

2

Man, The State, and International Politics: A Reconsideration of Rousseau

R.B.A. DiMuccio

Abstract

Among the political philosophers who appear in the bibliographies of international relations, Rousseau is perhaps the most superficially read and least understood. Illustrative of both of these contentions has been the work of Kenneth Waltz, whose major theoretical contributions draw extensively on Rousseau's political writings. However, Waltz's interpretation of Rousseau is fundamentally misconceived. In focusing narrowly on those aspects of Rousseau's approach to IR that emphasize structural causes, and in misreading Rousseau's intricate and highly novel treatment of interdependence, Waltz has recreated Rousseau in his own likeness and image, as a structural realist with a view toward interdependence as a key source of conflict among states. The effort to locate the true relevance of Rousseau's political philosophy in the study of IR and to move the evolving critique of *Theory of International Politics* to higher levels must begin by clarifying the senses in which Waltz's assumptions have been mistakenly drawn from a cursory reading of Rousseau.

R.B.A. DiMuccio is a Ph.D. candidate in the School of International Relations of the University of Southern California. He specializes in international relations theory and the political philosophy of international relations. Among his forthcoming publications is "Turbulence and Sovereignty in World Politics: Explaining the Relocation of Legitimacy in the 1990s and Beyond," in Z. Mlinar (ed.) *Globalization, Technology and Territorial Identities*. London: Avebury (1991, forthcoming), co-authored with James N. Rosenau.

Introduction

Among the political philosophers who appear in the bibliographies of international relations (IR), Jean-Jacques Rousseau is perhaps the least understood. In the theoretical literature in IR, Rousseau is generally portrayed as an adherent to the so-called “realist” or “classical” paradigm. Holsti, for example, includes Rousseau among those who have contributed to this paradigm, which focuses on the plight of states as they seek to survive under the harsh conditions of international anarchy.¹ Because of the lack of a central authority in the international milieu, states are forced to define their interests in terms of power. The “pessimist” Rousseau is often seen as an archetypical articulator of this approach to international affairs. However, Rousseau is not among the scholars most frequently cited in historiographies of realism, and although some aspects of Rousseau’s system of thought have captured wider attention, the whole of his political theory has not assumed a central analytical role in the field of IR.²

An important exception to this general rule has been the work of Kenneth Waltz.³ Waltz’s two major theoretical contributions, *Man, the State and War*⁴, and *Theory of International Politics*⁵, focus extensively on the political writings of Rousseau. Waltz’s scholarship has been, in fact, elegantly cumulative, since the interpretation of Rousseau that he constructs in *Man, the State and War*, provides an important assumptional basis for many of the key arguments set forth 20 years later in *Theory of International Politics*. Rather than playing a limited role, Rousseau’s political theory is among the centerpieces of Waltz’s analysis.

Waltz derives two interrelated conclusions regarding Rousseau’s theory of international relations. First, Waltz argues—most explicitly in *Man, the State and War* but also implicitly in *Theory of International Politics*—that Rousseau’s political philosophy places him firmly within the realm of “third image” theorists of international relations. That is, Waltz sees Rousseau’s approach as one that focuses on the structure of the international system in explaining international politics, and not on the structure of states (“2nd image”) or on human motivation or psychology (“1st image”). Second, Waltz derives from Rousseau the argument—most prominent in *Theory of International Politics*—that interdependence is among the direct systemic causes of war and conflict in the relations between states. This essay is intended to show that both of these conclusions are misconceived and that in essence, Waltz has recreated Rousseau in his own likeness and image.⁶

A close analysis of three aspects of Rousseau’s work will provide the foundation for this argument. First, I explore Rousseau’s theory of the causes of war to show its essentially “inside-out” or unit-level character. Second, I discuss the “plan for peace” inherent in Rousseau’s writings as a further illustration of the “reductionist” character of Rousseau’s theory of international relations. Finally, I examine Rousseau’s writings on interde-

pendence and reveal the absence of a direct causal linkage between interstate interdependence and interstate war in Rousseau's political theory.

