

Pulling Punches: Realism's Requisite Restraint

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Abstract

Sometimes equated with a vision of international relations as a war of all against all, as a theoretical and normative tradition realism is actually much more sophisticated, generally cautioning restraint. This article seeks to correct the widely held misperception of realism as a one-dimensional, saber-rattling approach by outlining three reasons that realists, both classical and modern, caution restraint for strategic and self-interested purposes: escaping unnecessary and unproductive security dilemmas, avoiding cycles of hostility and grievance exacerbated by nationalism and other strong identities, and preventing states from defining their interests in overly expansive ways that exceed their capacity to defend them. Indeed restraint is an essential ingredient in realism and *realpolitik*. Bringing theoretical insights and systematic empirical analysis together for the first time on this question, a detailed case study of Bismarck show that even the most revisionist of realists embraced restraint for all of these reasons. At a decisive moment in history in which Bismarck faced the least structural constraints, the wake of Prussia's military victory of Austria in 1866, he practiced restraint both at home and abroad so as to assure his long-term goal of German unification.

Realism is misunderstood. Sometimes equated with a vision of international relations as a war of all against all, as a theoretical and normative tradition it is actually much more sophisticated. Restraint is essential to realist theory, since all realists stress the necessity of defining interests and goals in light of structural constraints. Too much bellicosity in foreign affairs can undermine one's interests, even if they are defined in an exclusively egoistic fashion. Except in situations of vital interest, realists argue for pulling punches, even in situations of power advantage. Whether it is Morgenthau (1948) cautioning against moral crusades, Waltz (1979: 126) on the "appropriate amount" of power, Posen (2014), Gholz and Press (1997) on the need for a reduction in the American global footprint, or Mearsheimer and Walt (2003) on the importance of avoiding unnecessary conflicts in the Middle East, there is a long tradition of realists advocating for strategic restraint in foreign policy -- that is, restraint based on egoistic considerations and an anticipation of the reaction of others.

Restraint is often rational for a number of reasons. First, realists, both theorists and practitioners, are sensitive to the security dilemma. They understand that the pursuit of power or even security can mistakenly induce concerns on the part of other states that they might be the victim of aggression. Second, bellicose foreign and military policies often engender emotional and vitriolic reactions on the part of targets, creating the possibility for spirals of conflict. They serve to rally others around the flag, creating headaches and risks that might otherwise have been avoided. It is best, if possible, to avoid hatred and anger on the part of others. Restraint helps avoid making potential allies into adversaries. Third, gains in foreign policy from coercive foreign policies or territorial expansion can be costly and difficult to maintain. Getting in is often much less costly than staying in. What looks like a blessing can turn out to be a curse. Interests and goals must be defined in light of the limitations of power.

However, realist work on restraint is generally either prescriptive and normative in character or completely theoretical. Generally lacking is empirical evidence that realists in practice have advocated for strategic restraint at important moments in the history of international relations. Perhaps more importantly, none of these arguments goes far enough. I argue restraint is *indispensable* argue for realism. An unbound foreign policy approach cannot be called realist at all. In a way, this is evident in the very term itself. To be a

realist is to be realistic and to be realistic means to set one's sights to the attainable. Except in situations of absolute hegemonic preeminence (a possibility we will explore later), restraint is always necessary.

I demonstrate this through a careful study of Bismarck, one of the most successful realist practitioners of all time and also one of the most revisionist. The Iron Chancellor guided German reunification through a series of wars that profoundly altered the distribution of power in Europe, with consequences for at least a century. In that revisionism is antithetical to restraint, Bismarck's revolutionary foreign policy seems to speak for the typical argument made of realism: its unbound pursuit of power through violence. As we will see, however, Bismarck exhibited profound restraint both in domestic and foreign policy at the moment we might otherwise least expect, that is in the wake of military victory against Austria in 1866. Bismarck cautioned against the use of force, the subjugation of adversaries, and the pursuit of territorial expansion so as to avoid all the pitfalls of power – security dilemmas, conflict spirals, and overreach. If this most famous and revisionist of realists exercised strategic restraint at this decisive point, it speaks for the indispensability of restraint in realism.

In the following sections, I review the realist case for restraint and explain why it features so heavily in realist theory. I identify the three main reasons why realists caution us to be cautious. I then introduce the case of Bismarck and examine how during and after the Austro-Prussian War, he cautioned restraint at home and abroad for the same reasons contemporary theorists have stressed in their largely normative and prescriptive contributions. I then turn to arguments that question the essentially restrained nature of realism both from within and without the realist tradition and find them lacking.

Gun Shy: Restraint in Realism

Restraint -- that is the conscious and deliberate non-exercise of power, force and violence -- has been a central theme in both classical and modern structural realist scholarship. Realism is hardly all bellicose threats and power maximization. Coercion and force are not necessarily the most cost-effective way of reaching one's goals or the best strategy in the long-run. Morgenthau recommends "not to advance by destroying the

obstacles in one's way, but to retreat before them, to circumvent them, to maneuver around them, to soften and dissolve them slowly by means of persuasion, negotiation and pressure" (Ibid: 546). He describes statecraft as "quick adaptation to new situations, clever use of a psychological opening, retreat and advance as the situation may require, persuasion, the quid pro quo of bargaining and the like" (1948: 530). Similarly, Meinecke writes, "Power which gushes out blindly will end by destroying itself; it must follow certain purposive rules and standards, in order to preserve itself and to grow. Cunning and force must therefore unite in the exercise of power" (1957: 10). There is certainly a place for force and coercive bargaining, but there is no one-size-fit-all strategy. Trachtenberg writes of the older realist tradition, "In a Realpolitik world, the great powers relate to each other on a businesslike basis; power realities are accepted for what they are; compromises can normally be worked out relatively easily because statesmen all speak the same language, the language of power and interest. The power political approach thus provides a kind of yardstick for judgments about how power might be intelligently used—and, above all, for judgments about when its use is to be avoided. In this sense also, it is by and large a source of restraint" (2003: 167).

