managed to rule Iraq for 30 years. For 13 of those years, the most powerful state in the history of the world had been gunning for him. In addition, a number of middle powers including Russia, China, and France and US allies such as Turkey, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia had edged away from the US's increasingly strident pronouncements on Iraqi intransigence. In fact, Hussein skillfully encouraged this with oil deals and foreign aid (Tripp 2007: 259-69; Sachs 2000). But Hussein's rhetoric and actions were beyond Iraq's capability to defend. This is why, among weak states, the lesson of the US invasion is that weak states should wait to stand up to the US until they have nuclear weapons (Korean Central News Agency 2003).[27] But this level of competence can be achieved only with a great deal of restraint. Just as great powers are tempted to extend their control, less powerful states are tempted to pursue their own goals and point out injustices in the system.[28]

This brings us to the matter of US competence. Since 1989, the US has been the most powerful state in the world. As such, it has had sufficient capability both to assure its own domestic survival and to pursue a moderate strategy of protecting its far-flung interests.[29] But, like other great powers, the US has not pursued a moderate or *status quo* strategy. Instead, it has fallen for the temptation to go further and has used its capabilities to impose its will on the world. In doing so, the US has incurred great human, economic, military, and political costs and has burdened others with even greater costs in terms of human and national security. As a result, the competence of US leadership has been questioned. Among those who have questioned it most strongly are realists, who argued before the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and have continued to argue since then that the war was unnecessary because Iraq did not have WMD and was not in cahoots with al-Qaeda and, even if it had been, would have been deterred from aggression by the threat of US retaliation.[30]

Here again, the explanatory power of structural realism is evident. According to liberal scholars, as well as some classical realists, the US is a status-quo power and thus will not engage in imperialism unless individual policy makers are ignorant or irrational (Ikenberry 2001; Morgenthau 1978:45-51, 169). But according to Waltz and other structural realists, in the absence of a world government, every great power is tempted to engage in imperial policies of attacking, conquering, and otherwise intervening in weak states, and the temptation is especially strong for a unipole. Imperial policies are not in a great power's long-term interest because they encourage other states to develop the capabilities needed to balance its power. Thus wise or competent great powers would resist the temptation. But imperialism does reflect a clear assessment of a great power's short term opportunities. Thus even a well-intentioned great power would find it hard to resist. After all, there is some truth in a great power's claim that its

security and international stability are one (Waltz 1979: 200; Betts 1999: 169-70).

From the structural-realist perspective, while we might very much wish that great powers would treat weak states with restraint, we should not be too surprised when they do not.[31] In addition, we should expect a variety of policy makers within great powers to support imperial policies. As we have seen, this has been the case in US policy towards Iraq. Although their personalities, personal histories, and ideologies were markedly different, each of the first three post-Cold War presidents attacked Iraq. Moreover, each of the four post-Cold War US presidents has attacked at least one other weak state.

Given the role of international anarchy in permitting great powers to pursue unwise policies, how can we assess the competence of a great power such as the US? We can consider the extent to which its leaders evaluate the unintended consequences of their actions (Waltz 1959: 222). Here again, the record is clear. None of the first four post-Cold War presidents has attacked even one of the world's middle powers or nuclear states. By that standard, we can judge them all to have been competent. But all four have attacked weak states, despite the entirely predictable short- and long-term costs of doing so.[32] By that standard, none has been as competent as I, for one, would like. Yet, of the four, just one – George W. Bush -- carried out an attack on a weak state without any apparent consideration of unintended consequences.[33] This lack of concern with consequences can be explained in part by unipolarity. In the absence of a peer competitor, there was no one whose reaction to the invasion made President Bush, his advisors, Congress, the press, or the American public think twice.[34] Yet the other three post-Cold War presidents have sought and considered alternative perspectives. President Bush did not, and the Bush administration can therefore be judged less competent than the others.

In 2003, Iraq had a bad hand, and Hussein played it too strongly, given international anarchy, unipolarity, and the security dilemma. By contrast, the US had a great hand, and the Bush administration made sloppy and impulsive decisions that the US and the rest of the world will have to live with for a very long time.