The essay concludes with a discussion of the implications of Waltz's Rousseauian model in light of current developments in world politics. Indeed, the significance of Waltz's folly goes far beyond the rather empty realm of competing interpretations of an antiquated text. Because Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* has achieved a nearly unparalleled status in the field of IR (in terms of the frequency with which it is cited and the automaticity with which it appears on course syllabi), his theory has played a central role in the theoretical development of the discipline. Moreover, Waltz's theory has evolved into a form of dogma that tends to pervade the way students and scholars think about international politics. If we begin with the wrong assumptions, however, we ask the wrong questions and derive the wrong predictions.⁷ Thus, the effort to move the evolving critique of *Theory of International Politics* to higher levels must begin by illuminating the senses in which Waltz's assumptions have been inadequately drawn from a superficial reading of Rousseau.

The Theory of *Theory of International Politics*

Before it is possible to understand the ways in which Waltz's theory derives from a misconceived reading of Rousseau, it is necessary to examine the central theoretical principles upon which *Theory of International Politics* is based. Waltz claims that theories of international politics that focus their primary causal arguments at the level of the state or the individual are reductionist theories that explain phenomena in an "inside-out" fashion.⁸ That is, by seeking to explain the system by describing the units within it, reductionist theories lack the required comprehensiveness an adequate theory of international politics. In sum, "the whole cannot be known through the study of its parts".⁹

Instead, Waltz believes that a comprehensive theory of international politics should provide explanations and predictions at the level of the international system. Thus, a systemic theory of international politics is based, according to Waltz, on an analysis of the consequences arising from the "framework of state action".¹⁰ The framework or structure of an international system is defined by its ordering principle.¹¹ Since the beginning of the modern states system, Waltz argues, the ordering principle of all international systems has been anarchy or the absence of central authority.¹² States (as opposed to individuals in society) compensate for the lack of central authority by defining their interests in terms of the balance of power. Accordingly, anarchy means that the system assumes a self-help nature by definition. Furthermore, the self-help principle, Waltz argues, applies to all states in the system, thus rendering them functionally similar in that they all share the will to survive.

Several axioms and conclusions flow logically from Waltz's basic principles. The balance of power, in Waltz's model, is a function of the distribution of capabilities across the major states and the lack of central authority in the international system. An important implication of his theory is that the freedom of choice of any one state is limited by the actions of the others in the system; whenever one unit in the system makes it clear that it will not pursue a "pacifist" strategy, others are forced to follow suit. Therefore, in an international system in which there is no authority to prevent the use of force, force necessarily becomes the conduit through which the processes of international politics unfold.¹³ Stability and instability in Waltz's international system are thus a declared function of the absence or presence (respectively) of war among the system's major powers.

Waltz identifies several factors that are important for predicting and explaining the causes of war and the conditions of peace among the units of a system. For example, contrary to what is commonly assumed, interdependence between states raises the prospect for conflict and hastens the occasion for war. "The fiercest civil wars and the bloodiest international ones," Waltz writes, "are fought within areas populated by highly similar people whose affairs are closely knit ... it is impossible to get a war going unless the participants are linked." As a result of this dynamic, according to Waltz, interrelationships and mutual dependencies lead each state to watch the others with wariness and suspicion, while a measure of self-sufficiency and the possession of great capabilities insulate a state from the bad effects of interdependence. Thus, a simple premise of Waltz's theory is that the higher the interdependence between great powers, the greater is the chance for war among them and for instability in the international system. Increased interdependence leads to an increased need for the management of collective affairs, Waltz argues, but it does not produce a manager capable of doing it.¹⁴ Under conditions of interdependence, then, conflict tends to arise in the absence of supranational bodies.¹⁵

Compounding this problem, according to Waltz, anarchy in an international system tends to be self-perpetuating, since no major state will be willing to surrender its autonomy or ability to protect itself while the system remains one of self-help. Because world government is impossible, international stability is best perpetuated when two superpowers maintain their self-sufficiency so that the condition of equilibrium at a low level of interdependence remains in place. Under these conditions, there is the highest likelihood that the superpowers will be able constructively to manage international affairs.¹⁶

Waltz on Rousseau on International Politics

Waltz's theory is explicitly and implicitly derivative of the political philosophy of Rousseau. In *Man, the State and War*, Waltz presents Rousseau as

more or less the quintessence of the type of systemic, "realist" approach that is the focus of much of that book and that he later synthesizes into a more self-consciously scientific formulation in *Theory of International Politics*. More specifically, it is in Waltz's earlier work where the third image or systemic imperative is initiated, and where Waltz establishes the foundations of his assessment of interdependence in world politics.

