

**The Unreliable Ally: Offensive Structural Realism and
Rollback in Nicaragua**

by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For more than a thousand years the philosophical and political notion of realism has been developing. The foundation of modern realism was laid by Thucydides and Machiavelli. The primary contribution made by Thucydides was his identification of fear as a fundamental motivator for state action. Machiavelli refined Thucydides' observation into a treatise on power and how a prince could gain or maintain it. Eventually some theorists claimed that its fundamentals were scientifically provable. The theory of structural realism espoused by Kenneth Waltz is the first and most important of the neorealist political theorists and his work formed the foundations for the work of John Mearsheimer who revised Waltz's work and called it offensive realism. Machiavelli's The Prince, John Herz's The Nation State and the Crisis in World Politics, Hans Morgenthau's Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, Kenneth Waltz's Theory of International Politics, and John Mearsheimer's The Tragedy of Great Power Politics are the primary works utilized in this thesis to outline the development of realism in contemporary international relations. This thesis argues that the foreign policies of the United States under the Reagan Administration [with regard to Nicaragua], conformed to the tenets of offensive structural realism. In order to accomplish this goal four chapters will be offered.

The first chapter is devoted to a statement of the main arguments of the thesis, and an explanation of ideas presented throughout. Chapter Two involves a review of the relevant literature relating to the theoretical aspects of the arguments presented in Chapter One. The work of representative realist political thinkers from the two dominant post World War Two realist approaches are examined. These two realist approaches have dominated the foreign policy landscape in the U.S. primarily due to the development of the Cold War and the capability

to wage war on a global and catastrophic level. The fear engendered by the tense global political environment, and the ever present possibility of nuclear war, significantly contributed to the domination of the school of realism in American foreign policy.

The work of Machiavelli is discussed in the following section due to his singular position as the most influential realist in history. His work, The Prince, stands as a primary reference work for realist thought. He did not endorse any value except the pursuit of power and its maintenance and by doing so, effectively removed any moral check on power. He suggested that morality and its constraints could not be afforded if one wished to maintain power as long as possible. He argued that the abandonment of morality and the instilling of fear in one's subjects and enemies should be a primary tool in power maintenance and acquisition.

The work of John Herz is then examined due to his contribution to the notion of relative power. Herz outlined his security dilemma by positing that as one state's security increases, the security of others in the system is necessarily reduced. The implication made by Herz is that if one state has more power than another in an anarchical international system, then it also has more security and poses a threat to others in the system thereby causing the other states to seek power in a self interested fashion. In Herz's estimation, as those described before him, fear is the motivating factor behind action in the international arena and it forms a continuous cycle of reinforcement of power seeking behavior. The work of John Herz exemplifies the classical realism of Hans Morgenthau, who is discussed in the following section.

The examination of the work of Hans Morgenthau is the centerpiece of the portion of the literary review devoted to those realist thinkers who employ the classical approach to international relations. His influence in the foreign policy of the U.S. in the post World War Two era is so pervasive that any discussion of American foreign policy during the period would

be incomplete without it. A thorough examination and contextualization of Morgenthau's work and its influence in American foreign policy is particularly important to the arguments of this thesis because it provides the philosophical underpinnings of U.S. foreign policy for the period leading up to the election of Ronald Reagan. In order to make the argument that a philosophical shift occurred in the rationale behind American foreign policy from classical balance of power realism to offensive structural realism, Morgenthau's work must be related to actual American foreign policy. The work of George Kennan is examined in the following section for its contribution to the classical realist policy of containment, which exemplified the post World War Two American foreign policy framework.

Kennan's views are informative for this study in that they highlight the perspective at the time that the U.S. was not really threatened by the Soviets. He believed that the U.S. competitive advantage would lead to an ever increasing gap between the capabilities of the two countries, with the U.S. coming out on top. As a specialist on the Soviet Union, Kennan's views are important because they contrast with the rhetoric of the Reagan Administration which argued that the Soviet Union was an evil empire bent on global domination. His intimate experience with the country implies that his views on the nature of the Soviet Union were more reliable than those of the Reagan Administration even though they were decades apart. The inclusion of an examination of Kennan and his contribution to American foreign policy firmly establishes that classical balance of power realism formed the foundation of American foreign policy in the period leading up to the election of Ronald Reagan. This is a necessary antecedent to making the argument that a shift occurred from classical balance of power realism to offensive structural realism.

The work of Thucydides is discussed due to his early recognition of fear as a primary motivating factor in international relations. His understanding contributed significantly to all realist thought including structural realists who cling to it as a primary source for nearly all international action.

The fundamentally important work of Kenneth Waltz is assessed in the next section. His unique approach constituted the first significant development in the school of realism since the work of Morgenthau. Examination of his theory of structural realism is important because it formed the basis for offensive structural realism which this thesis argues is the basis for the policy of rollback implemented by Ronald Reagan with regard to Nicaragua. His theory posits that there are certain constants in the realm of international relations. Of the constants, the anarchical nature of the international arena is central. Also fundamental is that the international system is a self help system where each actor is responsible for the same set of tasks within the system. Waltz terms this constant functional undifferentiation. He limits the scope of analysis to the major players in the international arena citing their insignificance to the political calculations of great powers. Of the forms that balance of power can take, he feels that the bipolar arrangement is the most stable. In a multipolar balance of power the political calculations are far more difficult, thereby providing a larger possibility of error and thus war. In a bipolar balance of power, Waltz argues, a perfectly competitive system develops because the enemy is clearly defined. He believes that the superpowers will seek peace with each other because they are the ones who stand to lose most relative to others in a war against each other. His thoughts echo the sentiments of George Kennan who believed that the Soviet Union was not a significant threat because the relative strength of the United States produced an ever increasing gap between the two nations, which would inevitably lead to American victory.

The work of John Mearsheimer is examined in the next section. His twist on Kenneth Waltz's theory of structural realism is the central element of the core argument of this thesis that the Reagan Administration's actions in Nicaragua conformed to the tenets of offensive structural realism. Mearsheimer, like Waltz, believes that the condition of anarchy in the international system is of primary importance and because there is no supra-national arbiter of disputes, national security is the responsibility of each state. He argues that absolute certainty cannot be achieved when ascertaining the intentions of other entities in the international system and that states are rational actors. Though Mearsheimer's basic assumptions are virtually identical to those of Waltz, he concludes that the interaction of these factors produces an international environment characterized by actors with aggressive offensive tendencies. He argues that states will never be satisfied with their station in perpetuity and that this creates fear in other states in a cyclical fashion, similar to John Herz's security dilemma. In his assessment, the nature of the international system predisposes states to seek regional hegemony and eventually global hegemony.

This thesis argues that Mearsheimer's theory formed the rationale for the policy of rollback, which the Reagan Doctrine justified in the liberal rhetoric of democracy and freedom. It furthermore argues that the policy of rollback formed the justification for American foreign policy with regard to Nicaragua. Thus, this treatment of the work of John Mearsheimer is of primary importance to the core argument of the thesis.

The cumulative effect of the literary review of Chapter Two should be to encapsulate realism as a whole while highlighting the major contributors to the classical and structural realist schools of thought. It is necessary to the argument of this thesis to understand that classical realism formed the philosophical underpinnings of American foreign policy in the form of the policy of

containment under previous American Administrations before the argument can be made that a shift occurred in the nature of those underpinnings. With that accomplished, the literature relevant to the central argument of the thesis can be examined.

Chapter Three of this thesis is devoted to studying the case of Nicaragua with the intent of providing evidence and arguments that the Reagan Administration's policy of rollback was based on the principles of offensive structural realism. It argues that the policy of rollback meets key requirements for qualification as a policy based on the principles of offensive structural realism. These requirements are that it was a policy aimed at the diminishment or destruction of Soviet influence and power and it had a focus on relative gains with no consideration for irrelevant actors. International incidents such as the fall of the Shah in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan contributed to the perception of lost American hegemony. The belief that the Soviets were acting aggressively and seeking hegemony as well, provided fertile ground for the adoption of a policy based on offensive structural realism.

The examination of American foreign policy in Nicaragua begins with a brief outline and discussion of Soviet influence in Central America. The most important element of this discussion is the effect of Cuba's revolution and its alignment with the Soviet Union. Castro's embrace of Soviet military aid had the effect of instilling a powerful latent fear in American foreign policy makers that other countries would follow, thus endangering American national security, and destroying American interests. Cuba's revolution had the benefit of happening first, thus the American response was too slow to stop it. Unfortunately for the repressed citizens of other countries in the region, the social inequities which caused the Cuban revolution would not be resolved due to American concerns about increasing Soviet influence. Had Cuba turned

out to be moderate, non aligned, and conciliatory, as Nicaragua was, it is unlikely the policy of rollback would have been applied so readily to Nicaragua.

The following section examines the history of American foreign policy in Nicaragua because it provides important insights into the possible rationale of policy makers in the Reagan Administration. That the history of American involvement in Nicaragua has been characterized by abusive colonialism and support for a pro American dictatorship that suborned egregious human rights violations implies that American policy makers believed that Nicaragua would never be a reliable ally. It is likely that American foreign policy makers believed that Nicaragua would inevitably become a Soviet satellite in the region affecting the balance of influence in any multilateral forum. This perspective supports the argument that American foreign policy in Nicaragua displayed characteristics consistent with offensive structural realism because it suggests that American foreign policy in the region was primarily concerned with the relative power of the Soviet Union.

The following section is devoted to a brief examination of the actual nature of the Sandinista government after the revolution. This examination is important to this study because it stands in stark contrast to the rhetoric employed by the Reagan Administration to justify its actions. The Reagan Administration attempted to label the Sandinista government as a repressive, brutal, totalitarian regime that abused human rights. It did this because the rationale it employed was based on the Kirkpatrick Doctrine which justified the support of brutal dictators over communist rule. Its justification rested on the premise that totalitarianism was particularly evil because it destroyed the foundations of life such as property, religion, and freedom of expression. That Nicaragua under Sandinista rule did not resemble a totalitarian state is evidence that the Reagan Doctrine and Kirkpatrick Doctrine were simply rhetorical masks for an offensive structural

realist foreign policy that did not consider justice or human rights as valid concerns. The difficulty for the Reagan Administration was that procuring funding to violate human rights and a sovereign nation was problematic because domestic public opinion would not support it. The demonization of Nicaragua was necessary in order to justify funding for the Contras. The intensification of negative rhetoric relating to Nicaragua and the formalization of the Reagan Doctrine were efforts at avoiding the domestic political costs of endorsing a morally void foreign policy.

The next section is dedicated to an examination of the sources of offensive structural realist thought in the Reagan Administration. The assessment of Ronald Reagan, which begins this section, is important because it highlights his idealism. His idealism and inherent morality would have been detrimental to the implementation of an offensive structural realist foreign policy. Reagan's belief in the legitimacy of the Kirkpatrick Doctrine was an important factor in his continued support of the policy of rollback.

The following section deals with the work of Jeanne Kirkpatrick. Her work entitled Dictatorships and Double Standards was found by Reagan to be immensely appealing. It employed a strategy of demonizing the Soviet Union to the point where it was justified to use any means necessary to stop it even if that meant the support of human rights abusing dictators. She argued that even dictators are better than totalitarianism, which destroys the foundations of life such as property, religion, and freedom of expression. As the policy of rollback in Nicaragua became increasingly difficult to justify to Congress in the face of mounting evidence that the regime was actually moderate and non aligned, Kirkpatrick's doctrine was rewritten into the Reagan Doctrine and employed as an idealist plea to the American people to aid the rebels fighting for freedom in Nicaragua. In pursuit of the policy of rollback in Nicaragua the Reagan

Administration was forced to employ a transparent and unjustifiable doctrine couched in the liberal rhetoric of democracy and freedom. This implies that there was no real significant threat to the U.S in Nicaragua except for the continuing power of a government that was not a proxy of the American government.

The Reagan Administration's use of the rhetoric of the Reagan Doctrine is evidence in and of itself that the policy of rollback was based on the principles of offensive structural realism. For a gain that was virtually insignificant in the Cold War against the Soviets, the Reagan Administration was willing to topple a moderate socialist party that was the legitimate government of a nation which was willing to make peace with it. The singular and simple focus of the foreign policy of the Reagan Administration on gaining any edge in power relative to the Soviet Union with the goal of diminishing its influence, and with no consideration of the costs to insignificant units such as Nicaragua implies an offensive structural realist foundation for the position the administration held.

So while Kirkpatrick's doctrine provided the justification to Reagan's inherent idealism and the public at large for the policy of rollback, evidence of the realist roots of the policy are found in the influence of the Council on Foreign Relations discussed in the following section. It was significantly influential on the foreign policy framework of both the Carter and Reagan Administrations. In 1981, it outlined a new hard line against the Soviet Union. The fact that the Council acted in reaction to the perception of declining American hegemony implied the offensive structural realist underpinnings of the Council itself because they sought hegemony as the most stable balance of power, which is the key element of John Mearsheimer's theory of offensive structural realism. The nature of the Council's 1981 framework implies a direct connection to concerns of the relative power of the Soviet Union. Because the Council's 1981

policy framework met key requirements of the theory of offensive structural realism and had credible influence on the policy framework of the Reagan Administration, the argument that the policy of rollback is based on the theory of offensive structural realism is supported.

Further adding to the weight of the evidence of offensive structural realism in the fundamental beliefs of the Council on Foreign Relations is the fact that key foreign policy makers in Reagan's administration were members of the Council. To that end, Alexander Haig and Caspar Weinberger are examined for their relevance as a sources for offensive structural realism in the Reagan Administration. Their stated beliefs and known affiliations position them as credible sources for offensive structural realism in the Reagan Administration.

In the section that follows, actual American foreign policy with regard to Nicaragua early in Reagan's first term is examined as further evidence that the Reagan Administration had an offensive structural realist agenda in Nicaragua. The section begins with a brief outline of the rhetoric of the Reagan Doctrine and continues by outlining evidence of American unwillingness to accept the moderate nature of the Sandinistas. The sabotage of initiatives from moderates within the Reagan Administration and the hindering of the Contadora peace process combined with the termination of negotiations with the Sandinistas, provide solid evidence of the offensive structural realist standpoint of policy makers within the Reagan Administration because it links the administration's actions to a desire to see the Sandinista government eliminated and a proxy version installed.

Furthermore, the Reagan Administration's insistence on only multilateral talks during any negotiations with Nicaragua implies that the administration believed it had enough proxy support in regional talks to force the peace on its terms, while at the same time maintaining plausible deniability that it had not forced the terms because they were decided upon in a multilateral

forum of independent and sovereign states. Because states such as Honduras, Grenada, and El Salvador maintained a façade of democracy and freedom, the U.S. claim of impartiality would carry more weight. This implies that the overall goal of U.S. foreign policy since the Second World War has been aimed at maintaining the advantage of looking like a benevolent superpower when negotiating with the Soviet Union. Elaborate justifications such as the Reagan Doctrine were employed by the Reagan Administration as a means of gaining domestic support and funding, as well as enhancing its bargaining position relative to the Soviet Union.

The Reagan Administration's response to overtures by Cuba aimed at eliminating all forms of foreign military involvement in Central America also provides evidence of offensive structural realism in the foreign policy of the U.S. relative to Nicaragua. This is because American proxy forces such as the Duarte government in El Salvador and the Contras in Honduras would be severely damaged due to their reliance on American aid. That the Reagan Administration would not take the Cuban proposal seriously directly implies that the goal was an offensive one. One aimed at increasing American power and influence in the region at whatever the cost.

The following section examines the actual nature of the Contra force. This is important because the evidence gathered suggests that the claim of the Reagan Administration that the force was comprised of average people fighting for freedom against a totalitarian regime was false. Strong evidence of the force representing the former wealthy elite class of the Somocisto regime is presented such as the presence of former Somoza National Guardsmen in important military positions. Further evidence of the gap between the rhetoric of the Reagan Administration and reality supports the main contention of this thesis that American actions in Nicaragua were guided by the principles of offensive structural realism and not the liberal rhetoric of democracy and freedom contained in the Reagan Doctrine.

The World Court case brought by Nicaragua against the U.S. is examined in the following section because it serves to expand the evidence supporting the claim that the Reagan Administration had motives for its actions in Nicaragua that were not disclosed to the American public. The case highlights the lack of credibility of Reagan Administration claims of Sandinista involvement in supplying Soviet arms to rebels fighting in Nicaragua. The main argument of this thesis is further supported by the fact that the World Court found no substantiated evidence of Sandinista arms trafficking to El Salvador after 1980 and its ordered halt to U.S. support of the Contras.

The evidence and arguments presented in Chapter Three should have the cumulative effect of reinforcing the argument of this thesis that American foreign policy regarding Nicaragua during Reagan's administration was based on the principles of offensive structural realism. America's abusive colonial past with regard to Nicaragua combined with significant evidence of the development of a nonaligned, moderate and legitimate state, support the argument that the Reagan Doctrine was a rhetorical mask for the unmitigated offensive structural realist pursuit of power relative to the Soviet Union. Effective implementation of a policy grounded on the principles of offensive structural realism required a significant level of control over any Nicaraguan government. Evidence offered supports the argument that American policy makers were guided by a fear that the abuses of the past would predetermine that the outcome of the situation in Nicaragua would be a Soviet proxy, or at the very least an unreliable ally. The Reagan Administration's single objective to install a proxy government, which would be a reliable ally in multilateral negotiations, is evidence of offensive structural realism in the application of American foreign policy in Nicaragua. The connection that the Council on Foreign Relations, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Alexander Haig, and Caspar Weinberger all had to key

elements of offensive structural realist thought is significant evidence that the policy of rollback implemented after Reagan's election was based on offensive structural realism.

Chapter four of this thesis will contain a brief reassessment of the main arguments of the thesis and the evidence used to support those arguments. A brief examination of the actual costs of the Contra war to Nicaragua is undertaken as a means of highlighting the horrific nature of war itself. This characterization helps explain for the reader the actual origins of realist thinking because it is the horrors of war that engender the fear that is at the heart of all realist thinking.

The primary worth of this thesis lies in its identification of the philosophical underpinnings of a specific policy of the Reagan Administration and that policy's application in a specific instance. This identification is important because the Reagan Administration attempted to advance the opinion publicly that its actions in the international arena were grounded on principles steeped in liberal idealism. Had the Reagan Administration been forthright with the American public that Nicaragua would have to sacrifice its democracy and freedom so that the dubious advancement of American power could continue in a less than relevant and apparently moderate nation, it would not have received funding for the operations against Nicaragua. Evidence of Republican tendencies to disguise offensive structural realist policies in the rhetoric of freedom and democracy provides insight for future analysis of Republican policy. This thesis should help analysts see that there is a high likelihood that the foreign policies of Republican administrations in the U.S. will conform to the principles of offensive structural realism.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

This section will explore realism and the context within which it has evolved. This exploration will involve an assessment of the primary actors who contributed to its development and their perspectives in the school of realism. This is undertaken in an effort to contextualize structural realism within the broader framework of realism in general, and distinguish it from offensive structural realism. Accurate understanding of the philosophical and political development of realism is necessary in order to comprehend the roots of structural realism and those elements of the theory, which make it unique and which contributed to the theory of offensive structural realism. These unique elements must be understood before evidence of their existence within the policy of rollback and the Reagan Doctrine, as seen in their application in Nicaragua, can be offered.

The assessment of the roots of offensive structural realism will be advanced by discussing its main components. The first section contains a discussion of the classical approach to international relations because it is that approach which encompasses the classical realist school of thought. Representative thinkers are discussed beginning with an assessment of Niccolo Machiavelli because he is considered to be the father of realism as a mode of political thought.¹ His primary work, The Prince, and its context are examined in an effort to outline the basis of the classical school of realism. John Herz is then examined because of the significance of his security dilemma concept in the development of the field of international relations. The work of Hans Morgenthau is examined in light of his contributions to the classical realist school of thinking within the field of international relations. His work relating to balance of power theory contributed significantly to the nature of international relations in the post-World War Two era.

Following this, the work of George Kennan is examined. His work relating to the notion of containment helped form a large part of American foreign policy relative to the Soviet Union.

The next section of the chapter is devoted to assessment of the second component of the roots of offensive realism. That component is the structural part of offensive realism. Thucydides is briefly examined. Kenneth Waltz is discussed because of his contributions to the development of structural realism. This section concludes with an examination of the notions of John Mearsheimer, whose idea of offensive structural realism forms the theoretical basis for the argument of this thesis.

Examining the development of realism on this scale is necessary because it demonstrates that realism was the single effective definition for U.S. foreign policy in the post World War Two era. During the period leading up to Reagan's election and afterward, realism shows how the rhetoric of the Kirkpatrick Doctrine and the Reagan Doctrine was simply aimed at diverting public attention from the offensive structural realist intentions of the Reagan Administration. This diversion was necessary to acquire the public support needed to pursue the offensive structural realist policy of rollback. Showing that realism has developed over many years and came to dominate American foreign policy in a well documented fashion, implies that the policies of the Reagan Administration regarding Nicaragua were actually based on principles of realism.

The Classical Approach

The classical approach to international relations is grounded on the principles of the deductive epistemology traceable to Plato's Republic. This approach employs intuition, impression, and insight as the tools for defining a point at which to begin investigation. From these abstract

¹ Howard Zinn, The Zinn Reader (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1997), 336.

beginnings deduction leads to logical and plausible subordinate propositions and conclusions, both of which should be tested against “data that are not impressionistic, but rather are systematically and carefully selected.”²

The classical approach to international relations was dominant throughout the first half of the century and produced many works from authors such as E.H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, Georg Schwartzberger, Raymond Aron, and Martin Wight who attempted to bring together aspects of international law, political philosophy, and history in a multidisciplinary fashion, which recognized the necessary effect variables from these areas would have on considerations in the field. The enormity of the task led to treatments that were incomplete and in some cases vague. Criticism arose from the scientifically minded within the field that the approach was flawed because it failed to define terms, observe logical procedure, or make explicit assumptions.³ Generally speaking however, it can be said that classical realists begin their analysis of international relations laden with assumptions about human nature.⁴

Niccolo Machiavelli, who is considered the father of modern realism is discussed in the following section. He wrote what many believed to be a ruthless guide to dictators. His classical realist work, The Prince, lauded the effectiveness of ruthlessness in leadership and became the basis for the development of the school of realist thought.