Trachtenberg argues that a world governed by Realpolitik principles is one in which force is rarely used, contra the typical characterization (and caricaturization) of realism: "A world in which everyone behaves 'realistically,' a world in which everyone adjusts to the realities of power—that is, to the *same* realities of power—is thus a stable world. It is in large part for this reason that at least some traditional realists found such policies—those in line with political realities, those that accept the world for what it is—relatively attractive" (2003: 178). Trachtenberg laments the disconnect between normative and more recent explanatory realist thinking, particularly neorealism. "I think there is a gap between the sorts of policies many realists support—moderate, cautious, rooted in a concern with the stability of the system as a whole—and certain important theoretical views those same people hold. On the one hand, you have a theory that suggests at its core that a system in which states act in accordance with the dictates of Realpolitik is a violent, war-prone system. On the other hand, you have people who hold that view calling for 'realist' policies—that is, policies based on power and interest, policies that are rational in terms of the imperatives of the system" (2003: 160).

We do, however, see an emphasis on restraint in more modern realists as well, even those that Trachtenberg chastises. For Waltz (and other defensive realists), power is conceived of as “a possibly useful means” to security as an end, but the pursuit of power can be a risky business. States can be insecure from having both too little and too much, as the former tempts conquest and the latter invites balancing. The goal for statesmen therefore is to have an “appropriate amount” of power as a means to maximizing security (1979: 126). In an historical analysis, Snyder (1991) points out the dangers of the “myths of empire,” in particular the belief that the use of force is efficacious, that expansion is necessary for security, and that victory will be easy. This implies the benefits of restraint. Mearsheimer and Walt (2003) have made the case against American overexpansion, particularly in the Middle East, cautioning against the Iraq War of 2003. Gholz and Press (1997), long before American hegemony began to seem tattered, argued through a realist lens that the United States should “come home.” In an already influential new volume, Posen (2014) faults the advocates of American “liberal hegemony” for lacking restraint. The impulse of American foreign policy after the Cold War has been to pursue a self-defeating grand strategy “whose aim is to overwhelm potential challengers that they will not even try to compete, much less fight” (2014: 5). He calls for the United States to reduce its global military footprint. “The United States should focus on a small number of threats, and approach those threats with subtlety and moderation. It should do that because the world is resistant to heavy-handed solutions” (Posen 2014: xii).

Realists do give force and coercion a prominent role, but as the *ultima ratio* when other, less costly and less counterproductive means are first attempted. In this vein, Posen writes that “deterrence and persuasion of potential adversaries and reassurance of allies and friends is preferable to the actual use of force” (2014: 4) because military power is a “blunt instrument” (2014: 22) that “remains a club” not a “scalpel” (2014: xiii). In laying out his case for an American grand strategy of restraint, he writes: “Any state can resort to arms to enforce its claims so the United States wisely remains prepared to enforce its claims, if it must... That said, the development of military force is expensive and the use of military force is terrible” (2014: xi). Mearsheimer, the offensive realist, similarly chastises neoconservatives for their false belief that the application of American military power is capable of accomplishing any political goal (2005: 2).

Restraint in foreign and military policy can have at least three distinctive and interrelated advantages, according to realists. This is not to argue that restraint is always the right strategy; realism is by definition situational, calling on statesmen to address events as they arise. However, there are reasons for restraint to be the correct move at many moments, even for the realist who believes that the use of force in international relations is always possible.

First, restraint lessens security dilemma dynamics, thereby avoiding unnecessary conflicts and tensions. In international relations, the pursuit of security by any state is often indistinguishable to outsiders from the pursuit of aggrandizement because military power is utilized towards both ends (Jervis 1978; Herz 1950). What looks like territorial annexation to one state might be another state's security buffer. The security dilemma is often described as a "tragic" situation given that the structural nature of the dilemma makes it difficult to resolve. However, few realists would take a completely deterministic and fatalistic approach. Restraint, perhaps through cooperation with others, offers the ability to send signals of reassurance to other states (Glaser 2000). Realist scholars stress that leaders should "look at the political scene from the point of view of other nations" (Morgenthau 1948: 553). In other words, statecraft involves strategic thinking. Ken Booth and Nicolas Wheeler (2008) call this "security dilemma sensibility." Without it one might falsely inflate the threat posed by others or clumsily convince another incorrectly of having malign intentions.

This recalls Waltz's admonition that there is such thing as too much power in international relations. Since power can be used for offense as well as defense, a state can have too much if it induces fear on the part of the other side and balancing to restore an equilibrium. Balancing might enhance stability, of course. However, if one lacks the understanding that others are acting defensively, it can also generate spiral dynamics that lead to mutually detrimental outcomes even among status quo states (Jervis 1978, 1979; Glaser 1994: 53-60). Posen argues that recent American grand strategy, overly expansionist and revisionist as it is, has produced such dynamics, thereby undermining its security. He claims that the "the United States is causing countervailing behavior...[It] has stimulated actions great and small from the world's middle powers, which increase U.S. costs, or aim to erode U.S. advantages" (2014: 65). U.S. policy "injects more energy into

the opposition than is necessary” (2014: 127), a trend that will get worse as American power wanes (2014: 165).

Second, not only fear can generate conflict spirals. Cycles of acrimony and indignation are also possible. Fear is not the only thing to avoid generating in foreign policy. One also wants to avoid engendering hatred and anger on the part of others. This holds open the possibility of using them as allies in future situations. As Trachtenberg describes it, in realist thought “any individual state...would want to have as many friends and as few enemies as possible” (2003: 164). Haslam notes: “This concern for utility meant that for Machiavelli, as indeed for all those committed to Reasons of State, calculation and self-control were mechanisms essential to effective rule. Whereas fear was useful, hatred was counter-productive” (1957: 30).

Realists are particularly concerned about stoking nationalism in other countries. This means remaining attentive to identity politics, particularly when considering military annexation, occupation or even basing. Posen draws attention to the powerful force of nationalism manifested in the resistance of other nations to occupation and governance by the United States (2014: 52). He argues that the United States is somewhat oblivious to the fact that there is great opposition to the U.S. presence in many parts of the world, particularly the Middle East (2014: 67). This has been a particularly difficult lesson for the United States to learn, according to realists. Posen complains that “reform and political reorganization of other countries has proven expensive and ‘success’ has proven elusive” (2014: 167). Sensitivity to identity politics also requires strategic thinking, seeing things as others do not out of sense of genuine concern but because of self-regard.