Drawing largely on Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality (Inequality)*, Waltz recreates Rousseau's views on the causes of conflict among men and in the relations between states. It is in this work that Rousseau launches the analysis—one that is further developed in numerous subsequent works—of the discrepancy between man in nature and man in society. In Rousseau's *Inequality*, Waltz discovers the theoretical power of the notion that social activity is inherently conflictual.¹⁷ According to Waltz, Rousseau imagines how men tend to behave as they begin to depend on one another to meet daily needs. As long as each provides for his own wants, there can be no conflict. However, when the combination of natural obstacles and the growth in population makes cooperation necessary, conflict ensues.

But such conflict arises, Waltz's interpretation of Rousseau continues, not because of any inherent deficiencies or imperfections in man; the difficulty is not in the actors but in the situations they face. Since the world cannot be defined in terms of perfection, Waltz concludes from Rousseau, and "...since men are not perfectly rational, conflict among them is not a problem that can be resolved by changing men".¹⁸ Thus Waltz interprets Rousseau as arguing that if one wishes to explain the causes of conflict among men, one must focus on the *context* within which their relations unfold. The nature of the actors themselves remains unproblematic and not directly related to the causes of the phenomena that one wishes to explain, the relations among them.

Significantly, Waltz sees Rousseau's analysis of conflict among men as perfectly analogous to the nature of conflict among states. Shifting his focus to Rousseau's *Social Contract*, his unfinished work, "The State of War," and his "Summary and Critique" of St. Pierre's peace plan, Waltz interprets Rousseau's analysis of the state to allow the conclusion that states act either actually or functionally as unified bodies, and that in times of crisis, all states will share the will to defend their borders and to continue existing as autonomous polities.¹⁹ Thus, it is in Rousseau's political theory that Waltz derives the assumption that states—like individuals—can be thought of as both undifferentiated and unproblematic.

Hence, Waltz encounters in Rousseau an important proponent of a third image approach to international politics. Rousseau is said to find the causes of war neither in men nor in the states that they create, but in the states system itself.²⁰ In accordance with this position, Waltz specifically rejects the contention that a significant component of Rousseau's political philosophy

might posit an inside-out or reductionist causality. In response to Hoffmann's interpretation of Rousseau,²¹ Waltz states that

...[s]o profound is Hoffmann's commitment to inside-out explanations that he recasts even Rousseau in his own image. Pre-eminently among political theorists, Rousseau emphasized the impossibility of inferring outcomes from observations of participants' attributes and behavior...the context must always be considered for the context affects attributes and purposes and alters outcomes.

Waltz carries this argument further, arguing that

...[w]hen Rousseau indicates a hope for peace among highly self-sufficient states having little contact with each other, Hoffmann attributes to Rousseau the notion that the internal qualities of states would be the cause of peace among them. *Rousseau is instead giving an environmental explanation: states can experience little conflict if they are only distantly related to one another*²² (emphasis added).

This trenchant critique of Hoffmann is illustrative of Waltz's systemic interpretation of Rousseau.

But while systemic anarchy is the permissive cause of war in Waltz's analysis, interdependence is among the primary necessary causes, a theme also developed initially through Waltz's reading of Rousseau in *Man, the State and War*. As with his discourse on the inherently conflictual nature of social activity, Rousseau begins his analysis of interdependence, according to Waltz, by imagining how men must have behaved as they began to depend on one another to meet their daily needs. As long as each individual provides for his own wants, the conditions that create the seeds of conflict are not present, but whenever the combination of natural obstacles and a growth in population make cooperation necessary, men lose their natural freedom and conflict arises.²³

Analogously, the growth of the international system brings about mutual dependencies among states, in much same way as the creation of civil society effects an interdependence among men, according to Waltz. When this realization is combined with the lack of central authority in such a system, "...everyone, having no guarantee that he can avoid war, is anxious to begin it at the moment that suits his own survival interests." According to Waltz, then, a key assumption for Rousseau was that the very absence of an authority with the capability to prevent and adjust conflicts itself creates insecurity and interdependence among states, making war inevitable. Because the states of Europe

touch each other at so many points that no one of them can move without giving a jar to the rest—their variances are all the more deadly, as their ties are more closely woven ... thus they must inevitably fall into quarrels and dissensions at the first changes that come about.