Niccolo Machiavelli

Western tradition initially evolved as a blend of classical and Christian thought. Thinkers such as Aristotle, Plato, and Thomas Aquinas contributed to a general belief in a natural, moral, or divine law. Natural law suggests there is a higher law than those set forth by man. Diana

² James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff jr., *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey Fifth Edition* (Longman: New York, 2001), 26.

³ Hedley Bull, “International Theory: The Case for a Classical Approach,” *World Politics* Vol. 18, No. 3. (Apr., 1966): 94.

Schaub argues that, “this natural law offers a transcendent standard by which to judge political life.”⁵ The work of Niccolo Machiavelli helped begin a transformation of the western philosophical tradition and of the supremacy of natural law.⁶ His focus on force as a primary tool in the conduct of government, and the caution he offers to those who would apply morality in a generally immoral world, provide one of the earliest examples of political realism.⁷

Machiavelli’s republican nature and his connection to the thoughts of Aristotle were fleshed out by Terrence Ball and Richard Dagger;

Drawing on the writings of Aristotle, the Renaissance republicans argued for a revival of civic life in which public-spirited citizens could take an active part in the governance of their independent city or country. The key concepts in this argument were liberty, virtue, and corruption, and nowhere were these concepts deployed more effectively than in the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli.⁸

While some argue that these perceptions are tenuous,⁹ the views are nearing general acceptance¹⁰ and thus serve as a reliable connection between Machiavelli and the concurrent notions of realism and republicanism. As Robert Hariman points out, connections between Machiavelli and modernity are not often drawn.¹¹

This thesis connects threads from the past to theories of the present, specifically offensive realism. While valuable for the purpose of contextualizing offensive realism within the broader construct of realism, political theory, and international relations, an examination of Machiavelli’s context also engenders questions about the actual nature of The Prince and the purpose for which

⁴ Laurie M. Johnson Bagby, “The Use and Abuse of Thucydides in International Relations,” *International Organization* Vol. 48, No. 1. (Winter, 1994): 132.

⁵ Diana Schaub, “Machiavelli’s Realism,” *The National Interest* (Fall 1998): 109.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Grant B. Mindle, “Machiavelli’s Realism,” *The Review of Politics* Vol. 47, No. 2. (Apr., 1985): 212.

⁸ Terrence Ball and Richard Dagger, *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 31.

⁹ Vickie B. Sullivan, “Machiavelli’s Momentary “Machiavellian Moment”: A Reconsideration of Pocock’s Treatment of the Discourses,” *Political Theory* Vol. 20, No. 2. (May, 1992): 317-318.

¹⁰ Ibid, 309.

¹¹ Robert Hariman, “Composing Modernity in Machiavelli’s Prince,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 50, No. 1. (Jan. - Mar., 1989): 3.

it was written. Mary G. Dietz believes that the context of The Prince is defined by Machiavelli's radical republican nature and his desire to undo Lorenzo de Medici in favor of a revival of the Florentine republic.¹² Similar to Dietz's arguments, the views of Sydney Anglo are informative because they focus on the rationale for The Prince and thus they will be used as a primary source for the examination of Machiavelli's context.

According to Machiavelli, the year 1494 was a significant turning point for Italy.¹³ The movement of the French into Italy in that year represented the beginning of the destruction of Italian life, culture, and style of warfare.¹⁴ Battles that once took months and involved few or no casualties were resolved in a few bloody days.¹⁵ The unity of Italy was broken by the French invasion and subsequently Italy became a battleground for the major European powers.¹⁶ As a result of the loss of unity among states in Italy due to the French intrusion, Machiavelli's main purpose in life became to unite Italy and thus he took a job as a secretary in the Florentine government.¹⁷ He advanced in his position quickly and was soon undertaking diplomatic missions through which he met many powerful people of the time.¹⁸ Of the influential people Machiavelli met, Cesare Borgia, a prince of the Papal States, and a clever, cruel man, fascinated him.¹⁹ Though Machiavelli did not agree with the harsh realist policies employed by Borgia, he saw that with a ruler like that, the Florentines could unite Italy.²⁰

Of the acts committed by Borgia, one in particular had a significant effect on Machiavelli. Borgia's gruesome termination and public display of his faithful and successful servant Ramiro

¹² Mary G. Dietz, "Trapping The Prince: Machiavelli and the Politics of Deception," (in Articles) *The American Political Science Review* Vol. 80, No. 3. (Sep., 1986): 777.

¹³ Sydney Anglo, *Machiavelli: A Dissection* (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1970, c1969), 14.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 15.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 17.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 16-17.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 16-19.

d'Orco in the public square in Cesena was meant to impress upon the people that he and he alone had the power to reward and punish those who served him and were ruled by him.²¹ This examination of Machiavelli's impression of Borgia's actions is important because Borgia's actions had a significant effect on Machiavelli's belief system. He used Borgia's actions as a template for successful implementation of his desires regarding the future of Italy. To use fear as a means of maintaining power, he interpreted, was an expeditious way of achieving goals that required power.

Despite his years of faithful and successful work as a secretary of Florence however, Machiavelli lost his position. During his unemployment he unsuccessfully attempted to regain favor with the ruling Medici's by writing a book of intellect and power.²² Machiavelli constructed a political work geared toward the Medici's and the notions regarding politics he believed them to have. His goal was to gain influence with the Medici's and thus regain his post as secretary within the administration.²³ Upon presentation of The Prince to Lorenzo de' Medici, Machiavelli found his work less favorable than a pair of racing dogs offered by a suitor at the same time however.²⁴ He did not regain his post as secretary with the Florentine government.

He continued to suffer though, because once The Prince became public, people were outraged at the man for being so evil as to think the thoughts espoused in the book.²⁵ This passage reflects the evil his fellow Florentines felt was present in The Prince:

And many have imagined for themselves republics and principalities that no one has ever seen or known to be in reality. Because how one ought to live is so far removed from how one lives that he who lets go of what is done for that which one ought to do sooner learns ruin than his own preservation: because a man who might want to make a show of goodness in all things necessarily comes to ruin among so many who are not good.

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 33-35.

²¹ Ibid, p. 35.

²² Ibid, 60.

²³ Ibid, 64.

²⁴ Ibid, 80.

²⁵ Ibid, 271.

Because of this it is necessary for a prince, wanting to maintain himself, to learn how to be able to be not good and to use this and not use it according to necessity.²⁶

In this paragraph, Machiavelli endorses the utilization of all means necessary in order to achieve the desired result. If the desired result is the maintenance of power by a prince, then one must be prepared to be not good. His rationale for this belief was that we live in a world where there are more bad people than there are good. If a good person tries to be good in an overwhelmingly bad world, then that person will find their own ruin before they will find their preservation. The notion of 'good' involves a set of morals. Morals are rules individuals and society set out for human beings, and although there are very few universal morals, there are many commonalities cross-culturally. Machiavelli suggested that entering into a contest where one side plays by a set of constraining morals, and the other does not, is illogical. If self preservation is at stake, he suggested, most people will abandon their morals and do what they can to survive. The term realism directly implies a connection to the real or natural world where survival of the fittest has dominated and structured the existence and evolution of most organisms on the planet. In the natural world there is no morality because survival is at stake. Machiavelli suggested that operating without morality is the best strategy if one wants to succeed or survive. He took the concept and applied it to politics and in doing so helped solidify the notion of realism as one option among many others while at the same time enraging his critics.²⁷

Diana Schaub referred to Machiavelli's realization as the 'inauguration of modernity.'²⁸ In her opinion, it was the point in political philosophical development where the restraints of morality were left behind by a group of people who understood The Prince to be an attack on ideology and idealism. These people came to be known as Machiavellian for their view of human nature.

²⁶ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. Angelo M. Codevilla (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 57.

²⁷ Anglo, 271.

²⁸ Schaub, 109.

The work of John Herz will be discussed in the following section. His work relating to what he called 'the security dilemma' is important because it provides a theoretical justification for offensive structural realism's focus on relative gains. Including John Herz also contributes to the contextualization of realism within the broader framework of international relations.

John Herz

John Herz is a qualified realist of a stripe similar to that of E.H. Carr. At the heart of Herz's beliefs is the notion that states generally disregard the well being of other states. To account for the apparent disregard states seem to have for the well being of other actors in the state system, Herz defined what he termed the 'security dilemma.'²⁹ Herz argued that the security dilemma arises in periods of history when anarchy has existed in relations between people or groups of people.³⁰ Anarchy exists when there is no organizational agreement between actors in a polity. Because no establishment exists to offer assurances of survival, actors in the polity seek their own reassurances through the acquisition of some form of power, in order to defend against attacks from other actors in the community.³¹ The dilemma occurs because as one actor defines its security through the acquisition of power it reduces the relative security of others who are then less able to defend themselves as a result of the gains of others.³² Herz argued that no actor can feel entirely secure in an anarchical societal arrangement and because of this a recurring competition for power ensues.³³ This Hobbesian notion becomes more acute on the group level when individuals from within the group are willing to give up their existence with the goal of overall group survival and are not subordinate to any higher authority.³⁴ Such is the case in

²⁹ John Herz, *The Nation State and the Crisis in World Politics* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1976), 72-73.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Martin Griffiths, *Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations*, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 18.

international relations where there is no effective authority to govern the actions between nations.

The introduction of more sophisticated methods of warfare has added to the poignancy of Herz's argument. The development of nuclear weapons technology has made the security dilemma more like a security nightmare in modern times. The cold war struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States produced far more nuclear weapons than would be needed to destroy all life on earth many times over, and though the breakup of the Soviet Union has significantly mitigated the threat of a nuclear confrontation between superpowers, the security dilemma remains because secondary actors continue to feel insecure in a world where they feel threatened by others' pursuit of power.

Herz argued that there are two general political reactions to the security dilemma. He defined one reaction to the security dilemma as political realism.³⁵ The primary point of reference for political realism, according to Herz, is the pursuit of power and the need for security.³⁶ Herz defined the second half of his political interpretation as political idealism, which he suggests is primarily concerned with the notion that a common good exists and that all within the polity may work toward that end.³⁷ Herz argued that political idealism assumes that a general political accord exists or that it can be reached between the needs of the individual and the needs of the group as a whole.³⁸ Furthermore, he stated that the energy devoted to the pursuit of power can be directed toward a more positive end.³⁹ Herz went so far as to suggest that, ultimately, in a cooperative environment, the security dilemma, and thus the pursuit of power, can be eliminated

³⁵ Herz, *The Nation State*, 73.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

from the political equation entirely.⁴⁰

It seems clear that while identifying with the necessity for prudence in politics, Herz also underlines the importance of moving beyond the limitations that strictly realist thought imposes on political perceptions.⁴¹ Herz believed that people must attempt to assess the world they live in, and try to understand what fact is, and what is merely a conceptual framework that has been assembled over time.⁴² Elements which may have at one time seemed irrefutable may turn out to be simply an 'image' of the world.⁴³ Herz suggested that people can achieve a more refined sense of justice and humanity through identifying those images and seeking to change them, and in this sense he does not fit in the same category as those who subscribe to *realpolitik*.⁴⁴ Herz's images could be seen as a reflection of Thomas Kuhn's paradigms. The substance and effect of Herz's image and Kuhn's paradigm are the same. They both restrict human thought and analysis to a predefined set of parameters, which restrict creative thought and confine it to arbitrary borders, not intended to be permanent. Constant reevaluation of current variables with reference to history is needed in order to account for the inherently mutable nature of society and the factors that affect it. Thus, forming a constant in politics is difficult and not only denies justice to the process, but also seems unattainable.

Herz came to describe his position as 'realist liberalism' or 'mild internationalism' as opposed to the radical internationalism espoused by those who would see the development and formation of some kind of world government.⁴⁵ In his words,

[w]e live in an age where threats to the survival of all of us - nuclear super-
armament, populations outrunning food supplies and energy resources, destruction

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid, 73-74.

⁴² Griffiths, 17.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

of man's habitat - concerns all nations and people, and thus must affect foreign policy-making as much as the views of security.⁴⁶

While acknowledging the unavoidably international nature of the world today, he maintained that the state system must endure. Though self-determining, states would be bound by the tenets of international law and conflicts would be settled through mediation and arbitration. Within the context of developing interdependence and co-operation, his system would be both pragmatic and attractive.⁴⁷ Like Carr, Herz attempted to find a balance between realism and idealism. Herz believed that the human equation is not definable in such a manner as it is inherently complex and normative.

With regard to Latin America, Herz believed that if the U.S. truly wanted to protect the freedom of Latin Americans it would have to align itself with noncommunist leftist groups, even if that alignment countered the interests of big business or corporations. This was necessary, Herz argued, because,

[i]t is the abject poverty created by overpopulation, underdevelopment, lack or waste of resources, and so on, which leads to social, economic, and political instability and turns the expectations of the masses toward communist utopias or, as in Iran, to promises of religion fanaticism.⁴⁸

Herz's beliefs echo the reality behind the situation in Latin America, where the argument is more poignant because the U.S. is largely responsible for the underdevelopment of nations subject to its colonial abuse.

Hans Morgenthau

Morgenthau's most important publication, Politics Among Nations, is the most significant of its time on balance of power theory. As John Vasquez put it, "[b]ecause his [Morgenthau's] Politics Among Nations (1948) was so comprehensive, systematic, and theoretical" it came to

⁴⁶ John Herz, "Political Realism Revisited," *International Studies Quarterly* 25 (1981): 184.

⁴⁷ Griffiths, 17.

symbolize a generation of thinkers.⁴⁹ Morgenthau's perspective is based on the experiences of his youth in Germany as well as the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, which formed the intellectual authority in his life. He made conscious efforts during the writing of his work to omit references to Nietzsche and thus the perception has flourished that the primary intellectual influence in Morgenthau's life was Max Weber.⁵⁰

Morgenthau is considered a classical realist who believed in the notion of fallen man. His pessimistic view of human nature draws on such classical realists as Hobbes and Machiavelli. He had a tri-dimensional view of human nature which he believed to be innately selfish and dominating. Biological, rational, and spiritual elements combine to form the human experience and Morgenthau believed that of these, the biological element dominates in the political sphere. What he termed the will to power subjugates the spiritual and rational elements of man's experience in the international sphere. On the domestic front the biological urge to dominate is mitigated by culture, constitutions, and inherent pluralism, but in the international arena where anarchy is the norm and no authority above the nation state exists to curb the inherently dominating tendencies humanity, the will to power is consistent. He argued that the fact that there are numerous states competing within the system actually accentuates the desire to dominate. Furthermore, he argued that states may be peaceful and warlike under varying circumstances, and the task of the international relations theorist is to discover which circumstances lead to which outcome.⁵¹

Morgenthau believed that the central concept in the field of politics in general, and in the field of international relations, was power. He argued that in politics in general, power is defined in

⁴⁸ Herz, *Political Realism*, 191.

⁴⁹ John A. Vasquez, *The Power of Power Politics: From Classical Realism to Neotraditionalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 36.

terms of interest, and that in international politics power is defined in terms of national interest. Though a central concept, power does not singularly define the field of international relations.⁵² Rather, it “provides a kind of rational outline of politics, a map of the political scene.”⁵³ In Politics Among Nations, Morgenthau defined power by first defining what it was not. He stated that, power was not related to man’s capacities relative to nature, production, or consumption. For Morgenthau, power related to man’s ability to control the minds and actions of other men. Political power, Morgenthau argued, referred to “the mutual relations of control among the holders of public authority and between the latter and the public at large.”⁵⁴ Flowing from his definition of the notion of power, Morgenthau based his theory of international politics on two basic assumptions:

[f]irst that, for theoretical purposes international relations is identical with international politics; second, that a theory of international politics is but a specific instance of a general theory of politics.⁵⁵

By stating that any theory of international relations only relates to a “specific instance of a general theory of politics,” Morgenthau highlighted his belief that, because the field of international relations is so broad, theoretical efforts will tend to focus on one element of the field. He recognized that the breadth of the field promoted a fractured analysis. Though he believed that there were likely to be many theories in the field at any given moment, one would be dominant depending on historical circumstance.⁵⁶ Morgenthau’s pluralistic view of the field

⁵⁰ Christopher Frei, *Hans J. Morgenthau: An Intellectual Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 93-95.

⁵¹ Griffiths, 36-38.

⁵² Ghazi A. R. Algosaihi, “The Theory of International Relations: Hans J. Morgenthau and His Critics” *Background* Vol. 8, No. 4. (Feb., 1965): 223-224.

⁵³ Hans J. Morgenthau, “The Nature and Limits of a Theory of International Relations,” in William T.R. Fox, editor, *Theoretical Aspects of International Relations* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), 17.

⁵⁴ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 28.

⁵⁵ Morgenthau, “The Nature and Limits,” 15.

⁵⁶ Algosaihi, 221-223.

of international relations built on E. H. Carr's notion that the field was balanced between utopian idealists and practical realists. This growth represented the development of the field and the theory that dominated it.

While Morgenthau believed that theory could provide a map to understanding of the field of international relations, he also believed that map could help delineate the ideal course of action for a state. He argued that by addressing the probability of certain outcomes to policy makers, chances of success can be increased. Theory serves the purpose, held Morgenthau, of providing justification for the actions of those forming policy. Theory also provides a framework by which to judge the conduct of foreign policy as well as helping ground policy makers who can address that framework in their foreign policy practices. Morgenthau also held that theory can set the stage for the development and change of the international order though he cautioned against using it as a "blueprint for political action"⁵⁷ and pointed out that,

[t]he most formidable difficulty facing a theoretical inquiry into the nature and ways of international politics is the ambiguity of the material with which the observer has to deal.⁵⁸

Morgenthau argued that this ambiguity severely hinders the ability of those who would attempt to form a predictive framework around the field of international relations. He added that, "world affairs have surprises in store for whoever tries to read the future from his knowledge of the past and signs of the present."⁵⁹

In light of his perceptions regarding the field of international relations and the limitations of theory within the field, Morgenthau attempted to outline his notions of political realism in six principles. The first of these principles stated, "that politics, like society in general, is governed

⁵⁷ Ibid, 224.

⁵⁸ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 18.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 21.

by objective laws that have their roots in human nature.”⁶⁰ He argued that societal improvement can only occur when these laws are understood. To challenge them, he held, is only done with significant risk of failure.⁶¹ Morgenthau’s argument here, that the laws of politics have their roots in human nature, highlights his world view. In Scientific Man vs. Power Politics, Morgenthau described his world view by stating that the world consisted of,

[a]n unceasing struggle between good and evil, reason and passion, life and death, sickness and health, peace and war- a struggle which so often ends with the victory of the forces hostile to man.⁶²

In Morgenthau’s assessment, the forces of evil have a distinct advantage in an ongoing struggle within humanity. There is no convincing proof that his view is correct, however. A study does not exist that can account for the infinite number of variables in the human equation.

Morgenthau himself attested to this notion.

Of the six principles of realism offered by Morgenthau, the second he described as most important. It refers to his view that international politics is defined in the terms of “interest defined in terms of power.”⁶³ This assumption is necessary he argued, because it distinguishes politics from religion, ethics, economics, and aesthetics. In addition, it provides a connection between reason and fact. Morgenthau held that, a theory of international relations would not be possible without such an assumption because great power foreign policy is otherwise unintelligible. The intellectual discipline offered by his assumption is necessary, he believed, because it, “infuses rational order into the subject matter of politics, and thus makes theoretical understanding of politics possible.”⁶⁴ It does this, according to Morgenthau, by preventing common mistakes, which obviate the possibility of comprehension. The first of these mistakes is

⁶⁰ Ibid, 4.

⁶¹ Ibid, 4.

⁶² Hans J. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), 206.

⁶³ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 5.

the propensity of statesmen to attempt to ascertain the specific motives of other states. Because Morgenthau's assumption provides a general motive for all state action, entanglement in specifics is avoided. The second mistake he believed his assumption prevents is inclusion of ideology in the attempt to understand international relations. Closely related to his first point, the second implies that regardless of their ideology, states act in a similar fashion with regards to other states in the international system. If the statesman adopts this position, then ideological rhetoric cannot interfere with the normal relations of states. Ideology, Morgenthau held, is not a motive and searching for other motives is pointless because, "motives are the most illusive of psychological data, distorted as they are, frequently beyond recognition, by the interests and actions of actor and observer alike."⁶⁵

Morgenthau argued that the role of the statesman is to see through all the motives of other statesmen and to understand them simply as power seekers. At the same time he recommended that when a statesman forms a foreign policy it should not be formed at the behest of good motives. As an example he cited Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of Germany. Morgenthau held that Chamberlain's policies were intended to keep the peace for all concerned and were not concerned with basic power defined in terms of national interest. From these good intentions, he argued, Chamberlain created the circumstances that led to the Second World War. Morgenthau implied that it is not possible to predict that his perfect statesman will form moral foreign policies though the statesman would not intentionally pursue a morally deviant track. The goal of the successful statesman is to distinguish, "between their 'official duty,' which is to think and act in terms of the national interest, and their 'personal wish,' which is to see their own moral

⁶⁴ Ibid, 6.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 6-7.

values and political principles realized throughout the world.”⁶⁶

Morgenthau attempted to soften the effect his perception of international politics might have on those idealists and moralists who would be offended by his statements by saying,

[p]olitical realism does not require, nor does it condone, indifference to political ideals and moral principles, but it requires indeed a sharp distinction between the desirable and the possible – between what is desirable everywhere and at all times and what is possible under the concrete circumstances of time and place.⁶⁷

Morgenthau highlighted here the fact that while ideals and morals exist, the statesmen must focus on the rational elements of the international environment and thus must view himself and his views in a rational manner. If he fails to do so, he will not produce good foreign policy, because that foreign policy will not be rational.⁶⁸

The third pillar on which Morgenthau built his theory of political realism related his view that change is a constant in the world and thus he held that his notion of power, as defined in terms of national interest, is neither permanent nor concrete. He argued that, while the concept of national interest has deep roots in history, it is also temporally connected to the period in which it was formed, and thus cannot be understood as relevant outside that period. As an example he offered the current link between interest and the nation state.