Third, restraint helps statesmen avoid the problem of defining interests in such an expansive manner as to exceed one’s own power to defend them. This can mean seizing territory that one cannot hold or govern or taking on allies that one cannot defend. Defining interests in terms of power leads to moderation, realists often argue (Smith 1986: 221; Trachtenberg 2003: 167-8). Realism cautions states to distinguish between vital and more peripheral interests, focusing on the former and jettisoning the latter. Trachtenberg writes, “The power political approach, therefore, by defining what needs to be emphasized, by its very nature defines what needs to be played down, and thus tends to rule out other kinds of policy” (2003: 167). Having

identified truly important state goals, Morgenthau cautions states to “promote the national interest with moderation and leave the door open for compromise in the form of a negotiated settlement” (1948: 534). This is not easy. States’ eyes are sometimes bigger than their stomach, and this can lead to indigestion later. “How difficult—often indeed how impossible it is, in the case of territorial annexation by a victor, to separate a pressing necessity of Realpolitik, from the pure pleasure of aggrandizement,” writes Meinecke (1957: 7). He notes: “Freely-released power shall (when *raison d’etat* is properly exercised) really only constitute the means of implementing by force those vital necessities of the State... But this means, once freed from legal fetters, threatens to set itself up as an end-in-itself, and to carry the State beyond that frontier of which it stands in real need” (Meinecke 1957: 14). Even the offensive realist Mearsheimer notes, “if a great power confronts two or more aggressors at the same time, but has neither the resources to check all of them nor an ally to which it can pass the buck, the besieged state probably should prioritize between its threats” (2001:164). We see the same admonition in Posen’s recent book. He separates out the wheat from the chaff in American goals and argues that the United States must refocus on priorities, avoiding temptations to remake the institutions of other countries and the practices of their governments vis-à-vis their own citizens.

These three reasons to exercise restraint are interrelated of course. By exercising too much power in foreign affairs given a lack of security dilemma sensibility, one can attract both fear and hatred on the part of others, which makes it harder to defend one’s interest with the power available. Security dilemma sensibility entails attentiveness to other reactions on the part of states, such as national indignation and anger. One of the reasons that a state bites off more than it can chew is by underestimating the resistance of others or the fear that its own actions might generate.

Other theoretical traditions in international relations also theorize about the role of restraint in foreign affairs but in ways that distinguish them from realism. Realist restraint is egoistic and situational rather than normative and/or generalized. Most prominently Ikenberry (1999) makes the case for institutionalized restraint, arguing that by tying their own hands in international institutions and other regimes, great powers can ensure that others acquiesce to their leadership, thereby generating greater long-term gains for both themselves and others. He argues that American post-WWII foreign policy followed this path. The

multilateral institutional order is a self-imposed web of restraint that prevents the United States from exercising its power in an arbitrary and short-sighted manner.

Realist restraint, in contrast, will always be situational. Morgenthau writes, the statesman “has a number of circumstances...to take into consideration. Circumstances are infinite, are infinitely combined; are variable and transient; he who does not take them into consideration is not erroneous, but stark mad....A statesman...is to be guided by circumstances; and judging contrary to the exigencies of the moment, he may ruin his country forever” (1946: 221). Realists judge each problem on its own merits and eschew the formulation of universal principles or solutions (Carr 1964: 16). Therefore, they would caution against the application of any type of generalized restraint. And sovereignty, being a vital interest of any state, should not be compromised across domains or over a long period of time. Thompson’s (2006) understanding of the Security Council as a means by which states might in any given circumstances constrain their interests as a signal of restraint in a particular situation would be consistent with a realist strategy. However, the need to constantly secure some international institution’s permission to use force would not (Glaser 1994). Realists might also of course question the empirical validity of Ikenberry’s claims, arguing that in fact America’s multilateral order is a cover for an overreaching American foreign policy with overly expansive goals.

Constructivists argue that states are sometimes restrained by normative obligations that place limitations on the exercise of pure state egoism. Whether it be moral injunctions against the use of particular weapons (Price 1997; Tannenwald 1999), reinterpretations of national interests based on universal principles such as racial equality (Klotz 1995) or the willingness to redefine alliance goals in light of allies’ input (Risse 1995), constructivists think of restraint in a non-instrumental manner. Realist restraint, in contrast, is egoistic and self-serving, based on a rational calculation of costs and benefits. This means a balancing of the short-term against the long term as well as a willingness to separate the necessary from the purely desirable. Morgenthau writes of the need to “see the issue in hand as a moment in history and beyond the victory of tomorrow it anticipates the incalculable possibilities of the future” (1948: 547). Expansion might serve a country’s short term interests but provoke a balancing coalition that undermines those gains. Decisively vanquishing an adversary might lead to glory at home but lead to long-term animosity. Occupation might

allow for the plundering of resources but at the expense of triggering local insurgencies and the hatred of the local population. None of these instances of restraint are driven by social norms.

When statesman combine national egoism with a rational decision-making style, the Realpolitik they practice resists the crude characterization of bellicose, trigger-happy warmongers we sometimes find in the literature, even by some realists. The Realpolitik course is a course of moderation. It is as much about not using power as using it. Being weak and being strong both pose certain problems for the state.

Restraint in Reality: The Case of Bismarck

Realist consideration of restraint, however, has rarely wedded theory and evidence. Realists have been content either to make the conceptual point that the heavy-handed use of coercive means can be self-defeating and detrimental to one's egoistic interests or to make the normative case for a different foreign policy, particularly on the part of the United States, using at most through illustrative examples. For instance, Glaser's (2010) rationalist rethinking of realist theory, one mindful of how one's actions are perceived by others, is explicitly a normative theory, meant to describe how foreign policy should be pursued and only as accurate as the decision-makers are rational. And he does not apply it to any empirical cases. We do not yet have a systematic demonstration of the appeal of restraint in practice to realist-minded thinkers.

Even if we did, however, this might just mean that *some* realists *sometimes* practice restraint. I argue that restraint is more essential to realism, a part of the very nature of realpolitik itself. What empirical evidence would support this? Ideally we could identify every realist decision-maker and find evidence of the indispensability of restraint in their foreign policy. This is unfortunately impossible. I take a different tack, identifying a statesman that everyone would regard as a realist, Bismarck, who is also a least likely case for restraint given his revisionist foreign policy objectives. If Bismarck puts a premium on restraint, then we can be more confident of its central role in realism. Moreover, we want to judge Bismarck's behavior when he is the least constrained by his environment. If Bismarck pulls his punches when he and his country are at their

most powerful, it speaks for the indispensability of restraint in realism. The case of the Austro-Prussian war and its repercussions on foreign and Prussian domestic politics is tailor made for this purpose.