The contention that interdependence (a sufficient cause) under conditions of anarchy (the permissive or necessary cause) combine to produce interstate wars is among the most important conclusions that Waltz divines from his reading of Rousseau.²⁵

It is difficult to misinterpret the role of Rousseau's political theory in the development of Waltz's own thinking. Rousseau implicitly provides much of the assumptional core of *Theory of International Politics* and explicitly serves as a prototypical champion of third image theories of international relations and of pessimistic, anti-liberal conceptions of interdependence. Through the influence of Waltz, Rousseau must be seen as a significant contributor to the development of a structural realist theory of international politics.

Rousseau Reconsidered

As Hybel and Jacobsen have noted, international relations theorists are not necessarily good students of political philosophy, and their interpretations of traditional texts are in many ways superficial. Indeed, IR theorists tend to refer to the classics often as an afterthought, "...as if [they] are trying to convey the impression ... that [they] are not as uneducated as [they] might seem".²⁶ That this axiom is especially true where Rousseau is concerned is a fact that makes Waltz's analysis all the more central to a reconsideration of Rousseau's political philosophy.

Waltz's reading of Rousseau is particularly open to challenge regarding the two conclusions already emphasized: 1) that Rousseau's theory of international politics constitutes a third image approach, and 2) that within Rousseau's political theory is the argument that interdependence "raises the prospect for conflict among states" and is a systemic cause of interstate war. In this section of the essay, I examine the first of the three aspects outlined at the outset: Rousseau's theory of the causes of war. Subsequently, I analyze Rousseau's plan for peace as a key illustration of the second image nature of his causal theory. Thereafter, I try to refine our understanding of Rousseau's theory of international interdependence.

The 'Second Image' of Jean Jacques Rousseau

Although many scholars of political theory have pointed out the ways in which Rousseau's political theory lacks consistency, it is clear—contrary to Waltz's bold assertions—that Rousseau's theory of international relations is utterly consistent in its reductionism.²⁷ In Waltz's understanding, systems

theories or third image approaches are those that analyze the behavior of parts (or predict the value of the dependent variables) by defining the whole. Reductionist theories do the opposite; they define the whole through a careful description of the parts. This reductionist element is evident throughout Rousseau's important writings on war and foreign affairs, such as "The State of War," and his "Summary and Critique" of St. Pierre's peace plan, as well as in his primary essays on civil society, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, and *Social Contract*, and in his constitutional project for *Poland*.

A key expression of this reductionism is Rousseau's unfinished manuscript, "The State of War." Indeed, the pivotal point of this work is that in order to understand the causes of war, it is necessary to "...examine closely the way political bodies are constituted."²⁸ Although it would be simple enough to represent Rousseau's reductionism by quoting this statement and many others like it throughout his writings, it is crucial to demonstrate clearly that an inside-out or sub-systemic theory is central to Rousseau's political philosophy.

In "War," Rousseau develops a line of argument—begun in *Inequality*—regarding the peculiar nature of the state and the fundamental differences between the individual in the state of nature on the one hand, and the state in an international state of nature on the other. The state of war, Rousseau proposes, is not natural to man, but it *is* natural to states. That is, men introduce international wars out of their precautions to assure domestic peace. Hence, the way states are constructed gives them the tendency to be naturally warlike.

What factors cause the natural conditions of states to be so radically different from those of men? Because humans are organic bodies, Rousseau argues, their faculties are limited and fixed by nature. Moreover, men's component parts (i.e., their organs, extremities, sinews, etc.), will not divide from the body. Given the peace and harmony within the body and the lack of possibility for growth beyond a finite maximum, "savage man" wants only those things needed for subsistence and is "...inclined to rest when satiated". These factors mean that there is no necessary conflict of interest between men since their interests are greatly limited in a state of nature.

The state, on the other hand, is by definition an artificial body with no naturally fixed or proper size. Its power and size being purely relative, it ceaselessly compares itself to other states and necessarily feels weaker when other states are stronger. Moreover, since it is a synthetic entity consisting of individuals made greedy and envious by society, the constant pressures of friction and fissure within society make outward aggressiveness predictable. It is through these constructs that Rousseau establishes a clear distinction between man in a state of nature and the state in an international state of nature. This distinction—rooted in man's original or natural possession of *amour de soi* as opposed to the state's original or natural

possession of *amour propre*—is important in that it serves as one of the prime analytical bases of Rousseau's reductionist theory of the causes of war, thereby constituting a stark contrast to Waltz's outside-in or structural theory in general, and to his conceptions of the state as an unproblematic, undifferentiated unit.²⁹ In short, because natural man possesses the *amour de soi* that the state initially does not, the state of nature of men and the state of nature of states are not—contrary to Waltz's assumption—readily analogous.³⁰