[w]hile the realist believes that interest is the perennial standard by which political action must be judged and directed, the contemporary connection between interest and the national state is a product of history, and is therefore bound to disappear in the course of history.⁶⁹

Morgenthau’s appreciation of the role of change in history and his recognition of the impermanence of factors including the nation state strengthen his overall theory because they remove the limitations that a scientific approach to international relations imposes on the

⁶⁶ Ibid, 7.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 8.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 10.

theorist. Theories like those of Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer, which attempt to form laws out of mutable principles, fail to account for the relevance of change in history. This failure results in theory that is non-falsifiable and unduly rigid.

Morgenthau's fourth principle of political realism was his testimony to the relevance of morality in politics and the tension between it and political success. While he chose to highlight the relevance of morality, he argued that it is necessary to filter that morality, "through the concrete circumstances of time and place."⁷⁰ To achieve political morality, Morgenthau held, it must be defined in terms of prudence. As an example he argued that moral adherence to the concept of freedom cannot get in the way of prudent political action, which he stated is, "itself inspired by the moral principle of national survival."⁷¹

The fifth principle outlined by Morgenthau cautioned against the temptation to export national morality. It is impossible to define the true nature of good and evil, he argued, and while he accepted that nations are governed by moral law, forcing that morality on others is inherently bad. He cited religion and the crusades brought on by the attempt to spread morality to other nations and peoples who worship differently. The cost of this, he contended, is, "...distortion in judgment which, in the blindness of crusading frenzy, destroys nations and civilizations – in the name of moral principle, ideal, or God himself."⁷²

Morgenthau's final pillar of political realism relates to his assertion that politics is distinct from other areas of human action and interaction such as economics, law, and morality. Due to its unique nature, he argued, standards of thought relevant to other areas of human existence should not be imposed on politics. The successful politician must subordinate all other perspectives to the political one, which is dominated by the perception that the field can only be

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

understood in terms of power oriented national interest. As an example he cited the Soviet invasion of Finland and the adoption of a legalistic approach in dealing with the situation. Because the invasion was clearly illegal in light of the Covenant of the League of Nations, France and Britain were prepared to help the Finns defend their country. If the Swedish government had not barred territorial crossings to aid the Finnish fight, Morgenthau pointed out, the British and French would have soon found themselves at war with both the Soviet Union and Germany.⁷³ He implied that if British and French statesmen had endeavored to form a prudent and rational realist foreign policy, they would not have needed to rely on circumstance to prevent their destruction.

Morgenthau believed that through two mechanisms peace might be achieved. The first of these is the balance of power which he defined as the situation that results from the interaction of power seeking states in an anarchic international system. In his words,

[t]he aspiration for power on the part of several nations, each trying either to maintain or overthrow the status quo, leads of necessity to a configuration that is called the balance of power and to policies that aim at preserving it.⁷⁴

By using the term ‘of necessity’ he refers to his perception of political realism and its ‘necessary’ place in international relations. The other possible way to achieve peace, Morgenthau suggested, involves those devices which limit the ongoing struggle between nations. These are international law and morality, as well as global public opinion, but they alone are unlikely to ensure the peace, he suggested.⁷⁵ This is because he believed that international politics is based on principles of social equilibrium which dictate the tendency toward balance in a social system consisting of various elements. He argued that the tendency toward balance exists in biology,

⁷² Ibid, 11.

⁷³ Ibid, 12.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 167.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 23.

physics, sociology, and economics. Furthermore, Morgenthau believed that for the principle of balance to be achieved, all parts are necessary and thus the system seeks to maintain them.

System maintenance is achieved by

allowing the different elements to pursue their opposing tendencies up to the point where the tendency of one is not strong enough to overcome the tendencies of others, but strong enough to prevent the others from overcoming its own.⁷⁶

The impetus for the maintenance of the system arises from the fact that the units fear an encroachment of their rights or outright destruction by another self-interested unit which gains enough power to do so. Thus the system is geared toward the preservation of all elements, as well as stability. He implied that hegemony is not a desired outcome by states, because they would then be at the whim of the hegemon which could, if it desired, infringe upon the rights of other units in the system.⁷⁷

The actions of international political units relative to power within the system are determined by the pursuit of three goals, according to Morgenthau. These are maintaining power, increasing power, or demonstrating power. Maintenance of power corresponds to a policy of status quo in the international arena which means redistribution of power in the system is not the goal. Increasing power corresponds to a policy of imperialism which means the state seeks to increase its share of the distribution of power within the system. Demonstration of power relates to a policy of prestige, according to Morgenthau, and is intended to increase or maintain power. The interaction of these three policies creates a system that is inherently competitive as states struggle with each other for what each feels is the most advantageous position for them in the system. He believed, however, that it is the moral duty of states in the international system to choose a path that is the least evil from all the possible choices. He based this suggestion on his belief that sin

⁷⁶ Ibid, 169.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 169.

and evil are inescapable in life. He argued that all one can hope to do is the least amount of evil and in the case of state action where national security is the guiding moral principle, action and its morality must first be considered in light of that security.⁷⁸

This tertiary examination of the political and social beliefs of Hans Morgenthau has attempted to outline the most relevant elements of his theory. The stature of Morgenthau's work necessitated this examination because clear understanding of the context of offensive realism within the broader field of international relations as a whole cannot be achieved without it. Morgenthau's basic principles of political realism have been the most influential source for realism and its development especially the work of George Kennan, which will be discussed in the following section. Morgenthau's work also formed the basis of the writings of Kenneth Waltz whose work laid the foundations for the theory of offensive realism espoused by John Mearsheimer. It is important for the defense of this thesis that accurate portrayal of the state of affairs within the field of international relations as well as within the school of realism is achieved.

Before an examination of the work of Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer can begin however, George Kennan will be examined due to his influence in the formation of foreign policy based on the principles of political realism of Hans Morgenthau.

George Kennan

George Kennan is most famous for his recommendation of a policy of containment in what came to be known as the Long Telegram. He wrote this telegram in February 1946 after spending 20 years immersing himself in Russian society and trying to understand it. The onset of the Cold War had embittered Kennan who, along with his diplomatic colleagues in Russia, had positive hopes for the future of U.S. – Soviet relations. To him it marked the end of a

⁷⁸ Alghosaibi, "The Theory of International Relations," 231-232.

romantic period between the Soviet people and their government who he preferred to compare to a woman and her abusive husband. He described the Soviet leadership as having a psychosis, and as bent on the command and subjugation of western societies. He felt that understanding the government in Moscow was dangerous and difficult because the government had many personalities.⁷⁹

Following the Second World War there were differing opinions about how to deal with the issue of rising Soviet power. Some thought war was necessary, while others felt that co-operation was possible. Distinct from other opinions, Kennan advocated a policy of containing and isolating the Soviet Union. He did so in an emotional fashion that served to disguise his realism, while at the same time demonizing the Soviet Union. Considered an expert in Soviet affairs, Kennan's opinions were afforded significant weight in Washington. At that time the U.S. government was looking for clear concise answers as to how to deal with the Soviets who were conveying a foreign policy that was not easy to understand.⁸⁰ Soviet foreign policy in the period after the end of the Second World War reflected retreats, entrenchments, indifference, and assistance. This left Dwight Eisenhower and the American policy makers in general quite baffled. Kennan's expertise and his cogent advice thus acquired preeminence in the minds of American policy makers. Frank Costigliola highlighted John Lewis Gaddis's view that the Long Telegram, "provid[ed] American officials with the intellectual framework they would employ in thinking about communism and Soviet foreign policy for the next two decades."⁸¹

In defense of his policy of containment Kennan published a famous article in July, 1947 in Foreign Affairs entitled "Sources of Soviet Conduct." Known as the 'X' Article because Kennan

⁷⁹ Frank Costigliola, "Unceasing Pressure for Penetration: Gender, Pathology, and Emotion in George Kennan's Formation of the Cold War," *The Journal of American History* Vol. 83, No. 4. (Mar., 1997): 1309-1310.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 1310-1311.

⁸¹ Ibid, 1311.

authored it anonymously, the piece laid out the fundamental antagonisms between socialism and capitalism. In the article he made clear however that he did not believe the Soviet Union to be embarked on a quest to conquer the world, nor did he think it capable of doing so.⁸² He believed that the Soviet Union was embarked on a mission of power maximization. By this he meant that if it could expand its influence around the globe then it would, as he notes in the 'X' Article,

Its political action is a fluid stream which moves constantly, wherever it is permitted to move, toward a given goal. Its main concern is to make sure that it has filled every nook and cranny available to it in the basin of world power. But if it finds unassailable barriers in its path, it accepts these philosophically and accommodates itself to them. The main thing is that there should always be pressure, unceasing constant pressure, toward the desired goal. There is no trace of any feeling in Soviet psychology that that goal must be reached at any given time.⁸³

While acknowledging that Soviet expansionism existed, Kennan did not believe that war with the Soviet Union was imminent or predetermined and thus never abandoned his feeling that diplomacy was the best tool in dealing with the Soviets.⁸⁴

Though Kennan did not claim to be a theorist and did not provide clear renditions of his beliefs,⁸⁵ examination of "Sources of Soviet Conduct" provides some insight. In the article Kennan invoked realist beliefs steeped in the notions of Hans Morgenthau's political realism. He referred to the 'logic of rhetoric of power' and to the need to see through the ideology and understand the Soviet Union as simply a power seeker just as Morgenthau would have argued. He advocated that the self-aggrandizing rhetoric of the Kremlin should not be a basis for assessment of it and that the Soviet government was in fact more flexible than it seemed. He believed it to adhere to a principle of political realism in the international arena, but he also

⁸² David Mayers, "Containment and the Primacy of Diplomacy: George Kennan's Views 1947-1948," *International Security* Vol. 11, No. 1. (Summer, 1986): 124-125.

⁸³ X [George F. Kennan], "Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, 25 (July 1947): 566-582.

⁸⁴ Mayers, 124-125.

⁸⁵ Jonathan Knight, "George Frost Kennan and the Study of American Foreign Policy: Some Critical Comments," *The Western Political Quarterly* Vol. 20, No. 1. (Mar., 1967): 149.

believed that the Soviet Union, like any other state, could be threatened into a situation where it would be forced to fight. Furthermore he argued that, when dealing with the Soviet Union, it was important to offer a means of compliance that did not unduly affect its national dignity, or what he referred to as prestige. In the article he highlighted the fact that the Soviet Union was by far the weaker of the two competing systems in the world, and thus a policy of confrontation was not necessary. The inherent competitive weaknesses of the Soviet socialist system would only expand the lead that the west enjoyed over the east in the years to come.⁸⁶ Containing the Soviets at every possible turn followed the principles of political realism in a world where nuclear abilities made confrontation unacceptable. This examination of Kennan's contribution to the substance of American Foreign Policy after the Second World War and leading up to the election of Ronald Reagan is important because it represents a concrete example of Hans Morgenthau's classical realism in practice.

Now that the philosophical genesis of the notion of realism has been addressed and the fundamental classical realist ideas of Machiavelli, John Herz, Hans Morgenthau and George Kennan have been discussed, the works of Thucydides, Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer, who are the primary contributors to the offensive realist school of realism, can be examined.

Thucydides

The earliest incarnation of the principles of structural realism in western literature can be found in the work of Athenian general Thucydides. His account of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta stood apart from other accounts of its time because it did not employ myth and romance as descriptive tools.⁸⁷ Though his work did not develop into a cohesive

⁸⁶ X, 566-582.

⁸⁷ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (London: Penguin Books, 1954), 9.

theory⁸⁸ it remains an important landmark. The realism inherent in his telling and his assessment of the causes of the war are held by many to represent the first contribution to the realist school of thinking.

Thucydides concluded that the war between Athens and Sparta was primarily caused by the growth of Athenian power and the fear this growing power cultivated in Sparta.⁸⁹ The concern his assessment showed for the concepts of power, security, and fear demonstrates a clear parallel between his thoughts and the thoughts of many realists to come. In particular, offensive realists who balance the bulk of their theory on the existence of a latent inescapable fear, which unceasingly motivates human action. Distinguished theorist Martin Wight stated, “[o]ne of the supreme books on power politics is the history by Thucydides of the great war between Athens and Sparta, commonly called the Peloponnesian War.”⁹⁰ Kenneth Waltz acknowledged that Thucydides was one of the primary interpreters of the anarchic nature of the international system.⁹¹ Helpful in this study is Robert Keohane’s view that the work of Thucydides represented the development of a Khunian paradigm in the school of realism, and more specifically, the school of structural realism.⁹² Daniel Garst pointed out that it is Thucydides’ scientific methodology, which links him to neo-realism.⁹³

Kenneth Waltz

Kenneth Waltz published his seminal work Theory of International Politics in 1979. The work was a continuation of the analysis he began in his first work Man, The State, and War,

⁸⁸ Michael T. Clark, “Realism Ancient and Modern: Thucydides and International Relations,” (in *The 2500th Anniversary of Democracy: Lessons of Athenian Democracy*) *PS: Political Science and Politics* Vol. 26, No. 3. (Sep., 1993): 492.

⁸⁹ Thucydides, 23.

⁹⁰ Martin Wight, *Power Politics* ed. Hedley Bull and Carston Holbraad (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), 24.

⁹¹ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 66.

⁹² Robert Keohane, “Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond,” in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, ed. by A. Finifter (Washington, DC: American Political Science Association): 507-508.

which attempted to assess the nature of the causes of war with the goal of achieving a perpetual peace.⁹⁴ In this work Waltz assembled a framework for analysis of international relations composed of three levels with two sublevels he termed optimistic and pessimistic. The first level or 'image' he defined as 'international conflict and human behavior.' As the title suggests, people who see the world through a 'first image' lens are primarily concerned with the makeup of human behavior when assessing international relations. In summary Waltz stated, "the evilness of men, or their improper behavior, leads to war; individual goodness, if it could be universalized, would mean peace."⁹⁵ According to Waltz, first image optimists believe that man's nature is inherently good and that those who have strayed from the path of goodness can be reformed.⁹⁶ First image pessimists believe that man's nature is inherently bad and because of this peace can never be achieved.⁹⁷ They see the notion of peace as a utopian goal that, while attractive, is nonetheless unattainable due to the inherent qualities of humanity.⁹⁸ The division between optimists and pessimists Waltz describes here is that of idealists and realists in the classical sense and he criticizes both. He pointed out that though the first image optimists believe that reform of bad individuals is possible, they do not state what shape those reforms should take. That is, what is good and who gets to set those parameters.⁹⁹ Though Waltz stated that first image pessimists provide a useful warning against unreasonable optimistic expectations of the capacity of reason to solve social and political quandaries, he pointed out that the realists have not devised a way of repressing or modifying negative human nature that leads to war.¹⁰⁰ He suggested that these issues with both the pessimistic and optimistic perspective point toward

⁹³ Daniel Garst, "Thucydides and Neorealism," *International Studies Quarterly* Vol. 33, No. 1. (Mar., 1989): 3.

⁹⁴ Kenneth Waltz, *Man, The State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), 2.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 39.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 39-40.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 39.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 39-40.

social and political institutions and away from the assumption of a stable and defined notion of human nature because, as he stated, “human nature, by the terms of the assumption, cannot be changed, whereas social political institutions can be.”¹⁰¹

The second image outlined by Waltz relates to the internal structure of states. Waltz suggested that people who see politics and the causes of war through this lens believe that there could be lasting peace if states were internally structured in a specific fashion, which would preclude the desire or perceived necessity by states to go to war.¹⁰² One of the difficulties with using the second image to assess the causes of war, Waltz suggested, is that there must be consensus regarding the form that the internal structure of states must take in order for there to be peace.¹⁰³ Even if some consensus regarding structure is reached, Waltz held that there are numerous examples of similarly structured states, which resulted in conflict.¹⁰⁴ While he admitted that the second image notion that a state with a bad internal structure can foment the development of conflict, he argued that the second image is incomplete in the same fashion as the first image was.¹⁰⁵ Waltz’s first image suggests that the nature of man makes the state and the international environment that the state operates in and thus is the root cause of war. His second image suggests that the structure of the state makes the international system within which the state operates and thus state structure fundamentally causes war. Waltz argued that while the first two images are more incomplete without the other, they remain incomplete when combined because neither takes into account his third image.¹⁰⁶

Waltz entitled his third image ‘International Conflict and International Anarchy.’ The main

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 39.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 41.

¹⁰² Ibid, 120-122.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 120-121.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 121.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 122.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 123.

idea of his third image is that it is the anarchical structure of the international system that is the root cause of war.¹⁰⁷ Because there is no system of law or control enforceable in an anarchical international system of independent states each with their own set of values, ambitions, desires and definitions of the notion of reason, war between state actors is likely to occur.¹⁰⁸ In the international hinterland, states must rely on themselves in their efforts to secure their success in the impending conflicts and thus seek a relative edge in power.¹⁰⁹ Waltz argued that states will use that relative edge in power against other states if they decide that they value a specific objective more than they do peace because in the system each state is the final judge of itself and therefore may decide to use force at any time to attain its goals.¹¹⁰ Furthermore Waltz argued that, while the third image defines the structure of world politics, it does not operate independently of the first two images because without its predecessors, the third image would be unable to explain the nature of state policies.¹¹¹

Waltz concluded that war is caused not by human nature or the internal structure of states, but rather by the structural nature of the international system where there is no overarching authority to mitigate the actions of individual state actors. These conclusions formed the basis of Waltz's thought over the next twenty five years. As his thought developed however, Waltz abandoned his examination of the interrelationship between the levels of analysis and focused on the singular significance of the third image.¹¹² Released in 1979, prior to Ronald Reagan's election in 1980, Theory of International Politics became the foundation of a new perspective on international politics that became the epicenter of a acerbic debate between liberals and their

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 159.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 160.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 238.

¹¹² Waltz, *Theory*, 79.

realist counterparts on the right.¹¹³

In Theory of International Politics Waltz argued that political structure is defined by an ordering principle, a division of labor based on functional differentiation between units, and varying capabilities amongst units.¹¹⁴ Waltz held that, there are only two ordering principles in international politics. The first of these is hierarchical and as an example he used the domestic politics of a state where some elements command and others obey in a strictly predictable fashion.¹¹⁵ The second is anarchic where none of the units are subordinate to any others and this is how he defined the international system, which he maintained is a constant.¹¹⁶ Waltz used the term self-help to define the nature of the anarchical international political environment and in this self-help environment, he contended, the responsibility of providing for security falls to the individual state units.¹¹⁷

As stated, Waltz employed system structure as the primary mode of analysis with regard to international politics in Theory of International Politics and in doing so denied the relevance of the nature and interaction of the units.¹¹⁸ Because there is no hierarchy in the anarchic international system, Waltz argued there can be no division of labor between the units and thus each unit must perform all the tasks necessary for survival.¹¹⁹ Because the units (states) are functionally undifferentiated from one another and have a similar set of tasks set before them in order to survive, Waltz argued, their uniqueness is derived from their ability to perform the tasks or in other words, their capability.¹²⁰ Waltz held that because there are a limited number of states with comparably significant capability, international politics is best understood by assessing the

¹¹³ Griffiths, 47.

¹¹⁴ Waltz, *Theory*, 81.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 88.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 111.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 79.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 97.

great powers within the anarchical system because the analysis can be limited to a logical equation that omits the insignificant units.¹²¹

Waltz's limiting of units in the international equation supported his contention that balance of power theories provide the only solution to understanding international politics because it is only those actors with relatively significant capability which are afforded the ability to inflict changes in the relative power of states.¹²² While recognizing the lack of consensus on a strict definition of balance of power theories, Waltz endeavored to define three main assumptions that all theories maintain.¹²³ These are that states are the primary unit of interaction, that they seek to survive, and may seek domination over other states.¹²⁴ Waltz further defined his beliefs by supporting the notion that, of all the forms a balance of power situation might take, the bipolar form is the most stable.¹²⁵ His contention rested on the fact that political equations are far easier to solve in a bipolar balance of power.¹²⁶ He argued that the multipolar balance of power offers far more opportunity for unpredictable alliances to develop between state actors, which may lead to war.¹²⁷ The opposition, Waltz suggested, is readily identifiable in a bipolar ordering of the balance of power, which leads to the perception by the powers that all changes in the world order are relevant to them and thus very few are not considered relevant.¹²⁸ This lends to the development of a perfectly competitive system with actors competing in a much broader scope than in a system of multipolarity.¹²⁹ Waltz argued that, because each of the superpowers in a bipolar world are primarily concerned with each other and can only suffer significant losses to

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid, 117.