Testing H3: US Motivations: The final step in applying and testing structural realism is to consider why the US repeatedly attacked Iraq. According to H3 *the great power's motives for the attack and others like it are likely to be "endlessly varied" and may be difficult to discern, but they can be plausibly summarized either in terms of ambition or security. Great powers are especially likely to be motivated by ambition.* This hypothesis, too, is strongly supported. Each of the first three post-Cold War presidents attacked Iraq, and each couched his rationale in a different political doctrine. For George H.W. Bush, it was to "draw a line in the sand" and mark the beginning of a "new world order." For Bill Clinton, it was to spread democracy. For George W. Bush, it was to protect the US in the aftermath of 9/11.

It is impossible to know if these were the presidents' "real" motivations. As Robert Jervis points out, "many of the reasons [people] give are rationalizations, not rationales, and come to their minds only after they have reached their decisions" (2003: 318). Moreover, we know that each of these presidents lied about some aspect of US-Iraqi relations. George H.W. Bush claimed he wanted international sanctions to remain in place because he was concerned

about Iraq's WMD. But his purpose in imposing the sanctions was actually to weaken Hussein so he could be replaced by a more compliant leader. Bill Clinton and George W. Bush also promulgated this lie (Ritter and Hersh 2005). Clinton also lied about Hussein's lack of compliance with weapons inspectors and claimed that his December 1998 attacks on Iraqi military installations had nothing to do with diverting attention from his impeachment trial (Gellman 1998). George W. Bush claimed that Hussein was linked with al-Qaeda and 9/11. In addition, Bush concealed his administration's decision to "treat a 'one percent chance' of a country passing WMDs to a terrorist as a 'certainty'" (Suskind 2006: 166).

Despite these lies, and despite differences in each president's particular motives, it is clear from Iraq's capabilities and from the US history of making and breaking international law that repeated US attacks on Iraq from 1991 to 2003 were not sparked by the security dilemma but were instead inspired by US ambition to maintain and expand its unipolar position.[35] Given Iraq's profound and increasing weakness, as well as the fact that US attacks span both the pre- and post-9/11 eras, it is difficult to arrive at the opposite conclusion, that the US was simply motivated by security.

Why, when there were so many weak states in the world, did the US choose to focus on Iraq? Hussein's invasion of Kuwait and his treatment of Iraq's Kurdish and Shi'a populations no doubt played a role. So did Iraq's oil wealth and strategic location. But Iraq had not attacked another state since 1990, and Hussein was far from the only tyrant in the world. Neither was Iraq the only strategically-located, oil-producing state. What made Iraq a target was that, for over a decade, Hussein consistently and dramatically stood up to the US, and he began to do so just as the US came into its unipolar status.

The situation between the US and Iraq is, therefore, a bit like the proverbial princess and the pea. When there are big problems to attend to, one does not worry too much about the little ones. But when one sits at the top of the world, the slightest annoyance can become a fixation.[36] Only a unipole can afford to build a strategy on a "one percent doctrine." Yet the Bush administration was apparently not even motivated by the extreme sensitivity to threat expressed in that doctrine. If it had been, the administration would have made a more serious effort to pursue and disable al Qaeda, which carried out the 9/11 attacks. In addition, it would have considered the effects of the US invasion of Iraq in prompting North Korea and Iran to redouble their nuclear efforts, and it would have engaged them in negotiations instead of refusing to talk until they met US demands (Kristof 2006; 2009). Thus it is hard to escape the conclusion that George W. Bush, like the two presidents before him, simply sought to punish Hussein and, thereby, deter anyone else "with the temerity to acquire destructive weapons or, in any way, flout the authority of the United States" (Suskind 2006: 123).[37]