Bismarck and the Austro-Prussian War

Otto von Bismarck was the Minister-President of Prussia beginning in 1862, the senior civil servant in the Prussian government reporting directly to King William I with responsibilities including the management of foreign policy. In less than a decade, despite frequent resistance from others in the Prussian government including the crown himself, he guided Prussia through three separate wars that resulted in German unification. Bismarck engaged in three separate acts of strategic restraint during the unification process: limiting war aims following the defeat of Austria in 1866, checking centralized executive power in the new German constitution, and seeking accommodation with liberal opponents in Prussia. Above all, he is known for being a realist. Unsurprisingly all of Bismarck's biographers describe him in this manner (Ludwig 2013: 148; Pflanze 1990: 95, 562; Pflanze 2002: 4; Feuchtwanger 2002: 2; Steinberg 2012: 8).

The primary obstacle to German unification was Austria. The two were frequently jockeying for position in the German Bund (Diet), a federation of dozens of German states erected in the wake of Napoleonic wars of which both were members. Frictions with the Habsburgs over the disposition of Schleswig and Holstein provided Bismarck with the spark he needed to incite a final showdown, in the hopes of expelling the Habsburgs from German affairs forever. Matters came to a head in June 1866 when the Austrians violated the terms of the Gastein Convention by allowing the Holstein estates to meet. Prussian troops invaded Holstein to prevent the convocation. The Bund voted to mobilize its forces against Prussia in response to the incursion. Prussia declared that the Bund was thereby dissolved. All of the larger states – Saxony, Württemberg, Hanover, Electoral Hesse, Baden and Bavaria -- allied with the Habsburgs. Only the states geographically isolated and most susceptible to Prussian pressure – such as the small Mecklenburg territories and Anhalt – sided with Prussia (Feuchtwanger 2002: 143; Pflanze 1990: 304; Ludwig 2013: 275).

The interesting element of the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 is less how it began and how it was fought but how it ended. It was not much of a contest. The “Fraternal War” was also known as the “Seven Weeks War.” The Prussians decisively defeated the Austrians at the Battle of Königgratz, ending any chance of Austrian victory. The question was how far the Prussians would push the Habsburgs. Bismarck’s Realpolitik guided him not to exploit the Prussian success, as a crude understanding of realism might expect, but rather to engage in strategic restraint. This looked like “retreat in the very moment of victory,” writes Ziblatt (2006: 122). The most eager to get into war was the most eager to restrain Prussia in the wake of victory.

Although Prussia routed the Austrians, strategic considerations of the kind mentioned above led Bismarck to conclude that the Prussians should seek a negotiated peace that left the Austrian Empire intact, with no loss in territory. He advised “His Majesty to make peace on the basis of the territorial integrity of Austria” (Bismarck II: 41). Bismarck wanted to limit war aims to the expulsion of the Austrians from northern German affairs and the creation of new but small unified German state in northern Germany that could be added to gradually, not all at once. Prussia should not bite off more than it could chew. This had been Bismarck’s position even before the war began. He wrote von Moltke, the head of the Prussian army, in March 1866: “The goal...is the agreement of Austria to the new German constitution we are striving for. Limiting our ambitions to northern Germany also offers the ... possibility of an understanding with Bavaria” (GW V: 396). He cautioned against the “occupation of Elbe duchies” because this would led to a “new range of continuous conflicts and unabated burdens” (GW V: 396). It was a “mistake to place the entire result in question in order to win a few more square miles of territorial concessions or a few million more reparations from Austria,” he wrote the king (GW VI: 78-81). At another point he wrote a colleague, “As far as I am concerned the difference between a successful reform of the German federation and the direct acquisition of some countries is not practically high enough to risk the future of the monarchy. Our political requirements are limited to the disposition of the powers of northern Germany in some form” (GW VI: 40-45). Prussia should not go south of the Main River, a limit to which the French indicated their acquiescence and support

(Bismarck II: 47). Bismarck was prioritizing Prussian interests, securing its main goals and forgoing others that might threaten the former.

The Minister-President's actions indicate acknowledgment of all three realist reasons for restraint. He was sensitive to the possibility of conflict spirals, creating grudges that Austria would nurse and removing the Habsburgs as a potential ally in the future. He recounted,

It was my object, in view of our subsequent relations with Austria, as far as possible to avoid cause for mortifying reminiscences, as it could be managed without prejudice to our German policy. A triumphant entry of the Prussian army into the hostile capital would naturally have been a gratifying recollection for our soldiers, but it was not necessary to our policy. It would have left behind it, as also any surrender of ancient possessions to us must have done, a wound to the pride of Austria, without being a pressing necessity for us, would have unnecessarily increased the difficulty of our future mutual relations... In positions such as ours was then, it is a political maxim after a victory not to enquire how much you can squeeze out of your opponent, but only to consider what is politically necessary (Bismarck II: 43).

Bismarck again thought strategically: "If Austria were severely injured, she would become the ally of France and of every other opponent of ours; she would even sacrifice her anti-Russian interests for the sake of revenge on Prussia" (Bismarck II: 50). The same was true of the lesser German states. This was mentioned by Bismarck in his private conversations at the time as well (GW VII: 234-5; VII: 137). Austria "must be made into a friend, and as a friend it could not be complete powerless" (GW VII: 234-5).

Bismarck was also concerned about the broader European environment, demonstrating security dilemma sensibility. Disturbing the equilibrium any further would create fear in London, Paris, and Moscow and invite outside intervention, particularly if Prussia pushed the fight into Hungary and left itself exposed (Bismarck II: 51). He was particularly worried about Napoleon, for which reason he pushed for a quick peace. After Königgratz, he believed "we could not lose a fortnight without bringing at least the danger of French interference very much nearer than it otherwise would be" (Bismarck II: 41; also Bismarck II: 45; VI: 78-81,

VII: 234-5). He wrote to the king that Napoleon had consented to adding four million northern German inhabitants, “but one could not count on support of anything more far-reaching or calculate even how these Prussian demands would be received by the other great powers” (GW VI: 78-81). He complained to his wife that he had the responsibility of “reminding people that we do not live alone in Europe but with three other powers, who hate and envy us” (Steinberg 2012: 254). Bismarck’s preoccupation with the appearance of Prussian motives was also evident before the war (GW V: 396). The Austrians had to be seen as the power in Europe hindering natural German national aspirations (GW V: 396).