¹²³ Ibid, 117-118.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 118.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 171.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

each other, “unwanted events (are turned) into crises, while rendering most of them relatively inconsequential.”¹³⁰ In addition, Waltz contended, the superpowers in a bipolar world stand to make more significant gains in wealth and power than in confrontation with other states (certainly not the other superpower) providing the logical impetus for a more stable international environment.¹³¹

The contentions offered by Waltz in Theory of International Relations defended the status quo in 1979 as the world had evolved into a bipolar balance of power following the devastation of Europe and Japan in World War Two. Liberal internationalism had failed to prevent the Second World War and was moved aside when the nuclear age dawned and the arms race developed between the U.S.S.R. and the United States. Realist thought gained preeminence in the U.S. in the post World War Two era, with the relative gains against the U.S.S.R. becoming the primary goal of U.S. domestic and foreign policy. The development of détente between the Soviets and Americans in the 1970s allowed liberal institutionalists some hope that the Cold War would become lukewarm. World events however, endeavored to reverse the effects of détente and provide a fertile ground for the theories advanced by Waltz in Theory of International Relations. The Iranian Revolution, the subsequent embassy hostage situation and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan helped end détente between the superpowers and a new version of the Cold War developed. In addition, the fall of Managua to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua hallmarked a leftist swing in Central America, which constituted a backdoor threat to the U.S. and a relative decrease in power in the region. The election of the conservative Ronald Reagan in the U.S. as a reaction to increasing American economic woes coincided with Waltz’s new spin on realism and international relations. Though Reagan made public overtures depicting American action in the

¹²⁹ Ibid, 172.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

region as altruistic support of developing democracy, his policies implied that the primary concern of American foreign policy in Central America was the elimination of communist influence and the introduction or maintenance of national leaders who would align with the Americans.

The following section will examine the work of John Mearsheimer whose notions form the basis of the theoretical distinctions offered by this thesis.

John J. Mearsheimer

John J. Mearsheimer articulated the theory of offensive structural realism, which is the form of realism at the center of the analysis of this thesis. In his work, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, Mearsheimer outlined the foundations of his theory in five points. Though elements of his theory are present in the basic assumptions of many realists, it is the differences that are relevant. Evidence of the presence of those distinctions in the policies of the Reagan Administration with regard to Nicaragua will be discussed in Chapter Three because their presence supports the contention that those policies were based on Mearsheimer's offensive structural realism.

The first assumption that Mearsheimer based his theory of offensive structural realism on is the condition of anarchy in the international system. He maintained that anarchy is an ordering principle and does not imply any propensity toward conflict. It simply means that there is no governing body above the level of the state. Sovereignty, he argued, is inherent in states because there is "no government over government."¹³² This notion is shared by all contemporary realists like Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz who took it to be a scientific given. The second of Mearsheimer's assumptions argued that states inherently possess military capabilities. This

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 30.

capability is normally measured by the weapons at that states disposal but, he argued, even if there were no weapons, “for every neck, there are two hands to choke it.”¹³³ The manner in which Mearsheimer described the rationale for his second assumption hints at the nature of his third assumption, which focused on the intentions of states. Mearsheimer argued that it is impossible to ensure the intentions of other states are not aggressive with one hundred percent certainty. He defended his assertion by highlighting the fact that state intentions are inherently mutable so even if they are friendly one day, it is impossible to ascertain for certain whether they will be the next.¹³⁴

The fourth assumption of offensive realism offered by Mearsheimer, relates to a state’s primary objective. Like all other realists, Mearsheimer maintained that the primary purpose of the great powers is survival. In support of this statement he offered the words of Josef Stalin that, “We can and must build socialism in the [Soviet Union]. But in order to do so we first of all have to exist.”¹³⁵ Mearsheimer concluded by offering that states are rational actors, which is another traditional realist pillar. While further emphasizing that these assumptions do not predispose states toward aggression, Mearsheimer argued that, “when the five assumptions are married together, they create powerful incentives for great powers to think and act offensively with regard to each other. In particular, three general patterns of behavior result: fear, self-help, and power maximization.”¹³⁶

Like Thucydides, Mearsheimer believed that fear is the primary motivating force for interstate interaction. He believed that because of the intense costs and horrors of war, states are predisposed to fear each other and treat each other as potential enemies. In defense of this

¹³³ Ibid, 30-31.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 31.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 33.

proposition, Mearsheimer offered the aftermath of the re-unification of Germany. He argued that even though an alliance had been in place for forty five years, England and France still expressed concern over the reunification.¹³⁷ Mearsheimer's arguments suggest he believed that history has endowed humanity with a serious case of post-traumatic stress disorder, which predetermines an international atmosphere where trust is unlikely. He argued that the '911 problem' contributes to the cultivation of an international culture of fear. This referred to the lack of a supranational authority responsible for punishing one states action against another. Lack of punishment leads to a lack of deterrence of further action, Mearsheimer suggested, thereby supporting the growth of fear and a feeling of isolationism.¹³⁸

After defending the notion that states see other states as threats, Mearsheimer argued that because of this inherent antagonism amongst states, the only source for help is the state itself. He stated "in international politics, God helps those who help themselves."¹³⁹ Thus he defined the nature of the system as self-help, and suggests,

States operating in a self-help world almost always act according to their own self interest and do not subordinate their interests to the interests of other states, or to the interests of the so called international community. The reason is simple; it pays to be selfish in a self help world.¹⁴⁰

The definition of self-interest employed by Mearsheimer is limited however, and rooted in the pessimism characteristic of realists in general. This pessimism is supported by fear. This is the same fear that Mearsheimer suggested is an integral element of the nature of the international system. It is a new fear which developed as a result of advances in technology and the ability to wage horrific warfare in the post World War Two era. Even though the Americans were on the winning side and fought no military engagements on their soil, fear of attack in America grew

¹³⁷ Ibid, 32-33.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 33.

due to nuclear weapons. Realists driven by this fear tend to disregard the relevance of change in history based on the pessimistic perspective they hold that suggests they can only rely on themselves for help. While self-reliance is considered a positive characteristic amongst humanity, those who adopt the philosophy at all levels seem to negate the possibility that humanity can be altruistic. In fact, recent studies indicate that the characteristic may be genetic.¹⁴¹

If a person assumed that co-operation will inevitably come at a cost higher than the perceived benefit, then they would seek to avoid co-operation at all costs. This assumption is not based on any scientific data however, because no adequate data exists that could support a study that came to those conclusions. Mearsheimer's theory of international politics is rooted in the belief that humanity is incapable of reliable co-operation because we are selfish self-interested beings and this selfishness is projected into the international sphere. This selfishness combined with a latent fear of a violent Hobbesian demise prompts a cyclical reinforcement of both, with the result being an aversion to cooperation and a focus on undermining competitors. What Mearsheimer did not accept is that human action and thus international interaction cannot be sufficiently influenced so that cooperation can be accommodated by virtue of international institutional guarantees, which minimize the constraining elements of the anarchical system. The development of the European Union and The United Nations are evidence that change and co-operation have occurred in the international system, that it is occurring now, and that it seems safe to assume change will continue to occur because it always has. That humanity has evolved is the support for that assumption. Reinforcement of non-aggressive predictability and co-operation is at the centre of the institutionalist position in international relations which holds that

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Jane Allyn Piliavin and Hong-Wen Charng, "Altruism: A Review of Recent Theory and Research,"

by increasing the likelihood of co-operation, the possibility of war is reduced.¹⁴²

In “The False Promise of International Institutions” Mearsheimer outlined his belief that international institutions do not significantly affect the behavior of states and as a result they are not likely to contribute to peace.¹⁴³ In Mearsheimer’s words,

...cooperation among states has its limits, mainly because it is constrained by the dominating logic of security competition, which no amount of cooperation can eliminate. Genuine peace, or a world where states do not compete for power, is not likely...¹⁴⁴

In the article Mearsheimer highlighted Hans Morgenthau’s idealistic notion of a ‘will to power’ that causes states to take an offensive stance and then claims that his theory, though similar, draws its roots from structural realism and is inherently defensive in nature. If not for the anarchic nature of the international system, states would not act offensively.¹⁴⁵ The fact that there is no higher authority to deter aggression means that states must seek relative gains rather than simply absolute gains. The difference between these two notions is the presence of fear. Common logic agrees that a state will pursue gains in the national interest irrespective of how well other states benefit simply because gains improve life. Mearsheimer argued, however, that the fear that results from international isolation in a system governed by none forces states to assess the gains of other states in order to determine the threat they pose as a result of the benefit they received. States will pursue relative gains because more gains relative to other states mean more security and less fear. Mearsheimer attempted to argue that even if this fear is mitigated by circumstance, it will always exist and it will not be inconsequential.¹⁴⁶ But as Jack Donnelly

Annual Review of Sociology Vol. 16. (1990): 27.

¹⁴² Robert O. Keohane and Lisa L. Martin, “The Promise of Institutional Theory,” (in Promises, Promises: Can Institutions Deliver?) *International Security* Vol. 20, No. 1. (Summer, 1995): 39.

¹⁴³ John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” (in Get Real) *International Security* Vol. 19, No. 3. (Winter, 1994-1995): 7.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 9.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 10.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 11.

pointed out, “we can expect very different behaviors from states gripped by an overwhelming fear of a violent Hobbesian death and those under the influence of a just barely greater than trivial fear.”¹⁴⁷ Mearsheimer’s theory did not account for the variance of perspective among nations with regard to the notion of fear.

The attempt to disguise idealist theory as scientific generalizations is an attempt to strengthen the position of those threatened by the continuing development of interdependence amongst states. They are also those who maintain an idealistic attachment to a well defined identity that includes nationality, race, and religion. The concept of change does not assimilate well in a person whose identity is stable and very well defined. Those whose identities are in flux, however, tend to see change as a given and they see that change with more optimism about the possibility for improving oneself and the situation. The most fundamental question realists like Mearsheimer fail to answer is that if two ideal based theories exist, each of which cannot be proved or disproved, then an equal possibility exists that each may be right. The debate becomes a philosophical one, not a scientific one. Mearsheimer’s theory seems to suggest that he believes in Hobbes’ fallen man, and that he is simply following the path of Morgenthau and continuing to develop the theory. Failing to recognize the idealist elements of his theory, however, means his conclusions, and those of Kenneth Waltz, are flawed. Though there may be a scientifically provable theory of international relations, offensive realism does not appear to be it. Though deductive, it is based on ideological beliefs in the same way that Aristotle was guided by his beliefs in the gods. One can attempt to be logical with regard to human and state behavior, but to be scientific would require infinitely more resources than are available to prosecute the study. If structural realism and offensive realism are simply exercises in logic, then they would seem to be, at least partly, based on logical assumptions. As change occurs in states and in the

¹⁴⁷ Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 59.

international system, it becomes necessary to reapply that logic to contemporary circumstances in order to reaffirm its explanatory value, however. Not doing so is to deny the only constant available. That constant is change and it is constant because it is driven by humanity's cyclical relationship with procreation and death and the mutable nature of the environment around us. Notwithstanding the apparent shortcomings of Mearsheimer's theory, it is important to discuss his views on the nature of state behavior in more detail in order to outline the parameters of correlation between his theory and the Reagan Administration's policy of rollback and the Reagan Doctrine.

While Waltz and Mearsheimer agreed that a bipolar balance of power contributes to peace because there are simply fewer opportunities for war and the power calculations are far simpler to address, they disagreed about the ultimate goal of the state. Waltz contended that primary actors in a bipolar system would seek to avoid direct competition and would generally adopt a status quo policy aimed at avoidance of a costly war. Mearsheimer believed that states will actively pursue regional hegemony and ultimately global hegemony because it is under those conditions that true security can ultimately be achieved. In The Tragedy of Great Power Politics Mearsheimer quoted Emmanuel Kant to support his notion: "It is the desire of every state, or of its ruler, to arrive at a condition of perpetual peace by conquering the whole world, if that were possible."¹⁴⁸ This is unlikely to occur, Mearsheimer argued, primarily because of the barrier imposed by the oceans, which separate the regions. An amphibious assault would be tantamount to committing suicide, he argued. Due to the lack of feasibility of global hegemony, states pursue regional hegemony. Mearsheimer contended that if a state were to achieve global hegemony, the international system would cease to be anarchic; rather it would be hierarchic.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy*, 34.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 415.

In Mearsheimer's estimation, states would seek to tip the balance of power in their own favor by means of an incremental increase of advantage, even if the consequences of such action promoted hostility. In his words,

[e]ven when a great power achieves a distinct military advantage over its rivals, it continues looking for chances to gain more power. The pursuit of power stops only when hegemony is achieved. The idea that a great power might feel secure without dominating the system, provided it has an 'appropriate amount' of power, is not convincing...¹⁵⁰

He held that clear and significant hegemony is necessary to defend against such things as clever strategy which could overcome power advantages. To that end he stated, "only a misguided state would pass up an opportunity to be the hegemon in the system because it thought it already had sufficient power to survive."¹⁵¹

In essence, Mearsheimer's views were tantamount to the most basic views of classical realism, such as Machiavelli's, which are simple in their message. Like Borgia's beheading of his most trusted man, Mearsheimer's theory endorsed a preponderance of power that is well exercised in order to keep potential enemies under foot. In Machiavelli's context, the goal was defense of the Italian homeland, whose culture was being destroyed by external invaders. Though his views have often been equated with the notion of power for the sake of power, Machiavelli's history suggests otherwise.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 34.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 34-35.

CHAPTER 3

EVIDENCE OF OFFENSIVE STRUCTURAL REALISM IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION

The previous chapter was devoted to a review and examination of offensive structural realism and the major contributors to its development. This chapter will outline the actions and policies of the United States in Nicaragua during the Reagan Administration. It will argue that those policies were aimed at a reduction in the relative power of the Soviet Union and American hegemony, thereby forming a solid connection between those policies and John Mearsheimer's notion of offensive structural realism. To accomplish this task, it first will be necessary to examine the roots of socialism and the nature of Soviet influence in Nicaragua, and the region as a whole; thus the first two sections will focus on these issues. It will be established that a perception existed in the Reagan Administration that Nicaragua would never be a reliable proxy in the region due to past American colonial abuses. In addition, it will be shown that the socialist nature of the Sandinista organization prompted the Reagan Administration to predict that Nicaragua would become a proxy of the Soviet Union even though there was no substantial evidence to support such a claim.

This chapter aims to highlight the difference between the responses of both the Reagan and Carter Administrations to the Sandinista movement by identifying the Carter Administration's policy of containment as being largely governed by principles of classical realism. Carter's policy on Nicaragua was focused on control, and power, in the form of maintenance of American influence in the region. Under the Reagan Administration, a subtle shift occurred in the general philosophical rationale for the construction of foreign policy. This shift is exemplified by the Reagan Administration's implementation of policies which reflected a primary concern with

control, power relative to others, more specifically the Soviet Union, and hegemony. Though similar to the Carter Administration's philosophical bearing in the realm of political theory as a whole, the Reagan Administration's foreign policy was guided by a specific strain of realism which differed from classical realism in a way which has an important impact on the lives of the individuals who inhabited states affected by those policies. Because the ruling element of the American foreign policy decision making process under Reagan became solely dedicated to the pursuit of a goal related to global domination in the form of elimination of the Soviet Union, local factors became a secondary concern of foreign policy makers. The result of the relegation of the legitimate concerns of local people is injustice in the name of an imposed greater good for society. The Kirkpatrick Doctrine was the justification Reagan found comforting and his reading requirement of the document by his staff implied he felt it would be comforting to others faced with the moral dilemma of endorsing a foreign policy that put human rights second to policy goals. The justification employed by the Kirkpatrick Doctrine that it is better to support a brutal dictator than to suffer under the yoke of communism and have the foundations of life such as religion, morality, and most importantly, property, destroyed, amounted to psychological application of fear in order to gain domestic support for morally unacceptable tactics.

Under Reagan, the U.S. evaluated interaction in the international arena as primarily between itself and the Soviets and the relative power each maintained over the other. In other words, under Carter, being one of the two most powerful nations on earth, and maintaining that position, was sufficient. Under Reagan, having an ideologically unfriendly counterpart atop the scale of power was unacceptable and thus he implemented a foreign policy aimed at the diminishment or destruction of the Soviet Union. This primary concern with power relative to the Soviet Union implies a philosophical connection with the structural realism of Kenneth Waltz. His adopted

policy of rollback, which sought to increase the American share of power in a bipolar world, implies a connection to the theory of offensive structural realism espoused by John Mearsheimer. As opposed to Kenneth Waltz who argued that bipolarity in the international system is the most stable arrangement, Mearsheimer contended that unipolarity is the most stable arrangement. That Reagan's policies were aimed at producing a unipolar global environment, which hindsight has shown was in fact the result, philosophically ties his foreign policy, vis a vis the Soviets and the Sandinistas, to offensive structural realism.

Some, like Kissinger, believe that the Cold War was unduly idealistic in nature and should have rather been assessed in a simply geopolitical manner.¹⁵² Reagan's idealist rhetoric involving the Soviet Union is an example of Reagan selling his ideal to the American public in an effort to gain the broad public support for a foreign policy tacitly advocating human rights abuses in the name of a crusade against communism. In the course of this chapter some of that rhetoric will be examined.

Soviet Influence in Central America

The general impetus for the post World War Two American perception that communist influence around the world was increasing can be found in the rhetoric of the brand of communism followed by the Soviets. Ideological adherence by the Soviets to the notion of a global communist revolution caused anxiety amongst developed nations when it became apparent to the world after the Second World War that the Soviets may have the military capability to force the issue. The increasing conventional and nuclear strength of the Soviet regime, the fall of the iron curtain across Eastern Europe and stories of the repression of human

¹⁵² Henry A. Kissinger, *American Foreign Policy, Third Edition* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1977), 304.

rights and religion as well as material wealth emanating from the Soviet Union engendered a fear in the American public that their very way of life was at risk. This fear was expressed in the policy of containment employed by American administrations in the 1950s and 1960s. Those administrations believed the Soviet Union constituted a threat to the national security of the United States based on the Soviet ideological goal of global communist revolution and thus they concluded the Soviet's efforts must be contained. This policy of containment developed significant importance in the region of Central America, where the impoverished nature of the large majority of the populace provided fertile ground for the egalitarian notions espoused by socialism to spread. Formation of a military alliance amongst the states of the Western Hemisphere in 1947 and the development of the Organization of American States in 1948 were elements of the American strategy of containment.¹⁵³

Early Soviet involvement in the region is best exemplified by the example of Cuba. Cuban alignment and military ties with the Soviet Union following the Cuban Revolution and Fidel Castro's rise to power were the first examples of Soviet influence expanding in Central America and prompted a shift in American foreign policy.¹⁵⁴ The development of close ties between the Soviets and Cuba prompted the U.S. supported Bay of Pigs invasion, and the Cuban Missile Crisis. These events highlight the aversion the U.S. government had to giving up its strategic geographic isolation. Though the U.S. maintained short range first strike nuclear options in Europe, it was ready to go to war with the Soviets over the prospects of them gaining the same capability through the placement of missile bases in Cuba. U.S. action against leftist movements in Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Chile were further examples of the implementation

¹⁵³ Harold Molineau, *U.S. Policy Toward Latin America: From Regionalism to Globalism* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), 8.

¹⁵⁴ Thomas M. Leonard, "Central America and the United States: Overlooked Foreign Policy Objectives," *The Americas*, L (1), (July 1993): 23.

of the American policy of containment.¹⁵⁵

The following section will begin by outlining a brief history of American involvement in Nicaragua because these actions directly contributed to the development of a Nicaraguan socialist insurrection.

American Foreign Policy and the Development Of Socialism in Nicaragua

This history will serve as background to the development of the Sandinistas. This background is important because it highlights the fact that the brand of socialism which developed in Nicaragua was local in origin and not induced by Soviet influence. Furthermore, it highlights the American perception that, in the bipolar Cold War era, alignment served to designate a nation as either communist or non-communist, regardless of actual philosophical adherence to the principals of Soviet communism. The fear that Nicaragua would become aligned with, and receive support from, the Soviets was enough to prompt American action. Under Carter, that action took the form of containment. Under the Reagan Administration, American action took the form of the policy of rollback, which conformed to offensive structural realism.

The roots of the development of socialist oriented thought in Nicaragua can be found in the colonial actions of the United States in the region which date back to the early nineteenth century and are exemplified by the Monroe Doctrine. The doctrine sought to exclude European colonial powers from the region by asserting the independence of the Latin American states. Theodore Roosevelt's 'Corollary' to the Monroe Doctrine went even further by advocating intervention to prevent European interference in the region which would threaten American business interests.

¹⁵⁵ Molineu, 8.

The use of military force to protect American business interests in the region came to be known as dollar diplomacy.¹⁵⁶

General Smedley Butler was an American Marine Corps legend and 33 year veteran of American campaigns to protect U.S. business interests in Central America. When he reflected on the period of dollar diplomacy, he referred to it as a criminal racketeering enterprise meant to benefit Wall Street. In 1909-1912 in Nicaragua he helped cleanse the nation for the international banking house known as Brown Brothers.¹⁵⁷ In 1912 Butler's marines were sent in to prop up the U.S. friendly puppet government of Adolfo Diaz.¹⁵⁸ The obstinate rebel leader Benjamin Zeledon refused to surrender and when his stronghold fell, he was killed.¹⁵⁹ In the years that followed, Butler and his American Marines, under the direction of the U.S. State Department, effectively destroyed Nicaraguan sovereignty through the rigging of elections, intimidation, and structured appointments to every significant military and fiscal post. In 1926, when rebellion again arose in Nicaragua, it was led by Augusto Cesar Sandino who had been instilled with a sense of nationalism following the death of Benjamin Zeledon.¹⁶⁰ Sandino had become incensed with the truce signed by the government of Nicaragua with the United States and began an insurgency aimed at the removal of American forces from the country.¹⁶¹

Then United States president Coolidge was faced with domestic unhappiness over the occupation of Nicaragua. He attempted to foment a fear of communist infiltration in the region aimed at cutting off the U.S. from the Panama Canal. The effort was unsuccessful, however, and the U.S. was forced to withdraw its forces after a six year battle with insurgents. Before

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 7.

¹⁵⁷ Holly Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* (Boston: South End Press, 1988), 1-2.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 1-2.

¹⁵⁹ Thomas W. Walker, *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas: The Undeclared War on Nicaragua* ed. Thomas W. Walker (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 2.