Thus, the essence of Rousseau's argument in "War" is that the state tends to be an inherently insecure, envious, and warlike entity for two fundamental reasons. First, the artificial nature of the state automatically imbues it with instability and the inherent drive to define its interest in terms of *relative* power. Because the state in an international state of nature is by definition the product of social innovation, it is from the beginning consumed by *amour propre*, a competitive greed and a need to compare itself to others. By contrast, man in a state of nature, because of his physical capacity for self-sufficiency, is dominated by *amour de soi*, or a healthy need for self-preservation, which, combined with a modesty and timidity, creates in him a natural peacefulness. Only when man joins society does his *amour de soi* degenerate into the *amour propre* that then pervades the state from the first minute of its existence.

The second reason, according to Rousseau, for the inherent war-proneness of states is related to the corruption and depravity that visit natural man after his entry into society. This becomes manifested in the social and political structures of domestic society that place war firmly within the narrow interests of important sectors of the state's political machinery. It is on the basis of this reasoning that Rousseau, in his "Critique" of St. Pierre's plan for perpetual peace, explains why states tend toward war and why they will not yield to any supranational bodies.

Although the utility of St. Pierre's scheme was for Rousseau indisputable, equally clear in his mind was the realization that the princes of Europe would never allow it to become a reality. Why, in Rousseau's view, did princes so obviously neglect their own self-interest? The whole preoccupation of kings or of those to whom they delegate their duties, he argued, centered solely on two objectives: to extend domination outside their borders and to make it more absolute within them.³¹ Since any confederation or accompanying loss of autonomy would hinder their ability to achieve these ends, Rousseau reasoned, princes could not be expected to allow the installation of a peace plan that would diminish that autonomy.

In "Critique" Rousseau establishes a direct connection between the depravity of individuals within states and the tendency toward war between states.

Ministers need war to make themselves necessary and to precipitate the

prince into crises that he cannot get out of without them and to cause the loss of the state rather than lose their jobs; they need wars to harass the people in the guise of public safety, to find work for their protégés, to make money on the markets and to form a thousand corrupt monopolies in secret.

In considering the great advantages that would result from a general perpetual peace, “being common to all they would not be relative to anyone.” “Hence, we may not say that [St. Pierre’s system] has not been adopted because it is not good, but because it was too good to be adopted, seeing as special interests are almost always opposed to it”.

Moreover, Rousseau was among the first to perceive and analyze in a systematic (though polemical) fashion the direct relationship between domestic structures and foreign policy, the second image notion of causality that is largely antithetical to Waltz’s brand of structuralism. Princes, Rousseau lamented, made at least as much war against their own people as they did against their foreign enemies. Thus, war was merely a useful method for squelching domestic complaints and weakening the positions of unruly subjects by focusing citizens’ aggressions on largely manufactured or “conventional” security fears of the state. A necessary ingredient for keeping citizens in check was a large army. To justify the large armies, a continuous succession of foreign wars had to be waged. The cycle of needing foreign wars to maintain domestic order—clearly a second image proposition—was vicious and self-perpetuating.³²

For Rousseau, theory entailed the unending struggle to show how *amour de soi* is bolstered in men and in states as *amour propre* is subjugated. Yet, Waltz’s view of the essence of Rousseau’s theory is that war occurs because there is nothing at the level of the international system to prevent it. Just as violence among men does not derive from their nature, conflict among states is not a function of the nature of state, but of the states system itself. Since, according to Waltz, states are unproblematic, it can be assumed that the condition of anarchy prevents them from relinquishing their self-help abilities for fear that not all states will do the same. Since the inevitability of war results from the lack of central authority, the cause of war is seen to lie at the level of the international system.