Bismarck was also thinking of the difficulties that would be entailed by biting off more than Germany could chew, keeping its goals in line with Prussian power. Behind the benefits were hidden future costs. He wanted to pass on annexing those states whose particularism was strongest, particularly the southern states. “I gauged the proposed acquisitions from Austria and Bavaria by the question, whether the inhabitants, in case of future war, would remain faithful to the King of Prussia in the event of the withdrawal of the Prussian officials and troops, and continue to accept commands from him; and I had not the impression that the population of these districts, which had become habituated to Bavarian and Austrian conditions, would be disposed to meet Hohenzollern predilections” (Bismarck II: 44). Bismarck commented at the time: “I believe it is impossible to incorporate the Bavarian south German Catholic element... [T]he effort to violently conquer it would create for us the same element of weakness that southern Italy has created for that state” (Ziblatt 2006: 126; Pflanze 1990: 369; VI: 40-45). He added, “If we were to attack [the southern states] now, then the annexation would always be viewed as a result of war and victory, as an act of violence” (Ziblatt 2007: 127). The Minister-President said the same of Austrian provinces, that their acquisition would not “strengthen but rather weaken” (GW VII: 234-5). More colorfully, he said to a Hungarian aristocrat, “We should also not swallow more than we can digest” (GW VII: 140). In other words, Bismarck was mindful of the admonitions of modern realists about the power of nationalism and the difficulties it poses even for powerful countries when seizing territories. Given their geographical location on France’s borders, Bismarck also realized that the incorporation of those same states would also be the most threatening to Napoleon’s interests (Bismarck II: 45).

Bismarck, however, had difficulty persuading the military and the king to pull Prussia's punches. They wanted to continue the fight, seizing Vienna and even potentially going on to Hungary, as well as demand significant territorial concessions (Feuchtwanger 2002: 144). Extremely reluctant to go to war in the first place against a fellow monarch, Wilhelm I now proposed a striking list of desired territorial annexations from Austria and its allies – Bohemia, Austrian Silesia, Ansbach-Bayreuth, East Friesland, Hanover and part of Saxony in addition to Schleswig-Holstein and Austria's expulsion from the Bund, which Bismarck also expected (Steinberg 2012: 255; Bismarck II: 45). These would have meant an expansion of Prussia past the Main River.

The king and military, in Bismarck's eyes as well as those of subsequent historians, were not pursuing a rational course mindful of future consequences. For the King it was about the immediate gratifications of retribution and glory (Bismarck II: 51; also Ludwig 2013: 287-88). In the end, Prussia, over royal objections, confined its annexation to the area north of the Main River, in northern Germany, the most important territories being Hanover, Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein. The Hanoverian king lost his crown, although at French insistence, the Saxon king kept his (Steinberg 2012: 125). The new German state would have William I as its Emperor, but many constituent states still had their kings, princes and dukes as heads of state. The three large southern states, Bavaria, Baden and Württemberg retained their independence but were made to sign treaties of alliance. Upon hearing the generous terms, the Bavarian minister Bismarck was negotiating with embraced him and wept (Ludwig 2013: 292-3). However, even with the Minister-President's strategic restraint, Prussia had added four million habitants and now was a truly great power of 30 million.

Bismarck and the Constitution of the Northern German Federation

While Bismarck's success in holding back Prussia during the Austro-Prussian war have received the most attention by historians, less noticed are the Minister President's actions in regards to the new Germany created in the war's aftermath as well as his management of the domestic political situation in Prussia after he returned home victorious. These were also instances of historically important strategic restraint.

As part of the peace treaty with Austria, signed in Prague, the Habsburgs consented to Prussia's creation of a Northern German Federation, in essence a new German state. At the time of Prussia's triumph and within days of its victory at Königgratz, Bismarck summoned a new federal parliament, to be selected on the basis of direct and universal male suffrage, that would negotiate a new constitution incorporating Prussia and all the other German states that had not been annexed, with the exception of the three larger southern states (but including Saxony). Bismarck's plan for a new federal constitution and assembly had been ridiculed by most of its target audience when announced before the war in June (Pflanze 1955: 552). The longtime enemy of democracy in Prussia proposed a German parliament that would elect parliamentarians through universal male suffrage.

This was another example of Bismarck's strategic restraint. He made the greatest concession to liberals and nationalists, that for which they had fought since 1848 with withering resistance from Bismarck, precisely at Prussia's pinnacle of strength. To his colleagues he still spoke of the "national swindle," but it was one he would use (Feuchtwanger 2002: 145). Bismarck noted: "The goal requires sacrifices, not just from some but from all" (GW V: 514-5). He had made his plans for such a parliament clear before the war so as to court liberal nationalists to Prussia's side (Feuchtwanger 2002: 136; Pflanze 1990: 295). This had led to a row with conservative colleagues (Steinberg 2012: 242-243; Pflanze 1990: 309).

This was not a principled conversion of course. In his instructions to his colleagues he described the "principle of direct elections and general suffrage" as "the only one possible" (GW V: 432-4). Bismarck was accepting the facts on the ground. He recognized the limitations of the monarchy's power and was careful not to let his goals overtake his capacities, our third realist reason for restraint. Years before he had written, "As soon as popular representation...exists in every German State, it becomes impossible to regard a similar institution for Germany as a whole as essentially revolutionary" (Ludwig 2013: 182). Bismarck increasingly realized that the bourgeoisie, liberalism and nationalism were unpleasant political facts that could not be changed, so best to make use of them (Ludwig 2013: 152). Pacification of German national wishes "through ordered means" was "in the interest of the monarchical principle in Germany," lest the people "take matters into their own hands with force" (GW V: 514-5). When Bismarck revealed his intentions to von Unruh, a

prominent moderate liberal, he stressed the structural constraints Prussia was under: “Prussia is completely isolated. There is but one ally for Prussia if she knows how to win and handle them...the German people...I am the same Junker of ten years ago...but I would have no perception and no understanding if I could not recognize clearly the reality of the situation” (GW VII: 38; Gall (1986: 217). Later on, he would proclaim, “If there was to be a revolution, it is better to make it than to suffer it” (Feuchtwanger 2012: 145; Pflanze 1955: 553). Bismarck also thought that he now needed the allegiance of liberal forces to consolidate Germany, which would contain powerful centrifugal forces.