This is why structural realists look forward to the day when a new balance of power will form. When that occurs, US policy makers will be more likely to focus on US security and to consider the unintended consequences of their actions. In the meantime, like all historical great powers, the US will be tempted to impose its will on the world through ambitious wars and interventions.
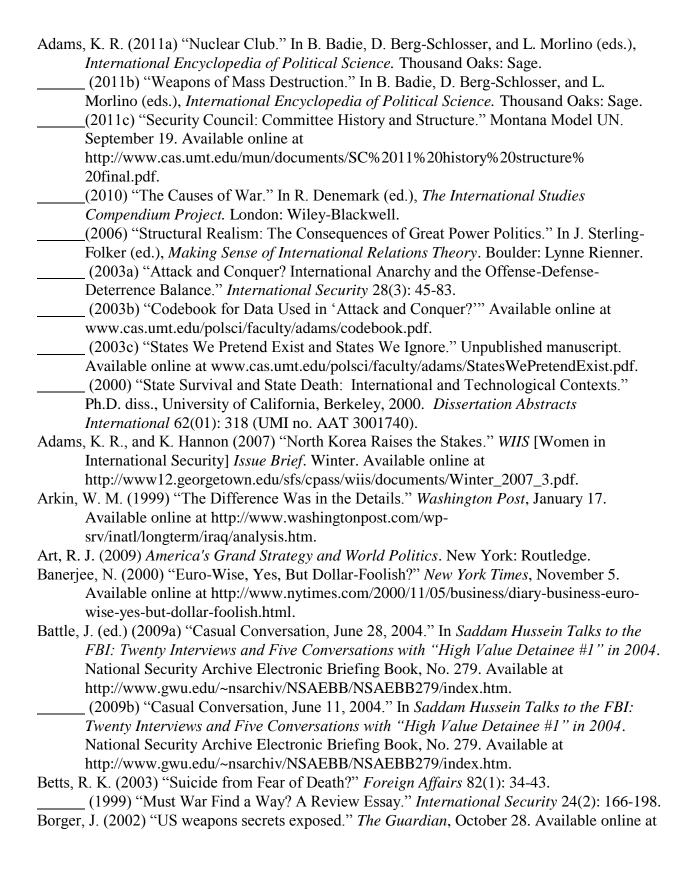
Conclusion

According to structural-realist theory, the anarchic structure of the international-political system is the ultimate cause of war. In the absence of a world government, states can choose to attack others. In doing so, their aims – the immediate causes of war – "may be endlessly varied" (Waltz 1979: 91). But the ultimate cause of war is international anarchy.

In evaluating the immediate causes of particular attacks, structural realists distinguish between two broad motives: ambition and security. Like classical realists, they recognize that some leaders seek to conquer the world. Unlike classical realists, however, structural realists also recognize that states that simply seek to survive and prosper may find themselves at war if they stumble into the security dilemma, in which actions taken to enhance security look like threats to others. According to structural realists, the international distribution of power strongly affects these motives. States whose capabilities are unmatched by others may become ambitious and try to fashion the system to their liking. Alternatively, states amassing capabilities simply to shield themselves from others may unintentionally spark war.

There is still much we do not know – and will never know – about the particular capabilities and intentions of Iraq and the US before the 2003 invasion.[38] Yet it was clear in 2003 that US capabilities far outstripped Iraq's. In fact, the US was not only "a" great power. It was far and away the most powerful state in the world. In the absence of a world government, there was nothing to stop successive post-Cold War US administrations from attacking Iraq. Moreover, when Iraq successfully courted allies to block UN authorization of further attacks, there was nothing to stop the US from going around the UN to engage in an invasion that was illegal under the UN Charter.

Since the demise of the Soviet Union, every US president has attacked both Iraq and at least one other weak state. By contrast, none of the four has attacked even one of the world's middle powers or nuclear states. Thus the pattern seen in the aggregate data on all great powers from 1800 to 1997 also holds for the US from 1989 to the present. The US invasion of Iraq is one of many instances of a recurring outcome that structural-realist theory, with its deductive and systemic logic, explains very well: the imperialism of great power.

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[2] For a general statement of contingent or "pragmatic" positivism in the social sciences, see John Gerring, who argues that "Concept formation … lies at the heart of all social science endeavor. It is impossible to conduct work without using concepts. It is impossible even to conceptualize a topic, as the term suggests, without putting a label on it" (2001: 35).

[3] Morgenthau and other classical realists recognize the security dilemma but argue that it can be successfully navigated by intelligent statesmen (1978: 169).

[4] In 2002, the other top military spenders in descending order were France ($33, ranked sixth), Germany ($27), Saudi Arabia ($24), Italy ($21), India ($14), and South Korea ($11) (IISS 2002: 332-7).