But far from being the natural outgrowth of the “nasty and brutish” life in the international system³³, war between states, for Rousseau, is purely conventional. The outbreak of war is determined, in Rousseau’s analysis, not by the absence of central authority in the international arena—as Waltz would have it—but by the *amour propre* of men in society that creates the same condition in states in an international state of nature. As Rousseau argues in his primary work on international relations, the way a state conducts itself in the world indicates something about the basic nature and

makeup of the states themselves.³⁴ In sum, it is plain that Rousseau's pointed critique of world politics and his model of states in conflict derive, as Hoffmann argues, "...from his most fundamental notions about man and society".³⁵

Rousseau's Plan for Peace

Rousseau's notions of how war can be avoided flow logically from his inside-out theory of war. For Waltz, an important piece of evidence for a third image reading of Rousseau stems from Rousseau's critique of the Abbé de St. Pierre's peace plan. More specifically, Waltz takes Rousseau's attack on St. Pierre's confederal solution to mean that war is inevitable in the absence of central authority, a systems-level proposition. Hence, a critical step in the critique of Waltz's third image interpretation and a necessary ingredient of any 2nd image reading of Rousseau is a discussion of the plan for peace embedded in Rousseau's system of thought.

In contrast to Waltz's propositions, Rousseau's view of why world government is impossible is not a systemic analysis at all. In "Critique" Rousseau argues that the *amour propre* that society brings to men and that therefore characterizes the state in an aggregate sense, causes princes to think in terms of their "apparent" rather than their "real" interests, compelling them to resist confederal solutions. Furthermore, the essential difference between the natural dispositions of men and states means that while the building of central authority is an effective method for establishing peace among men, there is no reason to expect that the same solution is either desirable or effective for creating lasting peace among states.³⁶ It is the absence of this original *amour de soi* in states that, in Rousseau's analysis, disallows the achievement of a general will of humanity and precludes central governance of nations. Hence, Rousseau's critique of St. Pierre and his view of why anarchy perpetuates exhibit a clear 2nd image character.

Therefore, it is impossible to account for the perpetuation of anarchy in Rousseau's political theory without assuming the problematic nature of the states that take part in the anarchic system of international politics. That is, world government is *not* a viable solution in Rousseau's analysis exactly because he sees the cause of the malady in men (in society) and states. Political societies are warlike because of the way they gradually stifle and submerge *amour de soi* and bring out *amour propre*. Because of the *amour propre* caused by social interaction, states are unwilling to entrust their security to world governments. Furthermore, if states were sufficiently reformed to make the adoption of a federal or confederal plan possible, as Hoffmann points out, there would be no need for it since states would be unambitious and inherently peaceful.³⁷ Armed with the assumption that "individuals and states are capable of moral development", Rousseau sets out to specify

the means by which appropriate self-love can be engendered among men and among states.³⁸ These are the bases of Rousseau's examination of the conditions for peace.

Rousseau wrote that "...once the causes of an evil are known, they are sufficient to indicate a remedy if one exists".³⁹ Because Rousseau's theory of international politics is not primarily an environmental one, the remedies that he outlines in his political works do not focus on the systemic causes of war. The following passage is illustrative of this proposition.

Let us enlighten his reason with new knowledge, let us warm his heart with new feelings; let him learn to multiply his being and felicity by sharing them with his fellows ... I do not doubt that if he has a strong soul and an upright mind, this enemy of the human race will finally abjure his hatred together with his error; reason, which led him astray, will bring him back to humanity; he will learn to prefer to his apparent interest his interest properly understood; he will become good, virtuous and compassionate. In short, this man who wanted to be a fierce brigand will become the most firm support of a well-ordered society.⁴⁰

The "new knowledge" that Rousseau seeks to communicate appears in *Inequality*, "War," and "Critique;" it is implicit in his theory of the ideal civil society in the *Social Contract*, but especially manifest in his constitutional project for *Poland*.⁴¹

Social Contract is not among Rousseau's chief writings on international relations. In fact, it seems to have been fairly clear in Rousseau's mind that the conditions that must be met in domestic society for the establishment of the good constitution (as described in *Social Contract*) are present neither in most domestic societies nor in international society. As Kendall writes,

...the central theme of the *Social Contract*... is the idea that man can be moral and free only in a self-contained community small enough to enable the citizens to meet and deliberate together in an assembly ... because only in such a community is it possible for the citizens to arrive at a 'general will.'⁴²

Hence, it is clear that the procedural requirements for the realization of a general will of all of humanity are impracticable in an international context. Nevertheless, there is the recognition, as Roosevelt points out, that as individual liberty and self-preservation are assured by the protection of the social contract in domestic society, our natural pity and compassion (*amour de soi*) are no longer repressed by a fear and envy of our neighbors and we can feel free to be civil to foreigners. Thus, the core of Rousseau's ideas on international politics (written largely prior to *The Social Contract*) is reflected here in the relationship between the development of more accommodating

and peaceful relations between states and the fostering of responsible political life within states.⁴³