Bismarck’s constitutional design also exhibited strategic restraint vis-à-vis the power of newly incorporated states, many of which still were governed by monarchs. Mindful of nationalist resistance, the Minister-President did not push centralization too far, balancing the forces of national centralization against those of particularism. Just as Bismarck had restrained Prussian power vis-à-vis the defeated powers, he did so vis-à-vis the new members of his federation. Two features of the draft, which was adopted with few changes, were key to appease particularist interests that might resist the new German state. First, the federation was to be partly governed by a Bundesrat, or Federal Council, whose members were to be directly appointed by the German states. It would share legislative power with the new federal parliament (Feuchtwanger 2002: 152). The Northern German Federation was a “compact among princes” (Steinberg 2012: 267). Years before he had written of the need “to tranquillise the German princes concerning the scope of our designs, so that they may realise that we are not aiming at their mediatisation but at a voluntary understanding among them all” (Ludwig 2013: 183). So as to minimize the loss in sovereignty and to “preserve the fiction that the new confederation was simply a reformed version of the old” (Pflanze 1990:343), rather than the creation of a new country, the Bundesrat was largely modeled off of the now disbanded Bund, even using the same voting rules (Steinberg 2012: 267; Feuchtwanger 2002: 152-153; Pflanze 2002: 343-345). Delegates to the Bundesrat were even given “diplomatic protection” and the members of the federation sent diplomatic envoys to Berlin (Pflanze 1990: 347). Bismarck wrote of a “viable creation on the basis and within the framework of the old federation” (GW V: 432-4).

Second, significant powers of administration and legislation were delegated to the states, something Bismarck had also long had in mind (Ludwig 2013: 183). The Northern German federation had legislative authority over customs and commerce, transportation and communication, banking and coinage and had the right to levy tariffs and some consumption taxes. States retained the right to legislate on all other matters, including how to implement laws passed by the central government. Judicial matters were left to state courts (Pflanze 1990: 347-352). Bismarck explained that instead of the “the integration and complete merger with Prussia itself even in the face of popular resistance...by civil servants and officers who feel duty-bound to the previous governments,” the “Prussian government intends to overcome the difficulties of these [groups] in a German way, through indulgence for particularities and through gradual habituation” (Ziblatt 2006:126). In other words, Bismarck was mindful of the likely resistance that would result if Prussia pushed too hard towards creating a unified state and decided for strategic reasons to proceed slowly.

However, by restraining overly ambitious goals, Bismarck could avoid worse outcomes, such as the advent of true democracy in Germany and Prussia. His strategic restraint was in Prussia’s interest. Unlike in a true parliamentary system, the executive branch in the new German state was not constituted by parliament and could not be dissolved by it. The king also had complete control over foreign policy with the sole right to negotiate treaties, supreme military authority and the power to command, declare war and declare martial law (Feuchtwanger 2002: 153-155; Steinberg 2012: 267; Pflanze 1990: 343-345; Ludwig 2013: 297). With the Bundesrat, the king could dissolve the Bundestag indefinitely. This was, in Treitschke’s words, a “revolution from above” (Steinberg 2012: 259; Ludwig 2013: 296). Historians comment on the realist quality of the constitution, “entirely guided by pragmatic considerations” (Feuchtwanger 2002: 152). It was a “masterpiece of realism. It united the forces of German nationalism and particularism, and solved the problem of uniting states of disproportionate size” (Pflanze 1990: 342). Bismarck’s blueprint formed the basis for final German unification when Bavaria and the other southern German states were admitted into the new Reich following France’s defeat in 1871 and remained in place until the empire collapsed in 1919.

Bismarck and Domestic Peace in Prussia

Bismarck's final act of strategic restraint during this immediate postwar period occurred in Prussia itself. The Austro-Prussian war fundamentally reoriented Prussian politics. Landtag elections held on the same day as the battle of Königgratz, before the battlefield results were even known, resulted in a decisive conservative victory. Reactionary forces increased their representation from 28 to 123. Progressives, the radical democrats, fell from 143 to 83. Moderate liberals declined from 110 to 65 (Pflanze 1990: 327-328; Feuchtwanger 2002: 149). The decisive turn in the public mood led many arch-conservatives to urge and expect Bismarck to undo the gains of the democratic revolution of 1848 (perhaps even to lead a coup d'état), which had forced William I to promulgate a constitution, (Pflanze 1990: 328; Ludwig 2013: 289). As Ludwig describes it: "The king has not been allowed to take vengeance on the enemy abroad; at least he will take vengeance on the enemy at home. All the extreme reactionaries whom Bismarck has been fighting or so long have now flocked to headquarters, declaring that the moment has now come to overthrow the constitution" (2013: 289).

Bismarck had the exactly opposite idea. The Minister-President instead proposed an end to a longstanding constitutional conflict with the Prussian parliament through the passage of an "indemnity bill," which would essentially admit the illegality of the crown's behavior in previous years, that of spending money without authorization, but legally forgiving it at the same time (Ludwig 2013: 291). Bismarck had been brought in as Minister-President precisely to play hardball with the liberal-leaning Landtag. Unable to secure approval of a budget and agreement on a military reform bill in the early 1860s, the crown proceeded on dubious legal grounds, arguing that it had the right to collect and spend taxes in the event that the Landtag and king could not agree since the constitution did not specify otherwise (what became known as the *Lücketheorie*, the "gap" or "hole theory") (Steinberg 2012: 208). Bismarck was brought in as a "Konfliktminister" because of his reputation as a heavy-hitting arch-conservative in domestic affairs. This seemed to portend (correctly) to most observers a no-holds-barred approach on the part of the crown. Indeed under Bismarck, the crown muzzled the press and banned civil servants and soldiers from engaging in any political activities in addition to other anti-democratic measures (Steinberg 2012: 190-208; Feuchtwanger 2002: 90-95). Bismarck had told William before his appointment, "The question now at issue is not between

conservative and liberal, but whether the regime Prussia shall be monarchical or parliamentary. If needs must, parliamentarianism should be withstood by a period of dictatorship” (Ludwig 2013: 199).

Bismarck now reversed course. His reasoning was strategic. The new German state (or federation) required liberal and national forces to combat particularism and renewed authoritarianism in Prussia would undermine those efforts (Pflanze 1990: 328). Bismarck wanted to avoid making unnecessary and permanent enemies on the part of liberals, the second realist reason for restraint. He explained, “The power of the monarchy in Prussia must be supported by a powerful army..... It is the duty of every Prussian minister to regard the will of the king as authoritative, but at the same time to let the will of the king be saturated with the opinion of the nation” (Pflanze 1990: 328). Bismarck sought to solidify Prussian absolutism with a national element, to use the people for conservative purposes. Conservatives again virulently objected (GW VII: 147). Bismarck scolded them for their lack of strategic thinking: “The little people don’t have enough to do; they see no further than their own noses and like to swim on the storm sea of phrases. With the enemy one can cope, but the friends!” (Pflanze 1990: 338; also Feuchtwanger 2002: 149).