[5] Population figures are for 2001 and are from the Correlates of War (COW) National Capabilities data, version 3.02 (COW 2001; Singer *et al.,* 1972). Data on territorial size, arable land, and proved oil and natural gas reserves are for 2011 and are from the CIA World Factbook (CIA 2011). I use current data on proved oil and gas reserves because data on Iraqi reserves before the US invasion were distorted by both Iraq and the US (Luft 2003). The coal data represents proved reserves at the end of 2010 (BP 2011). The economic data are for 2001 and are from the International Monetary Fund (IMF 2003b). I use 2001 GDP data because that is the most recent year for which there are reliable estimates of Iraqi GDP. The military data are for 2002 and are from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS 2002: 332-7). Military personnel include only active regular forces; reserve and paramilitary forces are not included in these figures.

[6] Given the lack of reliable data for less-powerful states, the latter is a conservative estimate of the actual number of such attacks (Adams 2003b: 3-4; 2003/04: 69; 2010).

[7] I use 1989 as the end of bipolarity and the emergence of unipolarity because, by then, the decline in Soviet economic capabilities was clear. Since 1985, GDP had been stagnant, labor strikes had accelerated, and the government had tapped its gold and hard currency reserves to service its external debt (Passell 1989; Cooper 1993: 452-3). When the Berlin Wall fell in late 1989, it was clear that these economic problems had significantly reduced the Soviet Union's

military and political capabilities.

[8] According to Eric Fournier, a French diplomat and political advisor to Richard Butler, the head of the UN Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM), "more than three hundred [inspections] had taken place in a few weeks and only a handful had been a problem." Butler later admitted that the inspectors left because they were warned by the US of the pending attack (Fournier as quoted by Kremmer 2002: 207-9; Butler 2000: 210).

[9] Initially, the no-fly zones were patrolled by US, British, and French pilots. Later, the French dropped out. Only US pilots were authorized to attack Iraqi targets (Mooney 2002; Zenko 2010: 33-4, 37-9). For an example of early criticisms of the attacks, see Lewis (1993).

[10] At the start of the war, US troops accounted for 84% of the coalition force of approximately 297,000. The US paid the vast majority of the costs, and troops from countries other than the US and UK played only support roles (Council on Foreign Relations 2003; Nordland and Williams 2009).

[11] In September 2004, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan acknowledged that the attack "was not in conformity … with the U.N. Charter," in other words, that "It was illegal" (Tyler 2004). After that, the US embarked on a campaign to replace him with a more compliant secretary general (Traub 2006). No attempt has been made to hold the US accountable in a court of law.

[12] See note 12 in Table 3. Here, too, I averaged the estimates from the *Economist* (CIA 2007) and IMF (2003a). According to the IMF, Iraq's economic declines were the result of "pervasive state intervention" in the economy, debt and reparations from the wars against Iran in 1980 and Kuwait in 1990, and refusal to comply with UN weapons inspectors, which meant that the sanctions on oil exports remained in place for over a decade (IMF 2003a; see also Tripp 2007: 251-3).

[13] The Republican Guard and paramilitary forces protecting Hussein were at higher levels of readiness.

[14] Population figures are for 2001 and are from the COW National Capabilities data (2001). Data on territorial size are for 2011 and are from the CIA World Factbook (CIA 2011). Economic data for the US are for 2001 and are from the IMF (2003b). Because Hussein considered economic data to be state secrets, it is difficult to find reliable economic data for pre-invasion Iraq. I arrived at these figures by averaging estimates from two reputable sources: the *Economist* magazine's Economist Intelligence Unit (summarized in CIA 2007) and the IMF (2003a). The military data are for 2002 and are from IISS (2002: 17-23; 106, 332-7) and Norris *et al*. (2002: 71). The primary purpose of Iraq's paramilitary forces was to protect Hussein and his government from internal opponents (IISS 2002: 6).

[15] It was, however, known that China had helped Iraq to improve its air defenses. As a

result, in mid-2001, "Iraqi air defense operators became more effective and aggressive in targeting US and British pilots, including a near downing of a U-2 spy plane with an unguided SAM" (Zenko 2010: 45-6).

[16] Gravity bombs and cruise missiles can be delivered by bomber. On the difference between the US' "active" and "inactive" nuclear stockpiles, see Norris *et al.* (2002: 71).