¹⁶⁰ Sklar, 4.

departing, however, Anastasio Somoza Garcia was placed in control of a powerful national guard. Sandino, having accomplished his goal, made peace with the Nicaraguan government headed by Juan Sacasa, and was given land to establish an agricultural cooperative. A year later however, Somoza's guardsmen began to surround Sandino's cooperative. Sandino traveled to Managua to demand that the peace treaty and the constitution be respected, but after dining with the president he was arrested and executed. The guardsmen who had surrounded Sandino's Wiwili encampment then attacked, killing approximately 300 men, women, and children.¹⁶² Despite his murder by Somoza's Guardsmen, Sandino's actions did prompt the withdrawal of American troops.¹⁶³ In 1936 however, the ultra American friendly Somoza seized power in a coup. The dictatorship established by Anastasio Somoza Garcia lasted 43 years and was passed from father to son and then to brother.¹⁶⁴ Though dollar diplomacy ended shortly before the onset of the Second World War, and a 'Good Neighbor Policy' promising non-intervention was implemented by Franklin Roosevelt,¹⁶⁵ American support of the Somoza dictatorship did not. More than 14,000 Nicaraguan military forces were sent to train under various military training programs under the Somoza dictatorship. In the words of Anastasio Somoza, "due to our close association with the U.S., Nicaragua became known as the little U.S.A. of Central America."¹⁶⁶ Indeed, it was American support of Somoza throughout the length of his dynasty that kept the regime strong.¹⁶⁷ In 1978 at the Organization of American States, the Venezuelan ambassador stated that, "Somoza believes that God has given him Nicaragua for a hacienda and its citizens as

¹⁶¹ John A. Booth, "Celebrating the Demise of the Somocismo: Fifty Recent Spanish Sources on the Nicaraguan Revolution," *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 17, No. 1, (1982), 174.

¹⁶² Sklar, 4.

¹⁶³ Walker, 2.

¹⁶⁴ Sklar, 4-6.

¹⁶⁵ Molineau, 8.

¹⁶⁶ Sklar, 7.

¹⁶⁷ Booth, 174.

its peasants.”¹⁶⁸

The Venezuelan ambassador was referring here to General Anastasio Somoza Debayle, also known as Tachito. In power since the death of his brother in the mid 1960s, Tachito endeavored to make Nicaragua an investor’s heaven replete with cheap labor, stability, and low taxes. Social welfare and reforms were not considered important to Somoza Debayle and thus under his tenure the richest five percent of the population received 30 percent of the wealth, six out of ten deaths were caused by preventable diseases, one in eight babies died before age one, and more than half the population lacked education and were illiterate. Two out of three peasant farmers remained landless in a country possessing a significant amount of arable land and export crops used up 22 times the amount of land used for production of domestic food supply. But it was not until a massive earthquake hit Managua in 1972, that the extent of the government’s corruption was revealed to the populace.¹⁶⁹ It became clear that Tachito was a more violent, cruel, and corrupt leader than his predecessors.¹⁷⁰

In 1974, in the wake of the scandal of earthquake aid distribution, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), formed in 1961 in honor of Augusto Cesar Sandino, appeared for the first time on the world stage after raiding a high profile party honoring the American Ambassador and taking hostages. The Sandinista organization won a \$1 million dollar ransom, the right to communicate its views to the country, and the release of political prisoners including Daniel Ortega.¹⁷¹ They also gained free passage out of the country.¹⁷² With the support of the U.S. and neighboring countries, Somoza Debayle waged an intensive campaign to eradicate the Sandinista insurgency. Reports of widespread human rights abuses filtered into Washington and

¹⁶⁸ Sklar, 7.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 9.

¹⁷⁰ Booth, 177.

¹⁷¹ Sklar, 9.

under President Carter efforts were made to tie further aid to improvements in human rights. Believing that the FSLN had been all but wiped out, the Carter Administration embarked on an effort to remove the Somoza family from power while retaining the apparatus bred to service American interests. When Somoza Debayle ended martial law however, it became clear that the FSLN had not been eliminated.¹⁷³

In October 1977, the FSLN launched a military offensive against the Somocista regime. That offensive, coupled with the formation of the Group of Twelve, which was a group of respected priests, professionals, businessmen and academics who insisted that the FSLN be included in any positive answer to Nicaragua's troubles, dealt a severe blow to Somoza Debayle. The assassination of the editor of a leading newspaper further eroded the support Somoza Debayle retained from the middle class whose members had always considered themselves safe. Contributing to the fear of the middle class was the Somoza Debayle's response to the first mass insurrection, which occurred in Monimbo in February, 1978. Somoza Debayle's son was sent to quell the insurrection, which he accomplished through harsh tactics.¹⁷⁴ Reported to be much like his father, Anastasio Somoza Portocarrero was being groomed to take over the regime.¹⁷⁵

In July of 1978, women's and student groups along with professional organizations, unions, and left wing political parties including Nicaragua's main communist party the Nicaraguan Socialist Party, reached a consensus on strategy and agreed to be headed by the FSLN. The new organization was named the United Peoples Movement (MPU) and advocated significant change in the social, economic, and political aspects of Nicaraguan life. The group aimed to correct the egregious social inequities created by decades of Somocista rule and provide justice, education

¹⁷² Booth, 179.

¹⁷³ Sklar, 9-11.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 11-13.

¹⁷⁵ Booth, 177.

and healthcare to all Nicaraguans. In addition to promising equal rights for women, it promised to accept support from any foreign government that would help and to institute land reform for the peasantry. Two months later, general insurrection broke out across Nicaragua and was met with the full force Somoza Debayle's National Guard. More than 5000 people were killed and four of Nicaragua's seven major cities were razed or partially destroyed. The FSLN's numbers grew immensely in the aftermath of the atrocities.¹⁷⁶ Various accounts of the atrocities strongly suggest that the Somoza regime was its own worst enemy.¹⁷⁷

At this point it began to become clear to the Carter Administration that there was broad support for the FSLN from all levels of society and that the future of American interests in the region was legitimately at stake. The success of the socialist oriented FSLN suggested to the American government that the future of Nicaragua would be alignment with the communists and Castro if efforts were not made to ensure it was excluded from the political process. For the Carter Administration, the goal became convincing Somoza Debayle to step down from power and allow a similarly conservative yet less brutal regime led by the Broad Opposition Front (FAO) to take power. From the Carter Administration's perspective, "the longer Somoza stayed in power, the higher the chances were of a radical takeover. The only question was when the Sandinistas would take power."¹⁷⁸

The moves made by the Carter Administration at this point suggest a strong philosophical connection to the policy of containment because the goal was stability and not advancement of American control of the region. Though American influence appeared to be waning in Nicaragua at the time and a powerful insurrection, which included communists, was gaining support, the Carter Administration sought to reduce its military support of the Somoza regime.

¹⁷⁶ Sklar, 12-17.

¹⁷⁷ Booth, 178.

On February 8, 1979, “the administration announced it was withdrawing the U.S. Military Group, terminating military aid (it had been suspended), withdrawing Peace Corps Volunteers and cutting the embassy staff from 82 to 37; no new aid would be considered.”¹⁷⁹ It is important to this study that the Carter Administration’s policies leading up to the fall of the Somoza regime and the rise to power of the Sandinistas are identified as conforming to the tenets of containment because it is the shift from this policy to a policy which reflected offensive structural realism, on which the study is based. The efforts to remove Somoza and install a more moderate conservative regime in Nicaragua, rather than continue support for Somoza who was committed to wiping out the FSLN and its communist element, directly implies that stability in the region was the aim of the Carter Administration. Had the goal of the Carter Administration been to wipe out the communist influence in Nicaragua and thus roll back the gains made by communists in the region, continued support of Somoza would have been a more logical path, one which would have reflected the tenets of offensive structural realism.

The policy of containment employed by the Carter Administration, which was hallmarked by a desire to see the more conservative FAO replace the Somoza regime, was doomed to failure however. CIA intelligence reports consistently claimed that the National Guard would be able to defeat the Sandinista forces. These reports continued to flow to the Carter Administration at least until June 11, 1979, by which time the Sandinistas had already strategically won the war. On June 12, 1979, the CIA reversed its conclusion and stated that the Sandinistas would likely win the war. The following day the U.S. began evacuating its citizens and the day after that the U.S. asked an Israeli ship loaded with weapons bound for Nicaragua to turn around, which it did. On June 16, the Provisional Government Junta of National Reconstruction was formed in Costa

¹⁷⁸ Sklar, 17-21.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 21.

Rica from a broad coalition of groups from all levels of society, which was headed by the FSLN. Andean Pact countries offered recognition for the Sandinista guerillas and “on June 18, the junta issued its first proclamation, spelling out an extensive program of political, economic and social reconstruction.”¹⁸⁰ The following day at a Special Coordination Committee, National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski asserted that a Sandinista victory in Nicaragua would significantly affect U.S.-Soviet relations.¹⁸¹

On June 21, in a final effort to control the outcome of the problems in Nicaragua, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance delivered a speech to the OAS which attempted to implicate Cuba, and thus the Soviets, in the problems in Nicaragua even though Cuba was not the only country supporting the Sandinistas, nor was it the most significant. In the speech, Vance also asked for an OAS force to enter the country to preserve the peace. The proposal was rejected by the states of the OAS, however, and marked the first time since the formation of the OAS that the organization refused to support U.S. intervention in an American state. Though Brzezinski continued to press Carter on the negative implications to U.S.-Soviet relations of allowing the Sandinistas to come to power, while also advocating direct American intervention in the country, Carter did not give in. On June 23, the OAS, with American support, adopted a resolution advocating true democratic elections in Nicaragua.¹⁸² These actions foreshadowed the conciliatory stance that the Carter Administration would take regarding the Sandinistas once they came to power.¹⁸³

The actions of the Carter Administration in this short period help identify the philosophical nature of the actors involved. Brzezinski’s advocacy of intervention is evidence of his general adherence to the notions of offensive structural realism because his primary concern was the

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 25-26.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 26-27.

¹⁸² Ibid, 27-28.

relative strength of the United States to the Soviet Union. He believed that the situation in Nicaragua was important to the U.S. only in respect to its implications on U.S.-Soviet relations such as the ongoing SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty) negotiations and thus he was prepared to endorse military intervention with or without OAS support.¹⁸⁴ That the remainder of the relevant actors, including Carter, rejected that notion and instead supported negotiating with the newly formed junta, implies that pursuit of relative gains vis a vis the Soviet Union was not the driving philosophical force behind the policies enacted by the Carter Administration. Instead, the implication is that the Carter Administration accepted that the policy of containment had failed in Nicaragua, and that the only reasonable recourse was to accept the loss and begin negotiations. Brzezinski felt that power itself was the primary goal and all other considerations were subject to that goal. The rationale he employed to justify his belief that human rights come second to U.S. power projection was that only through power could America protect its interests or “advance more humane goals.”¹⁸⁵ His comments are interesting in that when explaining why power over human rights, he adds a rider and a qualification to his answer. He adds protecting American interests to the human rights issue and on that he only says the U.S. would pursue more humane goals and not that it would protect human rights. In other words, Brzezinski implied that if the U.S. someday has a preponderance of global power, then it will try to consider human rights to a larger degree when pursuing its self interested goals. Mearsheimer would agree with his assessment. Though Brzezinski serves as a counterpoint to the ideological convictions of the majority of Carter’s Administration, he remains a possible example of a precursor to the shift to a foreign policy guided by the principles of offensive structural realism.

¹⁸³ Larry Hufford, “Focus On: The U.S. in Central America: The Obfuscation of History,” *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1985, 93.

¹⁸⁴ Sklar, 27-29.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 29.

He may also represent an undercurrent of philosophical thought within the American foreign affairs community that has always existed.

The final days of the Somoza regime were filled with American efforts to affect the outcome of the now inevitable transition of power. After Somoza submitted his resignation to the Nicaraguan congress the American efforts were sabotaged by Francisco Urcuyo whom Somoza had appointed to serve as interim president of the country. When he assumed power, he made clear his intention to serve out the remainder of Somoza's term. The remainder of the National Guard disintegrated as the Sandinistas moved on Managua. Urcuyo resigned and fled the country with thousands of guardsmen and sympathizers and on July 19, 1979 the Sandinista guerillas declared victory. When the junta arrived in Managua with the Sandinista directorate a day later, it was greeted by a crowd of hundreds of thousands of supporters.¹⁸⁶

Through examination of the history of Nicaragua up to the victory of the Sandinistas, a few important points become clear. The first is that while socialism was certainly the basis of the Sandinista movement, actual communist influence in the period leading up to the Sandinista victory was negligible. Rather, the history provides solid evidence that the development of socialism in Nicaragua was a result of social inequities caused by more than 100 years of exploitation by the U.S. governments and businesses. This exploitation combined with human rights atrocities, which were tacitly supported by the American policy makers through their continued support of the dictators who committed acts of brutality, forms evidence for the argument that socialism in Nicaragua was not induced by Soviet influence. Though aid filtered in to the Sandinistas from Cuba, it was not the most significant supplier of arms to the Sandinista forces. It seems clear that the reason why American policy makers feared Soviet influence in

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 32-34.

Nicaragua, even though there was little evidence of it, was because they anticipated animosity from a populace with socialist leaders who correctly believed that the U.S. has been taking advantage of Nicaragua for hundreds of years. In the eyes of American policy makers, the presence of inherent anti U.S. sentiment in the populace of Nicaragua virtually guaranteed alignment and close ties with the Soviet Union which was always present to aid the enemy of its enemy. Junta statements declaring its openness to any foreign aid were possibly construed as foreshadowing of the intended alignment. Evidence that the Carter Administration legitimately feared any increase in Soviet influence in Central America, and honestly believed that allowing the Sandinistas to achieve power would cause a further increase in Soviet influence in Nicaragua, supports the argument that the leader who took the place of Carter a short time later acted with the same focus on the Soviets and geopolitics.

The next section will briefly address the nature of the Sandinista government after it took power and the Carter Administration's response to highlight again the unique and geopolitically benign nature of the Sandinista government.

Sandinista Nicaragua

Soviet influence in Nicaragua before the revolution was negligible. In the period immediately following the Sandinista consolidation of power, two important miscalculations were made by the Carter Administration. The first was refusal of repeated requests for military aid by the Sandinistas. The Carter Administration missed the opportunity to co-opt the Sandinista government at that time based on the fear of a situation similar to Cuba developing. The overture by the Sandinista government foreshadowed its willingness to work with the American government. American policy makers failed to understand the significance of the fact that, in the

aftermath of their refusal to provide aid necessary to rebuild Nicaragua's security forces, Sandinista officials traveled around the world attempting to purchase arms and did not go to the Soviet Union directly. France initially sold them \$15.8 million worth of arms but American pressure removed the chance of any further sales, and there were no other western countries willing to sell. The reduction and termination of U.S. economic aid meant that there were no legitimate options left available to the Sandinista government. At this point the Sandinista government turned to the socialist countries for help.¹⁸⁷ These facts help consolidate the argument of this section that Nicaragua was not inclined toward the Soviet Union as the rhetoric of the Reagan Doctrine argues, but rather it sought to engage the American government in peaceful relations. The Reagan Administration was willing to ignore overtures made by the Sandinista government in the early 1980s, which implies that it had larger objectives in the region which would not be served by an ally made unreliable by virtue of U.S. colonial abuse.

Contrary to American fears that a Sandinista victory in Nicaragua would lead to the development of repressive totalitarian state, it did not. Though Marxist-Leninist thought was popular amongst the Sandinistas, it served more as an explanatory tool for the history of Central America than a blueprint for society. The primary influences in revolutionary Nicaragua were nationalism, religion,¹⁸⁸ and the logic of the majority. Because the majority of Nicaraguans were poor, the Sandinista government began working toward improving their plight. It promised pluralism in the political process, legitimate democracy, a nonaligned path, protection of human rights, and a mixed economy comprised of both public and private property.¹⁸⁹ The Sandinista government followed through with its promises by adopting a representative democracy with a

¹⁸⁷ Ruben Berrios, "Relations Between Nicaragua and the Socialist Countries," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* Vol. 27, No. 3 (Autumn, 1985): 122-113.

¹⁸⁸ Walker, 3.

¹⁸⁹ Sklar, 36-37.

directly elected executive as well as an elected legislature. It also facilitated the growth of an official opposition, which gained representation in the new national assembly.¹⁹⁰

The actual situation in Nicaragua stands in stark contrast to the prevailing conventional wisdom amongst policy makers in Washington that the Sandinistas were a brutal communist dictatorship closely allied with the Soviet Union which abused human rights and repressed freedom and individuality. Actual Soviet involvement in Nicaragua after the revolution did not amount to a threat to the balance of power in the region. The Soviet Union was not a source of hard currency for Nicaragua nor was it a state prepared to go to war to defend Nicaragua where history and ties to religion made a Marxist-Leninist revolution unlikely. Geographically, Nicaragua was not strategically located either, with long borders that were virtually undefended.¹⁹¹

This evidence is supported by the tens of thousands of U.S. citizens that traveled to Nicaragua after the Sandinista victory. These people were involved in Nicaraguan life at every level and they did not see signs of a brutal communist dictatorship that was abusing human rights. In fact they saw the opposite. In response to the claims of these people, the administration embarked on a campaign to limit outside assessment of and travel to Nicaragua. Its campaign also included attacking the integrity of those who had been making the claims.¹⁹² The actions of the Reagan Administration, in response to civilian claims supporting the Sandinista government, expose the fact that it had placed great importance on the demonization of the Sandinista government. If the policy of rollback were to be applied effectively in Nicaragua, with the Kirkpatrick Doctrine acting as rationale, then the Sandinistas had to be evil. If the Sandinistas were not evil, then

¹⁹⁰ Richard Harris, "The Revolutionary Process in Nicaragua," *Latin American Perspectives* Issue 45, Vol. 12 No. 2 (Spring 1985): 5.

¹⁹¹ Walker, 4-5.

there would be no way to justify the overthrow of a legitimate government to gain a proxy in regional affairs. This is further evidence of the existence of offensive structural realism in the Reagan Administration's policy toward Nicaragua.

Furthermore, the claim by the Reagan Administration that Nicaragua was supplying arms to guerillas in El Salvador was based on little or no evidence. Though the Sandinista government did supply the FMLN arms before its failed final offensive in early 1981, evidence of its involvement after that point is scant and anecdotal. The evidence that the Reagan Administration claimed to have regarding Nicaraguan involvement in El Salvador after 1981 was never released to the public due to its claim that it was too sensitive.¹⁹³ The nature of the evidence released by the Reagan Administration in response to the claims of skeptics that there was no significant Nicaraguan involvement in El Salvador suggests that the administration knew there was no significant Soviet involvement in Nicaragua simply because it is so scant and anecdotal. It also seems unlikely that the Reagan Administration would withhold evidence, even if it were sensitive somehow, when that evidence would silence critics and endorse its justification for the support of the Contras. This all implies that the U.S. aim in Nicaragua was guided by the principles of offensive structural realism because the goal of installing a proxy who would reliably serve American interests in the region met key requirements of the theory of offensive structural realism because it was aimed at increasing the relative power of the U.S. to the Soviet Union in Central America.

The Carter Administration's response to the takeover of Nicaragua by the Sandinistas was

¹⁹² Margaret E. Leahy, "The Harassment of Nicaraguanists and Fellow Travelers," *Reagan vs. the Sandinistas: The Undeclared War on Nicaragua*, ed. Thomas W. Walker (London: Westview Press, 1987): 228-229.

¹⁹³ Marc Edelman, "Soviet-Cuban Involvement in Central America: A Critique of Recent Writings," *Dossier: New Ideas From a New Genre*, No. 15 (Autumn, 1986): p. 107

generally positive in that it decided to attempt to deal with the Sandinista government.¹⁹⁴ By attaching strings to the aid offered, the Carter Administration maintained the hope that it could coax the Sandinistas into a course that suited America better.¹⁹⁵ Highlighting the philosophical connection to the notions of classical realism held by the majority of the Carter Administration, Assistant Secretary of State Viron Vaky quoted Hans Morgenthau in testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in September 1979 by stating, “As Dr. Hans Morgenthau once wrote: ‘The real issue facing American foreign policy...is not how to preserve stability in the face of revolution, but how to create stability out of revolution.’”¹⁹⁶

The following section will assess the possible sources of offensive structural realist thought in the Reagan Administration.

Sources of Offensive Structural Realist Thought In the Reagan Administration

Ronald Reagan

Generally speaking Reagan’s international political views are defined by a virulent idealistic hatred for Communism, which came to the fore during his early years as president of the Screen Actors’ Guild.¹⁹⁷ Previous to this, Reagan was known for his staunch liberalism, fear of a growing native fascism, and support for populist political movements, including movements with communist affiliation.¹⁹⁸ The liberal aspects of his idealism waned during his tenure as head of S.A.G., where he would eventually inform for the F.B.I. on communist infiltrators into his organization and support the policy of blacklisting those suspected of communist affiliation.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ Hufford, 93.

¹⁹⁵ Walker, 5.

¹⁹⁶ Sklar, 35.

¹⁹⁷ Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 106-108.

¹⁹⁸ Morris, 229-230.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 288.

Reagan took these views on communism with him from S.A.G. to the Governor's office of California where he served two terms beginning in 1966.²⁰⁰ By this time, Reagan had abandoned his liberal affiliation in favor of becoming a member of the Republican Party, whom he felt were better able to combat the growing threat of Soviet communist world domination.²⁰¹ In a 1975 speech Reagan offered a clear view into his idealistic beliefs about communism:

Communism is neither an economic nor a political system – it is a form of insanity – a temporary aberration which will one day disappear from the earth because it is contrary to human nature. I wonder how much more misery it will cause before it disappears.²⁰²

This passage is important because it highlights Reagan's inherent beliefs about human nature. These beliefs about human nature revolved around his perception that communism is the enemy of freedom. His desire to wipe communism, or what he referred to as a disease or a plague,²⁰³ therefore was rooted in his idealism and not strict concern for relative gains. In the following statement Reagan highlights the Machiavellian aspects of his idealism:

Now, as long as they(the Soviet Union) do that, and as long as they, at the same time, have openly and publicly declared that the only morality they recognize is what will further their cause: meaning they reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime; to lie; to cheat, in order to obtain that and that is moral, not immoral, and we operate on a different set of standards, I think when you do business with them-even at a détente-you keep that in mind.²⁰⁴

His words echo the sentiments of Machiavelli who pondered the wisdom of acting morally when one's enemies are not. But whether or not Reagan's personal philosophy conformed to the notions of structural realism, his administrations' policy shift from retrenchment to assertion with regard to the Soviet threat does lend support to the notion that if not him, then his

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 343, 366-367.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 322.