Bismarck did not argue that conservative wishes for more authoritarian government were undesirable. Rather they were self-defeating. They would turn over a powerful weapon to Prussia’s adversaries in the new federation, thereby undermining Germany’s most important interests: “By the suspension and revision of the Constitution, by the humiliation of the Opposition in the [Prussian] Diet, an effectual weapon against Prussia in the struggles looming in the future would have been placed in the hands of all those who were discontented with the events of 1866 in Germany and Austria. One would have had to be prepared meanwhile to carry out, in opposition to the parliament and the press, a system of government in Prussia which would be combated by all the rest of Germany” (Bismarck II: 76-77). It would undermine Germany’s most important interests. He cautioned them to pull punches, avoiding the creation of unnecessary resistance. “We could, indeed, have constitutionally gained an increase of strength for the monarchy within the amended boundaries of Prussia, but it would have been in the presence of fiercely dissentient domestic elements, to which the Opposition in the new provinces would have united itself” (Bismarck II: 76-77). Bismarck told the king that if liberal gains were rewound in Prussia, “All of those in

Germany who are dissatisfied with the victory would, in that case, draw away from an absolutist Prussia; the new provinces would join the opposition; we should have waged a Prussian war of conquest, but Prussia's national policy would have been hamstrung" (Ludwig 2013: 289).

Restraint in the wake of victory would be a particularly powerful signal. "Before the victory I would never have mentioned the word 'indemnity'; but after the victory the King was in a position to make the concession magnanimously, and to conclude peace, not with his people...but the section of the Opposition which had got out of harmony with the government" (Bismarck II: 77). He explained: "Concessions on the constitutional issue now had the appearance of a royal benevolence rather than of a government defeat" (Pflanze 1990: 329).

Bismarck's victory against Austria and his indemnity bill won him the support of moderate liberals, leading to a fundamental realignment in the Prussian Landtag and soon after the new Reichstag (Ludwig 2013: 300). Liberal moderates recognized that Bismarck had done through force what they had long failed to do, erect the foundations of a national German state. They traded this for domestic freedoms (Pflanze 1990: 334). Radicals in the Progressive party refused to support the indemnity bill, which legitimized unconstitutionality in their view. The moderates, however, then broke off to form a new party, that of the National Liberals (Pflanze 1990: 336). They became the largest party in the new federal parliament (Feuchtwanger 2002: 154). By restraining the monarchy's ambitions, the new Chancellor was able to avoid turning the moderate liberals into adversaries and intractable foes, instead drawing them to his side. Bismarck relied on their support for the next decade, abandoning his old conservative allies.

Shoot First, Ask Questions Later?: Misconceptions about Restraint in Realism

Many would dispute that restraint is a requisite for realism, which often has the reputation for being the foreign policy approach and theoretical tradition in which the lack of restraint is the entire point. The world is a no-holds-barred place where anything goes. Why is this the case? And why do I believe it is mistaken?

The origins of modern realist theory must be understood in relation to the simultaneous development of liberal international relations thinking. Realists generally framed their analyses as a departure from overly optimistic, idealistic and even “naïve” liberal theories, a broad set of arguments tied together in the belief that greater peace and prosperity was possible in international relations, primarily through the mechanism of international cooperation (Zacher and Matthews 1995; Rathbun 2010). This critique captures the essence of two of the most important realist books of the 20th century, E.H. Carr’s *Twenty Years’ Crisis* (1964) and Hans Morgenthau’s *Scientific Man and Power Politics* (1946).

The result, however, was often a caricature of realist arguments, a portrayal of realism as synonymous with the constant exercise of power and the expectation of consistent coercion and even war. Two prominent examples make the point. In the classical liberal treatise by Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, the first page reads, “For political realists, international politics, like all other politics is a struggle for power but, unlike domestic politics, a struggle dominated by organized violence,” going on to quote a realist textbook that reads: “All history shows that nations active in international politics are continuously preparing for, actively involved in, or recovering from organized violence in the form of war” (1977: 23). One of the three central themes of realism, according to Keohane and Nye, is that “force is a usable and effective instrument of policy. Other instruments may also be employed, but using or threatening force is *the most effective* means of wielding power” (1977: 23 (emphasis added)). Against this they articulate the complex interdependence alternative, a liberal critique that assumes that military force is often ineffective and non-fungible.

Similarly, the constructivist scholar Iain Johnston defines the realpolitik paradigm as compromising three core beliefs: a high frequency of conflict in human affairs, the zero-sum nature of conflict, and the high efficacy of violence” (1996: 224). This portrayal of realism does not do justice to the judiciousness, caution

and situational character of realist theory and Realist practice. As will be seen force is not a one-size-fits-all tool in the realist arsenal, and realists believe that the use of force and coercion are often counterproductive.

Realists have contributed to this misperception, as Trachtenberg has noted, likely in their zeal to draw a clear line with a liberal alternative seen as too rosy and optimistic. Waltz writes that “so too will a state of war exist if all states seek only to ensure their own safety” (1989: 43-44). Van Evera maintains that the “anarchic nature of international politics” encourages “cut-throat behavior among states”; it is a “brutal back-alley” (1992: 19). Grieco writes that realism assumes that “states in anarchy are preoccupied with power and security, are *predisposed* towards conflict and competition, and often fail to cooperate even in the face of common interests” (1988: 488 (emphasis added)). Note that all these scholars are regarded as “defensive realists,” not the “offensive” realists who argue that the nature of the international system creates incentives for states to continually maximize their power.¹ While this distinction is important, the point here is that realists of all varieties are sometimes implicated in the caricaturization of their own approach. Glaser (1994; 2010) maintains that structural realism in particular has a “competition bias,” one that neglects the important role of cooperation and non-military means in realist foreign policy.

Much of this misunderstanding about realism and restraint is therefore a function of the evolution of the discipline of international relations, particularly the casting of a “great debate” between realists on the one hand and liberal idealists on the other (Osiander 1998; Thies 2002). Realism evolved largely as a criticism of those who saw possibility for liberal progress in international relations, generally defined in terms of greater peace and cooperation. Realists criticized what they regarded as the “utopian” assumptions made by liberals (Carr 1964; Morgenthau 1946). Force would, in their eyes, always be the ultimate arbiter of international relations. It could not be wished away. However, this can create the false impression that realists are quick-draws and that they believe that force is the first choice in the resolution of conflicts. This is not the case. For realists, force is generally the *ultima ratio*, literally the last option when other less costly and unpredictable means are ineffective.