[17] From the US's 1945 explosion of nuclear devices over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we know that nuclear weapons are WMD. According to the US Strategic Bombing Survey, the uranium bomb exploded over Hiroshima in 1945, killed 60-70,000 people, about 30% of the city's population of 245,000, seriously injured another 30%, and rendered more than 70% of the buildings "unusable" (1946: 23). According to historian John W. Dower, "more recent and generally accepted estimates put the probable number of fatalities at around 130,000 to 140,000 in Hiroshima and 75,000 in Nagasaki" (2010: 199). If contagious biological agents for which there are no vaccines could be kept alive in great numbers, dispersed widely, and allowed to incubate in unsuspecting populations, biological weapons could also have mass effects. By contrast, although non-contagious biological agents and chemical agents can kill or incapacitate individual soldiers and civilians, their effects on populations are far from absolute because it is difficult to control and concentrate their dispersion. Thus it is possible for authorities to protect "at least part of the target population" by monitoring air and water, advising people to wear masks and protective suits, administering antidotes, and evacuating affected areas (McNaugher 1990: 31; Martin 2002; Adams 2011a).

[18] According to Bush (2003), "The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder. We will meet that threat now, with our Army, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard and Marines, so that we do not have to meet it later with armies of fire fighters and police and doctors on the streets of our cities."

[19] In addition, Bush claimed the US was invading Iraq to "end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people" (Bush 2003). According to Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, there was also a fourth reason: After the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration wanted to close US bases in Saudi Arabia, which Osama bin Laden had repeatedly criticized. But the administration did not go on record about that ("Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Interview with Sam Tannenhaus," 2003). According to *Foreign Policy* (2004), at least 21 reasons for the attack were articulated by 10 administration officials and members of Congress. The top two were "to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction" and "for regime change," both of which were given by all 10 officials.

[20] From the memoirs of Bush administration officials, as well as academic, journalistic, and governmental investigations since the war, we know that the administration officials who made this decision were President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz.

[21] Many other members of the Bush administration corroborate Pillar's argument about the Bush administration "propaganda campaign" in support of the invasion, including General Hugh Shelton, who was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1997 to 2001 (2010: 488). See also Prados and Ames (2010).

[22] In 2002, two academic researchers revealed that the US was secretly engaged in research on "biological cluster bombs, anthrax and non-lethal weapons for use against hostile crowds" (Borger 2002; Wheelis and Dando 2003).

[23] According to the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), in 2000, the US chemical stockpile consisted of "various rockets, projectiles, mines, and bulk items containing blister agents (mustard H, HD, HT) and nerve agents (VX, GB) (FAS 2000).

[24] In 1972, when the text of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) was being negotiated, President Nixon issued an executive order terminating the US' offensive biological weapons program. Since then, the US has continued to carry out research for defensive purposes (FAS 1998). This research is allowed under the BTWC. Because it is difficult to know whether states are engaged in strictly defensive research, there have been repeated efforts to amend the treaty to enhance transparency and verify compliance. In 2001, the US refused to beef up the Convention with mandatory inspections. When other states refused to accept a watered-down document acceptable to the Bush Administration, negotiations collapsed. Thus the only way to compel states to allow biological weapons inspectors onto their territory is for the UN Security Council to order them to do so, as it did in Iraq from 1991 to 2003. Thus the US, with its permanent seat and veto on the Council is unlikely to ever have its compliance questioned (Hildebrand and Adams 2009: 5-6). The same is true of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). In 1997, the US ratified the treaty and thereby promised to destroy all of the chemical weapons, production facilities, and materials in its possession by 2002. In acceding to the treaty, the US also agreed to allow challenge inspections of US facilities by other state parties. Should the US refuse to allow international inspectors into the country, only the Security Council could compel it to do so. Given the US veto, that is extremely unlikely to happen.

[25] Quandt (1990/1991) demonstrates that, as the Soviet Union was disintegrating, Hussein anticipated a change in the US approach to the Middle East. The US and Iraq had collaborated in attacking Iran as recently as 1988 (Sale 2003).

[26] After Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War, Hussein claimed that "Iraq has punched a hole in the myth of American superiority and rubbed the nose of the United States in the dust" (MacFarquhar 2006). In October 2000, he threatened to cut off the oil exports Iraq was allowed under the sanctions program to purchase food unless the Security Council allowed Iraq to be paid for oil in euros instead of dollars. When the Committee agreed, Iraq became the first of several oil-exporting countries, including Iran, Venezuela, and Russia, to demand payment in euros. Iraq did so when the euro was low relative to the dollar, bolstering Hussein's claim that he was standing up to the US (Sachs 2000; Banerjee 2000; UN Security Council 2000). After

the September 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C., Hussein "was the sole Arab leader who failed to condemn the attacks…, pointing out instead that the United States had brought them on itself through the policies it had pursued over the years in the Middle East" (Tripp 2007: 271).