²⁰² Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson, Martin Anderson, *Reagan, In His Own Hand* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 12.

²⁰³ Ibid, 10-12.

²⁰⁴ Ronald Reagan and Alexander Haig, "Soviet Ambitions, Soviet Immorality" in *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War* (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1981): 7.

administration was acting in a way that conformed to offensive structural realism. Reagan adopted the perspective in the 1970s, a period of relative decline of U.S. power,²⁰⁵ which is evidence of his concern with hegemony. Though a concern with hegemony implies a connection to offensive structural realism, Reagan's idealistic hatred of communism appears to be the driving force behind his foreign policies.

Those who argue that Reagan's idealism was the source for the policy of rollback and the Reagan Doctrine subscribe to the elite beliefs perspective.²⁰⁶ Mark Lagon compared the elite beliefs perspective with the structural realist approach in The Reagan Doctrine: Explaining the Reagan Doctrine's Origins as competing explanations for the policy of rollback and the Reagan Doctrine. He defines the elite beliefs perspective as focusing on the beliefs of leaders and their notions and relying on methods of analysis outside of traditional mainstream realism such as philosophical and sociological factors.²⁰⁷ Lagon finds a relationship between the elite beliefs perspective and the structural realist approaches to international relations as explanations for the policy of rollback and the Reagan Doctrine.²⁰⁸ However, the elite beliefs perspective seems to be invalidated by the nature of Reagan as an individual and thus structural realism is endorsed as the rationale for the policy of rollback.

Jeanne Kirkpatrick

The rhetorical roots of the Reagan Doctrine can be traced back to the influence of Jeanne Kirkpatrick, whose fundamental work, Dictatorships and Double Standards, outlined a justification for American support of anti-communist dictatorships couched in the liberal rhetoric of democracy and freedom. When the liberal rhetoric is carved away from Kirkpatrick herself,

²⁰⁵ David E. Kyvig, "The Foreign Relations of the Reagan Administration" in *Reagan and the World* (New York: Praeger, 1990): 5.

²⁰⁶ Mark P. Lagon, The Reagan Doctrine: Sources of American Conduct in the Cold War's Last Chapter (London: Praeger, 1994), 5-6.

as well as her work, what is left is essentially an offensive structural realist perspective concerned with the geopolitical security in the United States in a competitive anarchical international system. The democracy and freedom oriented arguments employed by Kirkpatrick to justify the peripheralization of human rights issues are weak at best and used primarily as a tool to mobilize broad public support.

Kirkpatrick clearly outlined her philosophical perspective when she stated,

No problem of American foreign policy is more urgent than that of formulating a morally and strategically acceptable, and politically realistic, program for dealing with non-democratic governments who are threatened by Soviet-sponsored subversion.²⁰⁹

This passage is interesting because she bluntly outlined her objective of finding a way to morally justify offensive structural realist concerns of relative gains over the Soviet Union. Furthering her qualification as an offensive structural realist, in Dictatorships and Double Standards she referred to a gap between ideas and experiences that has the potential to form when ‘bad ideas’ gain wide support. She argued for the relevance of history in providing the only basis for theory. The experiences of history should guide theory and when this is not the case and the realms of thought and experience intermingle, rationalism arises. In this passage Kirkpatrick describes her feelings about rationalism:

The rationalist perversion in modern politics consists in the determined effort to understand and shape people and societies on the basis of inadequate, oversimplified theories of human behavior ... rationalist reforms seek to conform human behavior to oversimplified, unrealistic models.²¹⁰

She connects rationalism to Plato’s republic and then to the development of tyranny. She argued

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 7.

²⁰⁸ Lagon, *The Reagan Doctrine*, 146.

²⁰⁹ Enrique A. Baloyra, “Central America on the Reagan Watch: Rhetoric and Reality” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* Vol. 27, No. 1 (Feb., 1985): 35-62.

²¹⁰ Jeane Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 8-10.

that there is a powerful impetus for a rationalist who thinks the nature of public good is to use power to impose those notions on others. This is dangerous, she claimed, because it is arrogant for one to think they know better than the other. She added that, because the rationalist cannot distinguish between experience and thought, they are likely to conceive of public goods that are not attainable.²¹¹ Though she employed history as a defense for the worth of experience, and thus realism, she failed to account for the relevance of change in history. To be tied solely to experience as a guide in politics would leave the theorist vulnerable to a rigidity that resists innovation if it has no grounding in the past.

Kirkpatrick also has clear notions about the worth and possibility of achieving equality. She stated,

One of the most widespread notions of our age is that justice requires egalitarian allocations of wealth, opportunity, and other social goods. But although equality is the dominant passion of the age, no nation achieves it, no nation ever has ... The experience of this century's socialist revolutionary regimes suggests that equality is unachievable at any price and, moreover, that in regimes that try to achieve it, less wealth is produced, less comforts are available, and ordinary people are less free than in many other societies.²¹²

Though this passage reflects a host of Kirkpatrick's beliefs, the most important to this study is her belief that communism and egalitarianism had been tested empirically and did not work. Thus her anti-communism and anti-totalitarianism can be seen not as an ideological belief, but rather an empirical analysis of history. Her beliefs were rooted in the same empiricism that formed the foundations for the structural and offensive realist approach to international relations. This strengthens the argument of this thesis that she philosophically conformed to the principles of structural realism. The rancor she held for rationalism and ideology in politics also supports her categorization as a structural realist because she rejected idealist interpretations of human

²¹¹ Ibid, 12.

²¹² Kirkpatrick, 14.

nature. Establishing Jeanne Kirkpatrick firmly in the structural realist school of thought is a necessary prerequisite to arguing that her contributions to the policy of rollback and the Reagan Doctrine were also structurally realist in nature. The rhetoric of freedom and democracy she employed as justification for her beliefs clashed with her stated distaste for rationalism, which holds that it is unjustifiably arrogant to apply one's own notion of the good life to others. This clash suggests that she employed the rhetoric for a purpose, the logical one being the desire to frame a distasteful policy in appealing terms.

The staunch anti-communism of Dictatorships and Double Standards, though ideological in tone, is best understood when viewed through a structural realist lens. Although Kirkpatrick labeled communism as a greater evil, than that of an authoritarian regime, due to the fact that its totalitarian nature means many important institutions of life are left unharmed under an authoritarian regime, her rationale implied that if any regime were on the march across the world and was as powerful as the U.S. and adopted a competitive perspective on world affairs, the reaction would be the same. The point here is that it was the threat to American national security and the reduction in the relative power of the U.S. that drove the heart of Kirkpatrick's doctrine. She was willing to sacrifice human rights in an effort to defeat communism, which does not negate the possibility, that she would be willing to sacrifice those rights again and again if the threat to national security and her cherished way of life arose in the future. Remove the antecedent that the communists posed a military threat, and it is unlikely she would endorse a negation of human rights concerns. To Kirkpatrick, the spread of communism was so threatening, the response must be accordingly rational and structurally realist in nature.

Furthermore, the extension of the label totalitarian to the communist movement in Nicaragua is problematic. The growth of communism in Nicaragua was not begun by Soviet agents, but

rather domestic ones and it was defined by local circumstances, such as staunch Catholicism, which made totalitarianism in the Soviet sense highly unlikely. The U.S. supported export oriented agrarian oligarchy in Somocista Nicaragua refused even to address the issue of land reform because the elites in power had no interest to do so.²¹³ By supporting an authoritarian regime, which historically marginalized the peasants and disenfranchised them, the U.S. fertilized the soil within which the seeds of socialism would develop. As Jan L. Flora and Edelberto Torres-Rivas put it in their article “Sociology of Developing Societies: Historical Bases of Insurgency in Central America,” “the current (1989) Central American crisis suggests the failure of a legal, gradualist, and peaceful approach to the modernization of oligarchical elites.”²¹⁴ The actions of the U.S. in support of authoritarian oligarchical elites in areas where socialist trends, and thus perceived Soviet influence were on the rise, created a situation of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because the U.S. interfered in the gradual transformation of a society like Nicaragua from rule by a few to rule by many, it ensured that the disenfranchised would have no other choice but to adopt a revolutionary stance.

Kirkpatrick’s attempt to rationalize support for authoritarians on the basis that some of the Nicaraguan people’s traditional life will be preserved, even if they suffer human rights abuses, was predicated on her belief that the forces for change in Nicaragua were Soviet in origin and not simply socialist and that an iron fist of totalitarianism would descend on every aspect of Nicaraguan life. As has been made clear, Sandinista Nicaragua was not defined by the characteristics of totalitarianism and the important aspects of Nicaraguan life were preserved under rule by the Sandinistas. Thus employing her doctrine as rationale for the implementation

²¹³ Jan L. Flora and Edelberto Torres-Rivas, “Sociology of Developing Societies: Historical Bases of Insurgency in Central America” in *Sociology of Developing Societies: Central America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989): 49.

²¹⁴ Flora and Torres-Rivas, 51.

of the policy of rollback in Nicaragua is fallacious.

The Council on Foreign Relations

Of particular importance in explaining the source of offensive structural realist thought in the Reagan Administration is the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). It is a private organization comprised of business, and political elites that has had significant influence on American foreign policy since the end of the Second World War. During the late 1970s the CFR had an international policy reflecting an internationalist perspective. Its policy advocated human rights improvements around the world, both nuclear and conventional arms restrictions, and an ongoing investigation of the relationship between the rich of the north and the poor from the south. When Carter took office in 1977, he began the process of implementing the agenda of the CFR immediately.²¹⁵ The liberal agenda of the CFR at the time of President Carter is an important tool in understanding the nature of the policies implemented during that time because the association between the government and the CFR was so close that the two were nearly indistinguishable. As Lester Milbraith put it, “the Council on Foreign Relations, while not financed by government, works so closely with it (the American government) that it is difficult to distinguish Council actions stimulated by government from autonomous actions.”²¹⁶

The CFR significantly changed the philosophical bearing of its agenda in 1981 however, with the release of the report entitled, The Soviet Challenge: A Policy Framework for the 1980s. The report reflected a new hard line relative to the Soviet Union. This line involved long term increases in military spending, limiting arms control, and advocacy of the use of force in regions such as the Persian Gulf. The policy conformed to the tenets of offensive structural realism because the intended goal (and actual outcome) of the policy was the diminishment or

²¹⁵ Thomas R. Dye, *Who's Running America: The Reagan Years* third ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1983), 244-245.

destruction of the Soviet Union and the creation of a unipolar international environment. The Reagan Administration, like the Carter Administration, was affected by the advice of the CFR²¹⁷ and thus the CFR can be seen as a credible source for offensive structural realism in the Reagan Administration's foreign policy in Nicaragua. Buttressing this argument is the fact that influential policy makers within the Reagan Administration were members of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Alexander M. Haig

A former career military officer and member of the Council on Foreign Relations, Alexander Haig served as Secretary of State in the Reagan Administration and thus had significant influence in both the decision making and policy development processes. He believed that during the 1970s, the Soviet Union had gained significant ground relative to the United States because the U.S. had restricted itself by applying a moral standard to action in the international arena. Furthermore, he believed that the problem was significant enough to warrant action targeted at the reversal of the downward trend of U.S. power relative to the Soviet Union.²¹⁸ To that end Haig declared to NATO one month after taking office that, "a well-orchestrated communist campaign designed to transform the Salvadoran crisis from the internal conflict to an increasingly internationalized conflict is underway."²¹⁹ Haig's beliefs and his affiliation with the Council on Foreign Relations, point toward the offensive structural realist underpinnings of his political philosophy because they are primarily concerned with power relative to the Soviet Union and had tendencies toward American hegemony rather than stable bipolarity. He highlighted the disadvantages brought on by the adherence to a moral code of ethics, which

²¹⁶ Dye, 244.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Alexander M. Haig Jr., *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984), 96.

suggests a Machiavellian influence. Thus for Haig, the issue of Soviet arms shipments to the Sandinistas before and after the revolution in 1979, and Sandinista support of rebels in El Salvador were enough evidence to convince him that Nicaragua posed a threat to the relative power of the U.S. to the Soviets.²²⁰ The distrust Haig felt for the Sandinista organization resulted from its denial in early 1981 that it was supplying aid to the rebels in El Salvador.²²¹

Caspar Weinberger

As Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger was in a position to affect all policy decisions relating to national security, and thus must be considered as a source for the offensive structural realist thought, which formed the base of the policy of rollback and the Reagan Doctrine. His membership on the Council on Foreign Relations and its international extension, the Trilateral Commission, suggest that his political beliefs are similar to those of the organizations he belongs to. Indeed he held the same offensive structural realist concern that the Soviet Union had made significant and disturbing gains on the United States during the 1970s and that the way to solve the problem was a significant and continuing increase in American military expenditures.²²² He furthermore held the belief that the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua was abusing human rights in the same way as the Somoza regime and was re-supplying the rebels in El Salvador, while being re-supplied by the Soviet Union and Cuba.²²³ Weinberger's stated beliefs and known affiliations imply that he was a credible source for the offensive structural realism inherent in the policy of rollback and the Reagan Doctrine.

The offensive structural realist underpinnings of the policy of rollback were derived from the

²¹⁹ Walter Lafeber, "The Reagan Administration and Revolutions in Central America," *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 99 No. 1 (Spring 1984): 2.

²²⁰ Haig Jr., 88-89.

²²¹ Roy Gutman, "America's Diplomatic Charade," *Foreign Policy* No. 56 (Autumn, 1984): p. 6.

²²² Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: Warner Books, 1990), 35.

²²³ *Ibid*, 23.

influence of the Council on Foreign Relations. CFR members and powerful Reagan Administration members such as Haig, and Weinberger contributed to the advancement of the CFR agenda. Kirkpatrick's theory served as the justification for the policy of rollback and eventually evolved into the rhetoric of the Reagan Doctrine.

The Reagan Doctrine and Rollback in Nicaragua

The Reagan Doctrine contains the same Wilsonian ideals that the Truman Doctrine did and represented a continuation of a tradition in American doctrines. It embodied the American self image by invoking American uniqueness, its unilateral mission, and the example it sets for the rest of the world.²²⁴ In his 1985 State of the Union address, Reagan outlined the principles of the Reagan Doctrine:

[W]e must not break faith with those who are risking their lives – on every continent from Afghanistan to Nicaragua – to defy Soviet – supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth support for freedom fighters is self-defense.²²⁵

This rhetoric is informative in the sense that it outlines the methodology of the administration with regard to dealing with Soviet adventurism in the developing world and the justification for those actions. The Reagan Doctrine was simply the formalization of the policy of rollback, which had been in effect for years. Officially it was employed to justify U.S. action in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Angola, and Cambodia.²²⁶ It was based on the logic employed by Jeanne Kirkpatrick in Dictatorships and Double Standards, and served as the rationalization for a policy that put the pursuit of power relative to the Soviet Union above all other factors including basic human

²²⁴ Robert H. Johnson, "Misguided Morality: Ethics and the Reagan Doctrine," *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 103 No. 3 (1988): 510-511.

²²⁵ Lagon, *The Reagan Doctrine*, 3.

²²⁶ Mark P. Lagon, "The International System and the Reagan Doctrine: Can Realism Explain Aid to 'Freedom Fighters,'" *British Journal of Political Science* Vol. 22: 39.

rights.

The roots of the policy of rollback are found, most recently, in the post-war strategy of containment outlined by George Kennan who postulated that due to questions of power and ideology, Soviet expansionism could and should be expected.²²⁷ In order to prevent a significant increase in Soviet power, he suggested a policy of containment of the U.S.S.R.²²⁸ Due to American indecision regarding how to deal with the Soviet Union in the post-war period, Kennan's policy became popular in Washington and subsequently he was given the position of head of the Policy Planning Staff in the State Department.²²⁹ The policy of containment is an example of the realism that had replaced the idealism of the inter-war period in Washington following the end of the Second World War. The policy of containment led to the Vietnam War, the costs of which combined with the mutual financial burden of the Soviet-American arms race, and the Sino-Soviet split convinced both sides by the late 1960s, that some relaxation in tensions was in order. The shift to a period of détente meant that the policy of containment was set aside.

With the election of Reagan and the Republicans in 1981 however, a new more assertive stance was adopted. Kenneth Oye referred to it as the single most significant difference between the foreign policies of Reagan's administration and the ones that preceded it.²³⁰ The Carter Administration's policy of tying human rights reforms to the support offered by the U.S. to third world dictators facing communist insurgencies was blamed by people in Reagan's administration such as Secretary of State Haig for causing disastrous defeats of the U.S. by the Soviets.²³¹ The general feeling in the administration that a relative reduction in American military strength

²²⁷ Lagon, *The Reagan Doctrine*, xiii.

²²⁸ Griffiths, 23.

²²⁹ Ibid, 22.

²³⁰ Kenneth A. Oye, "Constrained Confidence and the Evolution of Reagan Foreign Policy" in *Eagle Resurgent? The Reagan Era in American Foreign Policy* ed. Kenneth A. Oye, Robert J. Lieber, and Donald Rothchild (Boston: Little, Brown, 1987), 25

²³¹ Ibid, 22.

would cause a realignment of peripheral states in line with the Soviet Union in a bandwagoning effect, prompted a resurrection of the notions of containment that were largely abandoned during the period of détente.²³² The developing policy of rollback sought to do more than containment however, and it did so by focusing on countries where pro-Soviet regimes had already taken power.²³³ In March 1981 the National Security Planning Group composed of CIA director William Casey, UN Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Secretary of State Alexander Haig, National Security Advisor Richard Allen, and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger met and formulated the policy of rollback with regards to Nicaragua. Their decision to support the Contras as well as domestic opposition forces in Nicaragua can be viewed as the initiation of the policy of rollback and as a forerunner of the Reagan Doctrine.²³⁴ The aggressive posture of the policy of rollback is the single most important evidence that it is based on principles of offensive structural realism. That it actively sought the reduction or elimination of Soviet power and influence is a direct connection to the offensive structural realist concern with relative gains and hegemony.

Evidence of the Reagan Administration's policy of rollback in action in Nicaragua can be found as early as February 3, 1981 when Alexander Haig began the process whereby all aid to the Sandinista government would be halted. Furthermore, aid to the struggling American friendly government of El Salvador would be increased. These moves were made based on evidence Haig claimed to uncover of a definitive pattern of military support by the Sandinista government to rebel forces in El Salvador. The American ambassador to El Salvador, Lawrence Pezzullo, convinced the Sandinista government to reduce its aid to rebels in El Salvador, but this

²³² Ibid, 21.

²³³ Lagon, *The Reagan Doctrine*, 2.

²³⁴ James M. Scott, "Interbranch Rivalry and the Reagan Doctrine in Nicaragua," *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 112 No. 2 (1997): 241-242.

was not sufficient for Haig and he was later replaced.²³⁵ A further initiative by Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Thomas Enders to prevent further degradation of relations between the U.S. and Nicaragua, set conditions for Nicaragua to meet in order to maintain relations with the U.S.. The proposal was rigged to inflame Sandinista nationalism, which it did, and thus failed.²³⁶ Haig sent word to NATO Allies in Europe and Central and South America regarding the implementation of the policy²³⁷ and from this point onward, a downward spiral in relations began.

The ousting of Pezzullo and the sabotaging of Enders are direct evidence that the actual policy makers had a single strategy for Nicaragua and that was defeating the Sandinista government and removing it from the political landscape of Central America. The rationale was resumption of virtual American control of the country through installation of a government that was indebted to the Americans and would thus serve as a proxy in the region as the Somoza regime did. That concerns over relative power of the Soviet Union was the basis for the decision to move against the Sandinista government in the face of evidence implicating its moderate nature, is found in the policy agenda of the Council of Foreign Relations and the legitimately intimate links between the Council and the Office of the President. Haig's membership on the Council explains his tactics regarding the Soviets and the moves he would make regarding a legitimate Soviet threat, but it does not account for the apparently consistent failures in intelligence, which must have been present in order for Haig to come to the conclusion he did about the nature of the Sandinista government. The experiences of the Carter Administration, overtures by the Sandinistas, the opinions of the leaders of Central and South American

²³⁵ Haig Jr., 88-89.

²³⁶ William M. LeoGrande, "Rollback or Containment? The United States, Nicaragua, and the Search for Peace in Central America" *International Security* Fall, 1986 (Vol. 11, No. 2): 91-93.

²³⁷ Haig Jr., 88-89.

countries, as well as Pezzullo, and Enders, did not dissuade Haig's persistent application of the policy of rollback in Nicaragua. The first possible reason why Haig did not assign higher regard for the view that the Sandinistas were actually a moderate leftist group with conservative tendencies and thus not a real threat is that he maintained a view of history that omitted the negative influence American intervention has had in the region, thus eschewing his analysis of actual Soviet involvement, or that he knew nothing at all about the real history of the region. The less he actually knew about the region, the more likely he would have been to follow the lead of Reagan, and others, like members of the Council.

The second possible reason is that he was well aware of the implications of American intervention in the region and assumed that because of the past, Nicaragua would never be a reliable ally in the region. The fact that the primary goal of the Sandinistas has been to remove the cultural, economic, and political control the U.S. exerts on Nicaragua²³⁸ supports this notion. The fall of Somoza and the rise to power of any populist regime aimed at ending abusive American involvement in the country would have then prompted the same response because there would have been a reduction of American influence in the region, thus American power relative to the Soviet Union. In this perspective, the fact that the Sandinista government had a communist element and it received aid from Cuba were only factors which made the American decision to move against the Sandinista government easier to make.