Rousseau on Interdependence

As opposed to his view of Rousseau as a third image theorist, Waltz's recollection of Rousseau's theory of interdependence is rather more simplistic and superficial than it is directly incorrect. In fact, among the propositions most widely attributed to Rousseau is that interdependence leads to conflict among states. Few have disputed the validity of Waltz's interpretations, partly because it is a commonly held view, and partly because Rousseau is among the least read of the political philosophers who appear in bibliographies of the field. In sum, there is an ample supply of passages that seem to show, in Rousseau's political philosophy, a causal linkage between interdependence and war among states.

The central elements of this interpretation have been outlined above but warrant a brief recapitulation here. In nature, man enjoys liberty because he is completely self-sufficient; primitive man has few ideas, few needs, and few fears. Natural man is independent and essentially peaceful. Society, then, corrupts natural man because in it he is necessarily robbed of his independence. As populations grow dwellers create divisions of labor, and "from the first formed society, all others follow, and the whole face of the earth is changed as independence and liberty give way to laws and slavery." The surpluses created by society awaken greed, *amour de soi* degenerates into *amour propre*.

Only after man in nature associates with one man does he determine to kill another; he only becomes a soldier after he becomes a citizen.⁴⁴ Thus, association before the establishment of a good constitution brings greed and makes men dependent upon one another to meet those newly expanded needs. Put in Rousseau's own words,

...our needs bring us together in proportion as our passions divide us, and the more we become enemies of our fellow men, the less we can do without them ... such are the bonds of general society; such are the foundations of universal will. It is greed that engenders dependence ... the dynamics of greed and dependence have important consequences for social life ... for at the same time we are drawn toward others to gain their assistance in satisfying our needs, so our association with them breeds envy and competition; with dependency comes resentment.⁴⁵

To summarize, society corrupts men and creates in them the propensity to do violence against each other. Social association between previously independent individuals establishes the expansion of wants beyond needs, which creates interdependence, which then leads to conflict among men

in *de facto* political society. The cure for this condition, as outlined in *Social Contract*, is to establish a constitution that can simulate the independence and liberty of the state of nature, while at the same time providing a framework wherein individuals will identify their own interests with the general will, thus creating an equal and peaceful order.

This general view of Rousseau's conception of interdependence is well established. Rousseau's utter disdain for all of the societally created mechanisms that reduce the self-reliance of individuals is indisputable. What becomes distorted by Waltz, however, is the relationship between Rousseau's analysis of the interdependence between individuals and his treatment of interdependence between states.

Clearly, again there is some textual support for the Waltzian interpretation. In "The State of War," Rousseau seems to draw heavily upon his analysis of conflict between men in analyzing conflict between states; he rejects classical liberal notions about the relationship between interstate commerce and peace. He exudes a fundamental distrust of international interconnections that—as Hoffmann points out—runs through *The Social Contract*, *Inequality*, and projects for Poland and Corsica.⁴⁶ Rousseau lamented the entanglements, dependencies, and inequalities he saw among the states of Europe, and dreaded the consequences of these factors. Rousseau consciously attempted to set himself apart from Adam Smith and Immanuel Kant, who argued that international trade could lead to peace.⁴⁷ Just as he saw the lack of self-sufficiency among individuals as an unfortunate development, the same condition among states was to be avoided, if possible.

It is from these texts that Waltz retrieves his anti-liberal, systemic derivation of interdependence theory. But, as demonstrated above, a careful analysis of Rousseau's political theory reveals that—logically—interdependence cannot be seen as either the cause of war or as a systems-level constituent. While in Rousseau's imagery, "natural man" is free and completely self-sufficient, the same cannot be said of the "natural state." On the contrary, states are naturally, inherently dependent. Since states are artificial bodies, there is no natural correspondence between their capabilities and their designs. Hence, by their very nature, states must depend on, compare themselves with, and have complex interconnections to, other states in the system.