[27] After the 1986 US bombing of Tripoli and the 1991 Gulf War, Libyan President Moammar Gadhafi and Indian General Krishnaswami Sundaji made similar remarks (Payne 1996: 27-8).

[28] Because the strong write and enforce the rules, there is no guarantee that a low-profile approach will always work or that a confrontational approach will always fail (Waltz 1959: 222; 1979: 113).

[29] For structural-realist writings in this vein, see Art (2009), Layne (1997), Posen (2001/02), Schwarz and Layne (2002), and Walt (2005).

[30] On 26 September 2002, a number of scholars, including Waltz, ran an ad in the *New York Times* arguing that "War with Iraq is Not in America's National Interest." For articles on this theme before the invasion, see Betts (2003) and Mearsheimer and Walt (2003). Since the invasion, there have been attempts to distinguish between "wars of ambition" and "wars of choice" (Haass 2009), but realists disagree about how to categorize particular wars. For example, Haass claims the Gulf War was necessary, while Waltz (1990b) says it was not.

[31] In a recent interview, Waltz said, "One does not like it; I do not like it; and I am sure the countries that experience the bullying do not like it; but it is expected behavior. That is the way countries behave when they have dominant power—globally or within their region" (2011).

[32] Among the unintended yet predictable consequences of the US invasion were an Iraqi insurgency with regional support and redoubled efforts by North Korea and Iran to obtain nuclear weapons.

[33] According to Bush administration insiders, as well as academic researchers and journalists, there is no record of George W. Bush ever holding a meeting or requesting an options paper to consider "whether the war should be launched at all" or discuss the possible downside of an invasion (Pillar 2011a: 13; Prados and Ames 2010). As Dower puts it, there was a troubling "paradox [in] the Bush administration's rush to war with Iraq – apocalyptic forebodings about the target nation's arsenals and inclinations, and the menace of terror worldwide, coupled with a nonchalance regarding post-invasion contingency planning that bordered on the criminally negligent. Had the Oval Office planners been Japanese, a legion of white pundits would have materialized to explain that they simply did not think logically, as Westerners do" (2010: 20). Moreover, had the US been a weak state, its leaders might -- like Saddam Hussein-- have been tried and executed as war criminals.

[34] According to Pillar, "carefully produced intelligence assessments that presciently

described how the task in Iraq after Saddam's fall would be long and difficult rather than quick and easy received no more attention in Congress than they received from the Bush administration policymakers" (2011 c).

[35] For a similar argument, see Jervis (2003).

[36] This is not to belittle the extent to which Hussein terrorized his own people and the citizens of Iran and Kuwait. But the US was not primarily motivated by Hussein's human rights abuses, otherwise it would have done more to assure human rights during the invasion and conquest.

[37] This quote from Ron Suskind summarizes the view of "those attending the NSC briefings on the Gulf" in the year before the US invasion (2006: 123). A recurring theme in the memoirs of officials in the George W. Bush administration is that the 9/11 attacks provided the administration with an excuse to "take out" Hussein, which US officials – including members of the Clinton administration – had wanted to do for a variety of reasons for a very long time (Shelton 2010: 2; see also Suskind 2004a; for academic treatments, see Fisher 2003; Tripp 2007: 270-3). In his memoirs, George H. W. Bush repeatedly refers to his desire to humiliate Hussein (Bush and Scowcroft 1998: 486-7).   In 1999, Kenneth Pollack, an academic supporter of US attacks on Iraq, argued that Hussein "'is trying to be annoying… If he sends up planes twice a week, every week for six weeks' and forces the United States and Britain to increase its air patrols, 'at some point other nations may start to question what the U.S. is doing'" (quoted in Priest 1999). For decades, the goal of successive US administrations has been to avoid such questions (Schwarz and Layne 2002: 36-7).

[38] On research challenges posed by Iraqi and US obfuscation, post-invasion looting of Iraqi government ministries, and US bureaucratic politics, see Dower (2010: 396-7, 439-45) and Pillar (2011a: 84-5).