¹ On the distinction, see Taliaferro (2000) and Hamilton and Rathbun (2013).

Although this liberal-realist debate is now somewhat dated, its characterization of the realist position still persists today, even influencing realists' own conception of their own perspective (Trachtenberg 2003). However, as the very debate over American retrenchment reveals, it is often the liberal impulse that is hard to restrain. Prominent calls to "come home, America" are aimed at the hegemonic liberal establishment accused of never being able to say 'no' to a foreign troop placement or diplomatic intrigue.

A second reason why realism has an undeserved unrestrained reputation is that realism has many varieties and one notable one, Mearsheimer's offensive realism, hardly gives the impression of caution. Indeed Mearsheimer has argued against many of the key virtues of restraint, particularly the notion that too much power can undermine security. In his words, "offensive realism parts company with defensive realism over the question of how much power states want" (2001: 21). He writes, "States in the international system aim to maximize their relative power positions over other states. The reason is simple: the greater the military advantage one state has over other states, the more secure it is. Every state would like to be the most formidable military power in the system because this is the best way to guarantee survival in a world that can be very dangerous... The ideal outcome would be to end up as the hegemon in the system" (1994: 11-12).

One should not, however, allow Mearsheimer an outsize influence in defining the nature of realism, particularly in light of the fact that his interpretation, although a forceful one, is largely isolated in the realist community. When scholars refer to offensive realists, they are referring solely to Mearsheimer. Perhaps more importantly, however, is that Mearsheimer theory does not practice what he preaches. For all of his discussion on the rationality of maximizing power, which implies a lack of restraint, his policy advocacy consistently stresses the pitfalls of power.

Mearsheimer argues that America unadvisedly induces security dilemmas by throwing its weight around too much. He writes colorfully, "realists tend to believe that...when one state puts its fist in another's face, the target usually does not throw its hands in the air and surrender. Instead it looks for ways to defend itself" (2005: 4). Mearsheimer and Walt warned at the time that the United States was considering a second invasion of Iraq, "War may not be necessary to deny Iraq nuclear weapons, but it is likely to spur proliferation

elsewhere... Iran and North Korea will be even more committed to having a nuclear deterrent after watching the American military conquer Iraq. Countries like Japan, South Korea and Saudi Arabia will then think about following suit” (2003: 15). Mearsheimer (2014) used the same criticism in lampooning American policy vis-à-vis Ukraine: “President Obama has decided to get tough with Russia by imposing sanctions and increasing support for Ukraine’s new government. This is a big mistake... Instead of resolving the dispute, it will lead to more trouble. The White House view, widely shared by Beltway insiders, is that the United States bears no responsibility for causing the current crisis... Mr. Putin, of course, didn’t see things that way. He viewed these developments as a direct threat to Russia’s core strategic interests. But few American policymakers are capable of putting themselves in Mr. Putin’s shoes.” Note the reference to security dilemma sensibility. He goes on to caution restraint, the pulling of punches. “Mr. Obama should adopt a new policy toward Russia and Ukraine — one that seeks to prevent war by recognizing Russia’s security interests and upholding Ukraine’s territorial integrity. To achieve those goals, the United States should emphasize that Georgia and Ukraine will not become NATO members. It should make clear that America will not interfere in future Ukrainian elections or be sympathetic to a virulently anti-Russian government in Kiev” (2014b). Mearsheimer makes even the politically bolder assertion that “America’s interventionist policies are the main cause of its terrorism problem” (2014a: 10).

Even in his magnum opus, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Mearsheimer briefly considers the example of Bismarck, and seems to endorse his self-restraint in the wake of victory. Bismarck became defensive-oriented afterwards because Germany “had conquered about as much territory as it could without provoking a great-power war, which Germany was likely to use” (2001: 184)). Here Mearsheimer seems to be implying that power and security are not in fact always positively related.

Mearsheimer is worried about cycles of acrimony and indignation as well. “Realists...think that nationalism usually makes it terribly costly to invade and occupy countries in areas like the middle east. People in the developing world believe fervently in self-determination, which is the essence of nationalism and they do not like Americans or Europeans running their lives” (2005: 4). Contrary to the myth that realists always view force as an effective means of foreign policy, he writes, “The real trouble comes once the United

States owns the country it has overrun, and the Americans are seen as occupiers and face an insurgency. The RMA [Revolution in Military Affairs] is largely useless in combatting an insurgency” (2005: 5). Military power, after all, is not a scalpel.

Finally Mearsheimer takes the United States to task for not matching means and ends, complaining that “American national-security elites act on the assumption that every nook and cranny of the globe is of great strategic significance and that there are threats to U.S. interests everywhere” (2014a: 9). American interests are too broadly defined, i.e. not restrained enough. In short, in his policy advocacy the most prominent exception to the realist rule that restraint is requisite falls into line, highlighting all three of the rational reasons why a more cautious foreign policy approach is better.

Reclaiming the Real Realpolitik

This article has attempted to portray a more nuanced version of realism than which often prevails in the academic literature. Indeed, I would argue, that realism is by its very nature situational and adaptive. As a consequence, realists caution restraint, even (or particularly) when states have a position of advantage. This is evident in recent prescriptive interventions by realists in policy debates, particularly over the direction of an American foreign policy that seems extremely stretched, despite American military hegemony.

This paper shows that this is not new. Indeed realist practitioners of foreign policy have, at key moments in history, pulled punches in such a way as to profoundly influence historical developments. Arguably Bismarck’s strategic restraint following the Austro-Prussian war was necessary for the unification of Germany. There are other contemporary examples one could draw on as well. George W. Bush’s management of the Soviet Union during the German unification process seems another example of a realist practitioner sensitive to the security considerations of another power. The President stressed the need to avoid gloating following the fall of the Berlin Wall, drew the Soviets into a four power discussion about the disposition of Germany where their views were heard, and did not publicly pressure Gorbachev to give up Lithuania. Although I am not a realist personally, I urge realists to reclaim a more historically and theoretically

accurate understanding of their approach and critics to avoid a straw man easy to knock down. No need to pull punches provided that the adversary is a worthy one.

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