If this perspective is correct, then it would seem to be a good, real life example of offensive structural realism in action. The inherently competitive hegemony seeking stance of offensive structural realism would explain why Haig did not begin to explore the actual issue deeper when he saw that there was a significant difference of opinion regarding the nature of the Sandinista

²³⁸ Richard Harris, "The Revolutionary Transformation of Nicaragua," *Latin American Perspectives* Issue, 52, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Winter 1987): 5.

government. If Haig was not misinformed or uninformed about the nature of America's past involvement in Nicaragua, then as a realist former military man, he would be likely to assume that the Nicaraguans would not be happy when the yoke of American involvement and repression, in the form of Somoza, was removed. If his overarching framework for Soviet relations involved the diminishment or destruction of the Soviet Union, then allowing a government, that is predisposed to inevitably be an unreliable ally, to come to power and maintain that power, is unacceptable, regardless of ideology. As attractive as this perspective seems, Haig himself maintains that there was significant Soviet involvement in Nicaragua and that it posed a threat to the U.S. and the freedom of Nicaraguans, which was the official line.

In the Reagan Administration's November 1981 policy review, the use of direct military action against Nicaragua was ruled out and a series of covert operations aimed at the political and military destabilization of the Sandinista regime were undertaken. Reagan Administration efforts aimed at isolating Nicaragua in the world community included formation of a regional defense organization aimed at countering the Nicaraguan threat, and international efforts to sabotage the economic stability of the country.²³⁹ These actions can be seen as a prelude to the larger offensive it intended to pursue. Evidence of its intention lies in the unwillingness of the Reagan Administration to accept Nicaraguan overtures toward negotiating a settlement. Through the diplomatic efforts of Mexico, an ongoing dialogue between Washington and Managua was opened in March 1982 with the Mexicans acting as intermediaries. The Reagan Administration continued to refuse Nicaraguan efforts to begin official talks. The U.S. officially ended the talks in August by refusing to return Nicaragua's diplomatic note.²⁴⁰ U.S. action in this case serves as further evidence that offensive structural realism was the overriding philosophical impetus

²³⁹ Leogrande, 94.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 97.

behind American foreign policy and the perspective that American policy makers felt that because Nicaragua would never be a reliable ally, due to past American abuse, it was eligible for application of the policy of rollback.

Further evidence was that the Mexican initiative had significant support from within congress and the public at large. Referring to a further joint effort by Mexico and Venezuela, which occurred shortly before the U.S. broke of talks with Nicaragua in August 1982, William LeoGrande argues that, “the U.S. response to the Lopez Portillo initiative was never more than an exercise in public relations.”²⁴¹ The intention of the Reagan Administration was the destruction of the Sandinista government and the installation of an American friendly regime.²⁴² The goal was increasing American power in the region, and the rationale seems to be that the Reagan Administration thought that the Sandinistas would never make a reliable ally. This is further evidence that offensive structural realism is the theoretical basis for the policy of rollback and its application in Nicaragua.

In the summer of 1982, the former Nicaraguan national guardsmen and mercenaries who had been training in paramilitary camps in Honduras and the U.S. since shortly after the fall of Somoza and conducting small operations against the Sandinista forces started a new offensive. They came to be known as the Contras. Major attacks on Nicaragua from Contras based in Honduras sparked fears of a regional war. This fear led to the leaders of Mexico, Venezuela, Panama, and Colombia meeting on the Panamanian island of Contadora to discuss further efforts at striking a lasting Central American peace. In what came to be known as the Contadora Process, a regional peace accord was pursued. It was hampered however, by the disagreement of American proxy Honduras, who demanded multilateral talks as opposed to the Nicaraguans who

²⁴¹ Ibid, 96.

sought bilateral negotiations. This disagreement was seen by some as a backdoor American attempt to sabotage the negotiations. Publicly, the Reagan Administration was ambivalent regarding the process, while behind the scenes it was pushing for multilateral talks that Honduras could derail if necessary.²⁴³ All of this serves as mounting evidence that the policy of rollback, with its offensive structural realist focus on relative gains vis a vis the Soviet Union, was the source of the Reagan Administration's policy on Nicaragua. Attempts for peace made on such a high level throughout the region by all parties involved except for the U.S. and its proxy, further invalidate the perspective that a lack of knowledge of Nicaragua or bad intelligence was the root of the Reagan Administration's policy.

The response of Cuba to the Contadora Process supported the theory that U.S. policy toward Nicaragua was based on the tenets of offensive structural realism. Fidel Castro endorsed the process and stressed the need for a solution to El Salvador's problems as a necessary prerequisite for the success of any agreement. He added that he would agree to halt all Cuban military involvement in the region. William LeoGrande points out that, "the proposal stirred some interest in the U.S. Congress because it appeared to address the central issue of concern to the United States: the danger of revolutionary regimes in Central America would become military allies of Cuba and the Soviet Union, thereby threatening the security of the U.S. and its allies."²⁴⁴ In fact the proposal did give the Americans exactly what they wanted if they wanted to have the current state of affairs continue uninterrupted. If the goal was reduction of the relative power of the Soviet Union and ultimate global hegemony, as the tenets of offensive structural realism would hold, then the U.S. should have rejected the Cuban proposal and continued sabotaging the

²⁴² Susanne Jonas, "Reagan Administration Policy in Central America," in *Reagan and the World* (New York: Praeger, 1990):100.

²⁴³ Leogrande, 98-99.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 98-100.

Contadora Process. This was indeed what happened. Though Secretary of State George Schultz told the U.S. Congress that the offer would be seriously considered, days later it was rejected as an attempt to mislead the U.S. In explaining why the negotiations were rejected, U.S. officials stated there would be no negotiations until Cuba halted all military assistance to Nicaragua, which as a sovereign nation was its right.²⁴⁵ The U.S denial of the legitimacy of seemingly forthright Cuban efforts at peace implies the aversion the Reagan Administration had to admitting it was employing the offensive structural realist policy of rollback. That the public at large would find the policy reprehensible was assumed by the Reagan Administration and eventually dealt with in the form of the Reagan Doctrine, which provided the rationalization for the policy of rollback. The theory of offensive structural realism is based on a constant battle between competing elements in the international system. In a sense, adopting an offensive structural realist perspective is tantamount to an ongoing declaration of war against any nation which challenged its hegemony. In the context of the Cold War, it meant that peace was not possible with the U.S. until the Soviets surrendered. As a doctrine, offensive structural realism never precludes action that harms human rights and thus the Reagan Administration could not openly declare its policy.

The U.S. response to the Cuban proposal also highlighted that the Contras would be at a distinct disadvantage if all outside military aid were halted because they were totally dependant on the U.S. for support. Rebels in El Salvador would also be at an advantage in their fight against the American friendly Duarte government. The U.S. predicated its plan for the Contras on the idea that the Cubans and the Soviets would be unable to respond quickly enough to an

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 100.

American buildup and it saw Castro's overtures as an indication that the strategy was correct.²⁴⁶

In this case, the nature of the logic employed by the Reagan Administration implies a connection to offensive structural realism. American policy makers assumed that Cuba was operating on the same basis as the U.S. was which was that there will be no peace between the Soviets and the U.S. and any overtures toward it should be seen as a sign of weakness to be exploited. Offensive structural realism assumes forward progress against an enemy not bipolarity, which complies with the logic employed by the Reagan Administration in dealing with the Cuban proposal for peace through the Contadora Process.

The Contras

This section is devoted to a closer look at the nature of the "freedom fighters" of Nicaragua, also known as the Contras. This examination is important because the actual nature of the Contra force is the basis of the rationale employed by the Reagan Administration to justify continued and increasing U.S. support of it. The official U.S. government line was that the Contras were actually a force derived from popular unrest at the seizing of power by a brutally repressive totalitarian Sandinista regime. Evidence does not support the official claim by the Reagan Administration however.

Official U.S. involvement with the Contras did not begin until late 1981,²⁴⁷ but the Contras were a force that began assembling immediately after the fall of the Somoza regime. It was comprised of American mercenaries and ex Nicaraguan National Guard members, many of whom had been trained by the U.S. military.²⁴⁸ However, while testifying before Congress in 1985, former Secretary of State for Interamerican affairs Langhorn Motley claimed that, "the freedom fighters [the Contras] are peasants, farmers, shopkeepers, and vendors. Their leaders

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 100-101.

²⁴⁷ John Felton, *The Iran Contra Puzzle* (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1987), 6.

are without exception men who opposed Somoza.”²⁴⁹ A 1985 arms control report stated, however, that 46 of the top 48 most senior military positions were held by former Somoza Guardsmen. Heading the Contra force was Colonel Enrique Adolpho Bermudez who had served almost 30 years in Somoza’s Guard. The fact that the seven top members of the Contras received \$84,000 tax free from the CIA links Contra action directly to U.S policy makers.²⁵⁰

Furthermore, the civilian element of the Contras was defined by people who were affluent under the Somoza regime. Examples are Alfonso Robelo, Adolfo Calero, and Arturo Cruz, all of who were extremely wealthy and powerful and also on the CIA payroll. Adolfo Calero, the most powerful of the three, dominated the most powerful element of the Contra force, the FDN, and had only opposed Somoza because he was a hindrance to his financial endeavors.²⁵¹

The influence of this evidence on the main argument of this thesis is significant. Because it is clear that the Contra force did not represent average people fighting for their freedom, but rather represented elite interests from within Nicaragua as well as former Somoza national guardsmen, the official statements of the Reagan Administration can be seen as efforts at hiding the truth from the American public. The truth it was hiding was that of the actual nature of its policy. The offensive structural realist underpinnings of the Reagan Administration’s philosophy demanded any and all action be taken to increase the power and influence of the U.S. with no concern for human rights, international law, or justice. The construction of a freedom fighting Contra persona was necessary for the rhetoric of the Reagan Doctrine to apply and thus complete Kirkpatrick’s mission of finding a moral justification for offensive structural realist foreign policy. In Machiavellian fashion, the Reagan Administration determined that morality and

²⁴⁸ Sklar, 34.

²⁴⁹ E. Bradford Burns, *At War In Nicaragua: The Reagan Doctrine and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 63.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 67.

public opinion was tying its hands in its fight against the Soviet Union, which suffered no such domestic and moral constraints on their exercise of power. Thus it was forced to lie about the actual nature of the Contra organization, which was to formulate the leadership of a proxy Nicaraguan government after it had defeated the Sandinistas.

In an effort to continue re-supplying the Contras after congressional support for funding expired, the Reagan Administration endeavored to covertly provide aid through private donors and the illegal sale of arms to Iran. What came to be known as the Iran–Contra Affair, developed in October 1986 when a U.S. transport plane was shot down over Nicaragua carrying arms for the Contras. The Sandinista government obtained a taped confession from the pilot about the operation and broadcast it to the world.²⁵² That the Reagan Administration was forced to engage in illegal efforts to re-supply the Contras in defiance of Congress implies that the public justification for the Contras offered by the Reagan Doctrine was false because there was simply no solid evidence to offer Congress that would reactivate funding for the Contras. Further invalidation of the stated justification offered by the Reagan Administration helps in making the argument that the policy of rollback and the tenets of offensive structural realism were the basis for the Reagan Administration’s actions in Nicaragua.

Nicaragua v. United States

In making the argument that offensive structural realism, in the form of the policy of rollback, was the basis for U.S. foreign policy in Nicaragua, it is critical that the arguments employed by the U.S. to justify its actions are exposed as fabrications. U.S. action with regard to the authority of the World Court and the challenge leveled against the U.S. there further implies that the

²⁵¹ Ibid, 67-68.

²⁵² Peter Kornblugh and Malcolm Byrne, “Introduction” in *The Iran-Contra Scandal: The Declassified History* ed. Peter Kornblugh and Malcolm Byrne (New York: The New Press, 1993): xv.

policies of the U.S. in Nicaragua were based on false evidence. False evidence was necessary for the demonization of a moderate peace-seeking regime, which offered the Reagan Administration limited space to maneuver. The lynch pin of the Reagan Administration's justification for its support of the Contras was primarily that the Sandinistas were providing arms to rebels in El Salvador. In response to this, Nicaragua launched a complaint at the World Court stating that the American support of the Contras was illegal and should stop. The Sandinista government claimed that the American assertion that it was providing arms to the Sandinistas was simply false. The court found that though there was evidence of a small amount of arms traffic up to early 1981, there was nothing to support the Reagan Administration's claim that arms had moved from Nicaragua to El Salvador after the early months of 1981.²⁵³ Though the U.S. rejected the jurisdiction of the World Court, it issued a preliminary restraining order with measures to protect Nicaragua. It ordered an end to any military or paramilitary action by the U.S. against Nicaragua and that its sovereignty be respected. In January 1985 in response to a further World Court ruling in November 1984 rejecting U.S. jurisdictional claims, the U.S. stated it would no longer cooperate with the proceedings and withdrew.²⁵⁴

The weight of this evidence in the main argument of this thesis is significant. The court's finding of insufficient evidence to support the U.S. claim that the Sandinistas were supporting rebels in El Salvador is sufficient to argue that the claims of the Reagan Administration were greatly exaggerated or completely false. More importantly it adds weight to the assertion that the Reagan Administration knew that the claims were false because if they were based on poor intelligence then the World Court highlighted the flaws and helped it understand. That the U.S. attempted to challenge the jurisdiction of the World Court and consequently withdrew when it

²⁵³ Sklar, 55.

²⁵⁴ Sklar, 170.

ruled against it, also implicates its attempt to hide the truth from the American public by using the Reagan Doctrine as moral justification for action against Nicaragua. If it had evidence in support of its claims of Sandinista involvement in El Salvador, it would have presented it at the World Court and avoided the international attention brought to its actions against Nicaragua. Evidence that the Reagan Administration's public justification for its actions in Nicaragua was only rhetoric meant to disguise its intention to remove the Sandinista government supports the perspective that the Reagan Administration believed that Nicaragua would never be a reliable proxy in regional multilateral forums because of past colonial abuses. That the primary concern of the Reagan Administration appeared to be specifically aimed at the pursuit of gains in relative power against the Soviet Union and ultimately hegemony is a further connection between the policy of rollback, offensive structural realism, and American foreign policy relative to Nicaragua.

Summary

This chapter initially focused briefly on the history of Soviet involvement in Central America. The American experience with Cuba had the effect of underlining the dangers of allowing left wing insurgents to take power. The result of the revolution and Castro's rise to power instilled a longstanding sense of paranoia in American policy makers that the same might happen elsewhere. This was an important factor in determining the rationale behind the Reagan Administration's adoption of offensive structural realist policies.

The following section examined the history of the revolution in Nicaragua. The nature of the revolution and its complexion afterward clearly implied that the Sandinista government was prepared to be conciliatory toward the United States and its interests, which was of no importance to the Americans. The perspective was offered that previous colonial abuse by the

U.S. in Nicaragua created the perception in policy makers that Nicaragua would inevitably become an unreliable ally, which worked against American interests in the region and developed military ties to the Soviets. The perspective that the Reagan Administration held a belief in the inherent animosity of the Sandinistas toward America is supported by the history provided in this section. Interventions, colonial actions, and continued support for a dictator that treated a large portion of his population as slaves is evidence of this belief because it would be logical for any group of people to despise those who have repressed them for so long. This qualified Nicaragua, in the minds of the Reagan Administration, for implementation of the policy of rollback. It had to take control of it, or lose ground to the Soviet Union. This perspective is the most plausible explanation for the American rejection of conciliatory overtures for peace, legitimately offered by the Sandinistas in the period following Reagan's election.

Because the policy agenda of the Reagan Administration was intimately related to the policy of the Council on Foreign Relations, it was inferred that increasing American power relative to the Soviets was the most important policy framework of the Administration. Reagan's idealism was examined for its possible worth as a source of offensive structural realist thought in his administration, but it was determined that he acted as a facilitator or trigger for the implementation of the structural realist policy of rollback rather than as an architect. The influence of Jeane Kirkpatrick was then examined in an effort to illuminate the origins of the rhetorical justification for the policy of rollback, which was later officially released, and dubbed the Reagan Doctrine. Kirkpatrick's ideas had a significant impact on Reagan because they appealed to his idealism and anti communism. The offensive structural realist foundations of American foreign policy during the Reagan Administration can at least partially be found in Kirkpatrick's ideas. This examination was necessary because the public rationalization for the

policy of rollback contradicts the claim of this thesis, that the policy was based on principles of offensive structural realism. Because there was actually no moral impetus to go hand in hand with the rationalization of the policy of rollback, Nicaragua was demonized and accused of suborning Soviet military buildup in the region.

Alexander Haig and Caspar Weinberger were then examined as sources of offensive structural realist thought in the Reagan Administration. Though Haig is definitively offensive structural realist in orientation, there was less evidence of the position in Weinberger. In the final section of the chapter, actual American action with regard to Nicaragua was examined. The reaction of American policy makers to the consistent regional efforts at peace amounted to thinly veiled attempts at fomenting a period of instability in the region, which would allow them time to move against the Sandinistas through the Contras. The end result would have been the installation of a government indebted to the U.S. for its existence and ready to serve alongside Honduras as an American proxy. The ultimate U.S. goal in Nicaragua was power not only for the sake of power, but power relative to the Soviet Union. The incremental accumulation of power in a global environment where there is a limited amount leads to inevitable victory by whosoever is able to achieve it. This directly implies that the theory of offensive structural realism formed the basis for the policy of rollback and the actions of the U.S. in Nicaragua.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The literature review contained in Chapter Two focused on evaluation of the realist political thinkers from the two main approaches to international relations which are relevant to this study. The classical approach was examined first due to its relevance in defining the philosophical underpinnings of the foreign policy of the United States in the post World War Two period leading up to the election of Ronald Reagan. The work of Hans Morgenthau was discussed due to the centrality of his contribution to the classical realist school of thought. George Kennan was discussed as his containment policy is the fundamental example of Morgenthau's brand of realism in practice in American foreign policy. John Herz was discussed because his articulation of the security dilemma in international relations helped form the rationale for employment of classical realist principles in American foreign policy. His work was also important because it highlighted fear as a driving force behind the dominance of classical realist thought.

The second major element of Chapter Two was devoted to an examination of the work of Thucydides, Kenneth Waltz, and John Mearsheimer, who collectively make up the offensive structural realist component of the literature review. The examination highlighted the key components of their theories while contrasting and comparing their similarities and differences as a necessary antecedent to making the argument that the Reagan Administration's policy of rollback was based on their principles.

Of importance in the assessment of the work of Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer are their conceptions about competition within the international system. While the classical school of realism acknowledges that states are power seeking entities because more power is directly equal to more security, Mearsheimer and Waltz argue that states are concerned with their power

relative to their rivals. Waltz contends that the most stable form of international order, which may evolve, is bipolarity. Given that the two major powers stand to suffer the most significant losses relative to others in the international system, they will seek overall peace and downplay international crises. Waltz argues that this situation develops because a clearly defined, single enemy allows for a perfect level of competition between the two powers.

In contrast, Mearsheimer argues that bipolarity cannot provide the ultimate level of national security. The ultimate level is when there are no legitimate rivals to the power of the lead actor. Hegemony, Mearsheimer argues, is the only balance of power that ensures the national security of a state. When hegemony is achieved the anarchy of the international system ceases to exist and the system becomes hierarchical. The hegemon then becomes the ultimate arbiter of disputes in the international system and thus will always be able to ensure the national security of itself. This drives relevant state actors to unceasingly pursue increases in their relative power so that they may eventually achieve hegemony and thus complete security. Though open conflict between great powers in the nuclear age is unlikely, conflict on the periphery is not. By constantly diminishing the powers of rivals through reduction of their international influence and economic power, a state may hope to achieve hegemony and maintain it over time.

The policy of rollback conceived of by the Reagan Administration is a policy that meets key requirements of Mearsheimer's theory of offensive structural realism. Primarily it is because its stated aim is the relative reduction of Soviet power and influence with the goal of reinforcing the relative lead in power that the Americans maintained over the Soviets. That those who developed the policy did so because of a belief that the Soviets were attempting to make gains on the U.S. directly implies the relevance of employing Mearsheimer's theory as an explanatory tool in examining the policy of rollback. This is because the desire to maintain the highest level

of national security, that of hegemony, was the ultimate goal of the policy of rollback.

Chapter Three was devoted to an effort to connect John Mearsheimer's theory of offensive structural realism, the policy of rollback, and the Reagan Doctrine with American foreign policy in Nicaragua during the Reagan Administration. This connection is important because the rhetoric of the Reagan Administration does not match the rationale supported by the evidence. Exposition of the actual rationale of the Reagan Administration through the statement of evidence contrary to its public claims, offers a chance for analysts to begin further analysis of American foreign policy from a position of heightened awareness about the tendencies of Republican administrations.

Chapter Three began with an assessment of Soviet involvement in the region because the history provides the initial basis for the claim that U.S. foreign policy, with regard to Nicaragua, was based on offensive structural realism. Cuban alignment and ties with the Soviet Union were significant threats to U.S. foreign interests simply due to the proximity of Cuba to the United States. Before Cuba, the Soviet Union was strategically limited in the Americas because the U.S. maintained the advantage of proximity through allies in Europe. Subsequent U.S. interventions in the Dominican Republic and Chile are evidence that geo-political concerns determined U.S. foreign policy in the Americas. That U.S. concerns were geo-political in the period leading up to the election of Ronald Reagan increases the likelihood that they were afterward as well.

In the following section, the history of the socialist revolution in Nicaragua is examined because it sheds light on important aspects of the main argument of this thesis. The consistent claim by the Reagan Administration of significant Soviet involvement in Nicaragua is severely diminished by the fact that the history of the revolution was inherently Nicaraguan in origin.

The history shows that the roots of socialism developed due to abusive U.S. colonial action in Nicaragua, including the full support of a harshly repressive proxy dictatorship. As the abuses of the Somoza dictatorship grew and the plight of the poor and the landless increased, support for the Sandinista movement also increased and eventually culminated in the overthrow of the Somoza regime by the Sandinistas in 1979.

The Carter Administration's response to the overthrow of Somoza was examined because it serves as evidence of a different policy than that of the Reagan Administration. Though cautious and suspicious at first, the Carter Administration reflected a willingness to work with the Sandinista junta in order to prevent it from moving toward the Soviet Union. Though the Carter Administration seems to have missed the opportunity to co-opt the revolution in Nicaragua before the election of Reagan in late 1980 through the advancement of military and economic support, it was not moving in the direction of direct conflict with the Sandinistas, which suggests adherence to the policy of containment based on the principles of classical realism. This is important because establishing that the period leading up to the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 was defined by policies which reflected classical realist principles is a prerequisite for making the argument that a shift occurred from classical realism to offensive structural realism in American foreign policy.

The next section deals with an assessment of actions taken by the Sandinista junta and the nature of its rule. This assessment adds weight to the arguments of this thesis because the nature and actions of the Sandinista government contradict the claims of the Reagan Administration that it was a brutal and totalitarian regime. Further evidence of the illegitimacy of Reagan Administration claims about the Sandinista regime undermines the argument that its actions in Nicaragua were guided by the principles of democracy and freedom, as defined by the Reagan

Doctrine. Additional evidence that the rhetoric of the Reagan Doctrine is insufficient to explain the Reagan Administration's actions in Nicaragua adds weight to the argument that those actions were based on the principles of offensive structural realism. If Wilsonian idealism is not at the heart of the policy then the probability that geo-strategic offensive structural realism is the primary basis of U.S. action in Nicaragua is increased significantly.

The moderate nature of the Sandinista government was implied first with analysis of its actions in the period following the revolution of 1979. That the Sandinista government attempted to procure arms for its security forces from many western countries before it turned to the Soviet bloc, is evidence of its desire to pursue productive and peaceful relations with the U.S. American action aimed at isolating Nicaragua from the international community and the military and economic aid it could offer predetermined that the country would have to turn to the Soviet Union. Consistent reports from impartial observers in the country which were operating on various levels and which supported the opinion that the Sandinista government was following through with its promises of positive reform, were ignored and the purveyors of those reports were attacked. The actions of the Reagan Administration with regard to these reports implies that it had no interest in peace, but rather wanted the Sandinista government removed from power because it would never serve as a reliable American proxy in the region. This directly implies an offensive structural realist basis for American action in the region.

Possible sources of offensive structural realist thought in the Reagan Administration were examined in the next section beginning with Ronald Reagan. The assessment of Reagan determined that idealism formed the foundation for his beliefs. That his virulent hatred of communism prompted his shift to the Republican Party, which he believed would be better able to fight communism, is evidence that Reagan was not a source of true offensive structural realist

thought in the Reagan Administration. The effect of the beliefs of Jeanne Kirkpatrick on Reagan was to provide for him a moral justification for an offensive structural realist doctrine, such as the policy of rollback, which justifies the abandonment of human rights by demonizing communism and thus she and her views are discussed in the following section.

The assessment of Kirkpatrick's views is important because it provides the basis for the moral justification of the policy of rollback, which came in the form of the Reagan Doctrine. By determining that communism was a greater evil than authoritarianism, she advocated the overthrow of communist governments as a matter of policy. The section's assessment of the validity of Kirkpatrick's arguments determined that they were not based on the idealism that Reagan believed was inherent in them. Rather, they were based on her assertion that communism, and egalitarianism do not work. Kirkpatrick holds that the real world test has been done and the results prove her assertion. She believes that the only source for political theory is experience and maintains that rationalism has no place in politics. It leads, in her opinion, to the enforcement of one perspective's notion of the good life on other unwilling participants. Her stated views and general beliefs about politics imply a behaviorist approach due to their empirical methodology. Her qualification as an offensive structural realist is supported by the nature of her doctrine in that it supports U.S. intervention to topple the legitimate governments of foreign countries if they adopt a Soviet style totalitarian regime. This is an inherently offensive strategy. It seems unlikely that a person whose overriding philosophy is equitable to the survival of the fittest would advocate a strictly altruistic foreign policy. It seems more likely that her philosophical beliefs are strategic in nature and concerned with the relative power of the enemies of the U.S., particularly its closest rival, the Soviet Union. Her following statement supports the contention that she is an offensive structural realist not only because the language is congruent,

but also because of the urgency she places on dealing with the Soviet geopolitical threat. That urgency directly implies a concern with the position of the U.S. relative to the Soviets and thus highlights her offensive structural realism. She stated,

No problem of American foreign policy is more urgent than that of formulating a morally and strategically acceptable, and politically realistic, program for dealing with non-democratic governments who are threatened by Soviet-sponsored subversion.²⁵⁵

The following section dealt with the influence of the Council on Foreign Relations and the philosophical underpinnings of the policy framework it endorsed during the Reagan Administration. The section determined that the policy framework endorsed by the CFR was based on the tenets of offensive structural realism because it met key theoretical requirements of the theory. The policy's concern with the relative power of the Soviet Union, its endorsement of the use of force in an offensive manner, and its advocacy of long term increases in military spending are all congruent with the theory of offensive structural realism. The fact that the CFR's policy framework sought to reduce arms limitations implies that parity was not the goal, thus suggesting an inherently offensive long term strategic goal. The CFR's intimate relationship with the Whitehouse since the Second World War implies that the foreign policy framework of the Reagan Administration conformed to the suggestions of the CFR and thus to offensive structural realism. As a source for offensive structural realist thought within the Reagan Administration, the CFR performs admirably. CFR members Caspar Weinberger and Alexander Haig were briefly examined and found to be credible sources of offensive structural realism in the Reagan Administration.

The next section briefly outlined the historical basis of the policy of rollback and the Reagan Doctrine and examined Reagan Administration foreign policy maneuvers in order to uncover

²⁵⁵ Baloyra, 37.

evidence of the inconsistency between the stated and actual goals of the administration. The efforts at peace made by the Sandinistas combined with the unwillingness of the Reagan Administration to seek a negotiated solution to the tensions, is evidence of the offensive nature of the Reagan Administration. This supports the contention that that the U.S. believed that the Sandinista government would never be a reliable ally due to past colonial abuses of the U.S. That the Sandinistas would never act as a reliable American proxy in the region and therefore tip the balance of any multilateral negotiations in favor of American interests and influence relative to the Soviet Union, was enough to prompt the application of the policy of rollback in Nicaragua. The fact that there was little evidence to support the use of the Kirkpatrick and Reagan Doctrines as justification for the application of the policy of rollback in Nicaragua meant that American attempts at demonizing the Sandinista regime were rife with inconsistencies and weak unverifiable evidence. The U.S. sought to avoid negotiating with the Sandinistas, but wished to maintain the appearance publicly that it was, due to the need to prove to the public that peace was actually possible thus hiding its actual offensive structural realist intentions of toppling the Sandinista government and facilitating the installation of a more reliable ally. The evidence suggests that the U.S. sought to draw out the prospect for a negotiated settlement as long as it could in order to save face publicly. Its limiting of the negotiations to diplomatic notes implies this point, as does the eventual termination of those limited negotiations by the U.S. itself.

U.S. reaction to Cuban endorsement of the Contadora Process highlighted the geo-strategic goals of the Reagan Administration because it displayed its unwillingness to accept a proposal that would limit the abilities of its proxy paramilitary forces in the region. Though Castro's offer of removing all foreign military influences in Central America would have all but eliminated the actual Soviet military threat, evidence suggests that the U.S. refused because its offensive

structural realist goals in the region could then not be achieved.

The centerpiece of American foreign policy, known as the Contras, was examined in the following section because their actual nature contradicts U.S. claims and thus further invalidates the Reagan Administration's stated justification for its actions in Nicaragua, while also adding weight to the main argument of the thesis that American goals in the region were strictly geopolitical in nature. That the Contras were a paramilitary force not comprised of average people who had been repressed by the Sandinistas and fighting for their freedom, but rather ex-Somoza sympathizers, National Guardsmen, and mercenaries highlights the contradiction between the stated and actual nature of American foreign policy in Nicaragua.

The proceedings at the World Court in the case of Nicaragua v. United States were examined in the next section because they further invalidate the claim of the Reagan Administration that the Sandinista government was a Soviet satellite in the region trying to export its revolution to El Salvador. The court's findings that no significant evidence could be found of Sandinista support of communist rebels in El Salvador after early 1980, and the United States ultimate withdrawal from the proceedings offers support for the perspective offered in this thesis that the U.S. knew there was no legitimate Soviet threat in El Salvador but considered the Sandinistas to be an inherently unreliable ally due to latent anti-Americanism in Nicaragua, which resulted from past U.S. colonial abuses. The singular desire of the U.S. to oust the Sandinistas from power and install a proxy government willing to protect American interests and advance an American agenda in regional multilateral negotiations directly implies the geo-strategic offensive structural realist goals of the policy of rollback and American foreign policy with regard to Nicaragua because of its focus on gaining relative power against the Soviets.

Evidence and arguments presented in Chapter Three support the contention that the Reagan

Administration's policy of rollback was based on the principles of the theory of offensive structural realism laid out in Chapter Two. Examination of the Reagan Administration's actions with regard to Nicaragua uncovered significant evidence that the Reagan Doctrine was a rhetorical mask for the policy of rollback necessary because the offensive structural realist nature of the policy did not consider justice and human rights, which were domestically required due to the American public's unwillingness to support an amoral policy. Credible sources of offensive structural realist thought were identified in the Reagan Administration and in the architect of the Reagan Doctrine's precursor, the Kirkpatrick Doctrine. Significant evidence was offered that highlighted the contradictions between the actual and stated policies of the Reagan Administration, which supported the contention that U.S. actions in Nicaragua were not simply aimed at supporting freedom and democracy. Significant evidence suggested that American foreign policy with regard to Nicaragua was concerned primarily with increasing the power of the U.S. in the region relative to the Soviet Union. The cumulative effect of this evidence is a high probability that the central argument of this thesis is valid that the policy of rollback and the Reagan Doctrine are based on the principles of offensive structural realism and were applied in Nicaragua during the Reagan Administration.

During the literature review of Chapter Two, attention was paid to fear and its relevance in defining the school of realism as a whole. The horrible costs of war leads inevitably, realists feel, to fear. That fear is magnified because there is no supranational arbiter of disputes in the international arena. Though the state has its own survival in mind, there is no legitimate international body that is primarily concerned with the best interests of all states and can force compliance. The lack of a superstructure of international authority with force projection and enforcement capabilities leads to an inherent fear in states that they will be attacked and enslaved

by their neighbor. Because this has occurred throughout history, in the forms of direct slavery or the enslavement of populations through proxy governments, states seek power to prevent it. Thucydides recognized the motivation it provided, and Machiavelli recognized its power when used against others. For Morgenthau, it was a fear of the fallen nature of his fellow man translated into the field of international relations. For Waltz and Mearsheimer, fear was caused by the structural nature of the international system and the inherently selfish nature of states. Mearsheimer went as far as saying that fear of winning a war is enough to cause states to act with a preponderance of aggression towards each other in search of a preponderance of power, which in the form of clear hegemony, creates the only situation where that fear can truly be eliminated. Bipolarity would never work because the fear still exists. Thus each state, while maintaining the peace generally, would still seek to incrementally undermine or diminish the capacities of the other. In the period leading up to the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 world events conspired to inspire the fear in powerful figures in America that the Soviet Union was gaining relative ground on the U.S. and that something had to be done about it. This analysis provides an interesting introduction into the following section, which will briefly examine the costs of the war to Nicaragua and its people, because it is precisely those costs which provide the stimulus for nations like the U.S. to act in an offensive structural realist manner. The injustice to the Nicaraguan people that resulted from implementation of the Reagan Administration's policy of rollback in Nicaragua, contributes to the fear that drives the offensive structural realist foreign policies of states. If the Sandinista government had developed enough power, then it would have been able to defend Nicaragua from the assault of U.S. proxy forces, thus minimizing its negative effects.

The Costs of the War in Nicaragua

Reagan's illegal war in Nicaragua affected virtually all Nicaraguans from all levels of society. Economic sanctions placed on Nicaragua by the Reagan Administration produced severe hardships amongst the general population in that they hampered the implementation of reforms promised by the Sandinista revolution. However, life for the majority of Nicaraguans under the rule of the Somoza dictatorship was harsh enough that after the revolution, in spite of American efforts at preventing the Sandinista government from receiving the aid it desperately needed to recover from the war against Somoza, some improvements occurred in the lives of ordinary Nicaraguans. Education spending increased significantly under the Sandinistas as did adult literacy rates. Congruently, infant mortality rates decreased sharply due to significant increases in public health expenditures. However, these improvements occurred at the same time as decreases in Nicaraguan socioeconomic ranking and overall gross domestic product, which were the direct result of economic sanctions imposed by the Reagan Administration.²⁵⁶

The tangible negative effects of the war certainly began with the sheer numbers of direct casualties, but ended with the psychological effects of the strategies employed by the Contras. The strategy of the Contras was "to paralyze life, to silence individuals and communities, to deny hope that personal struggle could ever bear fruit and to insist that the revolution could never live up to its promises."²⁵⁷ To accomplish this task a manual for Contra activities was developed by CIA operative James Kirkpatrick. Entitled "Psychological Operations in Guerilla Warfare," the manual was based on his experience in the Phoenix Program from the Vietnam War and revolved around the ability to produce terror in one's enemy. It endorsed assassination, murder, torture, and kidnapping as effective methods of destabilization in Nicaragua. The manual

²⁵⁶ Sklar, 64.

defined guerilla warfare as essentially a political war, which is fought in the minds of the people. Defeating the Sandinistas meant removing hope that the Sandinistas could bring the people a better life. The Contras implemented the strategies laid out in Kirkpatrick's manual with a great degree of success.²⁵⁸

The result of this strategy was the development of high levels of anxiety in the population as a whole, especially to those who lived near the front lines of the war. James Quesada argues that, "The war resulted in repeated separations between parents and children, continuous shortages of food and goods, rampant inflation, faltering infrastructures, limited life options, and a state of chronic uncertainty."²⁵⁹ These results have a particularly long term effect on the children who are forced to endure the hardships they cause. Children experience psychopathological behavior abnormalities resembling post traumatic stress disorder that they carry into adulthood, long after the violence has abated.²⁶⁰

Though this examination is only tertiary at best, it serves the important purpose of highlighting the psychological effects of war and the fact that those effects are felt most acutely in children who tend to carry them into adulthood. Post traumatic stress disorder results in a latent fear that a similar stressor will reappear causing the same hardships which resulted in the formation of the original condition. It seems logical that those affected by the original stressor would seek to prevent it from happening again in the future, and thus seek defenses aimed at that prevention. The fear engendered by the terrors of war leads to the assumption that one must do what one can to defend one's self from experiencing the terrors of war.

That the Reagan Administration's war in Nicaragua lacked any moral justification would

²⁵⁷ James Quesada, "Suffering Child: An Embodiment of War and Its Aftermath in Post-Sandinista Nicaragua," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, Vol. 12 No. 1 (1998): 56.

²⁵⁸ Sklar, 177-178.

²⁵⁹ Quesada, 56.

promote the belief that states are selfish and do not consider the welfare of others in the prosecution of their foreign policy and thus adequate defenses are necessary because any given state may come under fire from other more powerful states for no justifiable reason. This fear based causality loop is important because it is the basis for offensive structural realism. The ultimate danger is, however, that offensive structural realists believe that the cycle cannot be broken because that fear is a latent part of the human condition that cannot be changed and they believe the adoption of the scientific method secures their theory in perpetuity. The following section outlines inherent problems with the scientific method itself and thus poses important questions as to the efficacy of employing scientific principles in the realm of politics.

Offensive Structural Realism, Science, and Politics

If the contention that offensive structural realism formed the basis of U.S. policy and action in Nicaragua is correct, then employing the ideas of Thomas Kuhn to highlight the shortcomings of that theory is valuable. Offensive structural realism employs science and incrementalism without proper understanding of the possible flaws associated with such methodology. If Kuhn is correct and science itself misunderstands the nature of knowledge accumulation, then relying on the inescapable validity of science as a justification for adherence to a political theory such as offensive structural realism is problematic and should be reassessed in light of those shortcomings. Kuhn's assessment that the rigidity imposed by the institutional frameworks surrounding knowledge accumulation should be perceived as nothing less than temporary, calls into question the very nature of what is fact and what is not. All disciplines are dominated by contending theories, whether they are scientifically based or not. Though architects of dominant theories tend to defend their perspective with a vigor that implies their singular conviction that

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 58.

what they have said is actually the truth, it is illogical to do so, Kuhn argues. Rather he suggests it is logical to employ a theory only so long as that theory is the best explanation for a set of circumstances. By removing the intellectual constraints imposed by education and institutions a more constant and productive trend toward innovation is possible.

It seems clear from Kuhn's beliefs that he would perceive the attempt to include science as a rationale for a political theory to be a dangerous misunderstanding. Mearsheimer and Waltz, he would argue, have attempted to stretch a flawed theory even further thereby reducing its overall effectiveness as a basic framework for analysis. Kuhn would argue that the scientific method is a tool capable of testing the validity of a set of variables and thus when those variable change, the test must be conducted once more in order to revalidate the worth of the previous outcome. Structural and offensive realism rely on a consistent unchanging notion of an international system with the state as the primary actor, a limited number of significant units which seek to subjugate other states, and the functional undifferentiation of those states. When these variables are altered, the argument of the theory must be set aside until confirmed once more. Kuhn would suggest that Waltz and Mearsheimer's preconception that employment of the scientific method in a logical fashion would inevitably lead to a factual answer to the questions posed by the field of international relations has prevented them from understanding the actual worth of their perspective, which was that structural and offensive realism offered a popular alternative for international relations policy makers during the Reagan era of the Cold War. He would suggest that, for Waltz and Mearsheimer to continue to endorse a theory whose variables are constantly in flux without retesting, would be to deny the spirit of why they employed the scientific method as a framework for analysis in the first place. Furthermore, Kuhn would argue that the variables they employ need a proof concerning their inclusion as a relevant variable. To that end, other

variables previously not included would require consideration for inclusion.

This consideration of other possible variables leads to an equation that is far more complex than that suggested by Waltz and Mearsheimer. Inclusion of variables related to the so called human equation make the equation incomprehensible unless reduced and simplified to a Hobbesian or Nietzschean notion of humanity exemplified by the contention that states always act in a self-interested, power-oriented manner. Notwithstanding the actions of the United States, there is increasing evidence to support the contention that successful co-operation among state and non-state actors is possible. So while Kuhn would say that successful employment of the scientific method to international relations was not impossible, it is rather improbable if all variables were up to date and accounted for. Thus, Kuhn would argue that it would be illogical to assume the singular validity of the scientific method as a framework for analysis in the field of international relations. He would also argue however, that it could be employed as a tool of inquiry on many levels.

John Herz echoed the sentiments of Kuhn when he suggested the prudence of evaluating what is fact and what is merely a conceptual framework assembled over time. His suggestion supports the application of the term paradigm to his security dilemma. Even Morgenthau had a defined appreciation for the role of change in history. He would not have endorsed the limitless amoral pursuit of power at the cost of the freedom and independence of irrelevant actors in the international system. Abandonment of a moral anchor in foreign policy is appropriate, according to Morgenthau, only when prudence demands it; such as when clearly the survival of the state is at risk. Waltz and Mearsheimer's attempt to justify a permanent departure from any semblance of a conscience with regard to international relations by applying a scientific explanation for state action belies their general misunderstanding of the nature of knowledge accumulation and

science itself. By taking into account the relevance of change in history it becomes clear that what is fact today may not be tomorrow. At one time people believed the world was flat. Waltz and Mearsheimer would have foreign policy makers believe that states are destined to be uncooperative, self serving, and power hungry. The former belief was discarded as knowledge of the world grew. The latter will be discarded as the world's knowledge of itself grows.

Uncovering evidence of offensive structural realist principles couched in the rhetoric of freedom and democracy in the practice of American foreign policy under the Reagan Administration with regard to Nicaragua is an important contribution for three reasons. The first reason is that offensive structural realism applies scientific principles to human and state behavior when no such application is possible given the enormity of the variables involved and the relevance of change in history. Furthermore the architects of the theory mistakenly assume that incrementalism defines the nature of knowledge accumulation in science therefore the false assumption that a greater truth has been uncovered is adopted. Such assumptions are dangerous because they limit the possibilities for positive development in international relations in the future.

The second reason is that the Reagan Administration attempted to hide the actual nature of their decision to apply the policy of rollback in Nicaragua. Demonstrating that such a deception occurred under a Republican administration provides a framework for analysis of future Republican administrations. If evidence of other instances of public deception by Republican administrations in foreign policy rationale can be found, then arguments can be made about the nature of the general tendencies of administrations of that political stripe. More accurate definition of the general tendencies of American administrations of any stripe is important. Specifically so in this case because it helps defend the democratic ideals that the nation was built

on in the first place because the tendency that is defined is one that damages that democratic ideal.

The third reason is that when the problematic theory of offensive structural realism was applied to American foreign policy and adopted in a deceptive manner, there were real life consequences for the individuals who inhabited the states affected by application of the theory. Foreign policy that is amoral, self centered, and aggressive leads to situations where real people lose their lives. If those lives are lost in defense of their own country and way of life, that is one thing. If those lives are lost because another state sought a nebulous advantage in influence over a far away rival in regional multilateral negotiations, then that is another thing altogether. Permanent application of a foreign policy theory based on amoral, relentless and unceasing pursuit of power guarantees a future for humanity defined by the horrors of war and the absence of the possibility of a sustainable peace.

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