Where individuals are concerned, the fact of association causes the loss of self-sufficiency, which then becomes related to a series of maladies that leads directly to conflagrations among men. Among individuals, the cause of conflict lies in the very structure of social interaction, because the very fact of social interaction causes necessary, essential changes within men that make them socially warlike even though they used to be naturally peaceful. Among states, on the other hand, the cause of conflict lies not in the structure

of social interaction, but in the inherent dependency of states and the *amour propre* that follows from it. That is, the “natural state” (as opposed to the “natural man”) possesses the prerequisites of warlike behavior *independent of the system within which it operates*. For these reasons, the state of nature of men and the state of nature of states are, in fact, significantly different.

Waltz and others, therefore, make the crucial mistake of equating Rousseau’s analysis of men in nature with his theory of the behavior of states in nature. The fundamental dissimilarity between man in nature and the state in nature comes through clearly in Rousseau’s political theory. Since the correspondence between Rousseau’s analysis of conflict among men and war among states is limited, there is little reason to expect a direct relationship between his analyses of interdependence in these two spheres.

Upon even closer analysis, it becomes clear that Waltz’s Rousseauian theory of interdependence lacks external as well as internal validity. Rousseau’s state theory is quite unambiguous in its conviction that dependence is inherent to all states. Assuming this, the causal connection—inferred by Waltz—between interdependence and war becomes tautological. If all states systems, in Rousseau’s view, exist in a state of war, and if all of them are characterized by mutual dependencies and interconnections, then interdependence explains little of the variance. Even in Rousseau’s theory of conflict among men, interdependence is derivative, i.e., social association leads to interdependence that leads to conflict. But in terms of the behavior of states, interdependence (or mutual dependence) obtains from the nature of states, and is therefore more effect than cause. Waltz confuses Rousseau’s disdain for modern society with the argument that interdependence between states is a cause of war. However, it is not the interdependence that causes war, but rather the moral corruption inherent in states that itself leads to the condition of dependence in the first place. Interdependence is at most an intervening variable in Rousseau’s theory of war.

Waltz’s effort to circumvent this difficulty merely leads to other difficulties. In Waltz’s theory, interdependence hastens the occasion for war, except when interdependence between states is low as the number of units in the system is reduced. Thus, it is beneficial for the major states in a given system to maintain their large capabilities and self-sufficiency to enhance stability. As Waltz states,

...the narrow concentration of power, which is implied in lessened interdependence, gives to the small number of states at the top of the pyramid of power, both a larger interest in exercising control and a greater capacity to do so. The size of the two great powers [the U.S. and the Soviet Union] gives them some capacity for control and at the same time insulates them to a considerable extent from the effects of other states’ behavior.⁴⁸

The problems here number two. First, if interdependence is, as Waltz contends, a systems-level phenomenon, then it should be impossible to discern variations in *systemic* interdependence based on an observation of the capabilities of individual *units*. By dwelling on variables such as the size and power of units in the system, Waltz descends to the reductionism that he attempts to avoid. Since self-sufficiency is a unit-level variable, interdependence itself is a 2nd image phenomenon.

Second, according to Rousseau, true self-sufficiency is a virtual impossibility except in a very few isolated cases. Also, Rousseau seemed to concede that the intertangling and intermeshing of the societies of Europe had progressed far beyond the point of return. He saw, in other words, that modern states could never be truly self-sufficient and that the interconnections between them were more or less permanent. In the absence of a general will of humanity, the only hope was to turn the malevolent interdependence into a benign one, beginning with the creation of good citizens and good societies. Therefore, Rousseau recognized that it was impossible to destroy international interdependence. Instead, he attempted to articulate ways that *amour de soi* could be favored over the *amour propre* that interdependence brought about. So as Roosevelt argues, to counter the wickedness engendered by the dependencies of social life, one finds a theme that unites Rousseau's educational theory with his political theory and his theory of international relations—the condition of individual solitude and autonomy *in men* is the condition that is the most conducive to peace. Rather than a systemic factor that determines the conflictual nature of international life, interdependence is a unit-level force, the negative effects of which are avoidable through the efforts of human agency. However, Rousseau cautions,

...if, despite such an effort ...the project remains unfulfilled, it is because men are insane and ... it is a sort of folly to remain wise in the midst of those who are mad.⁴⁹

Conclusion: Interdependence and the March Toward Doomsday?

In this essay I have challenged the primary assumptions that Waltz derives from Rousseau, focusing generally on questions related to levels of analysis and specifically on the concept of interdependence. The driving force of the discourse has been the incongruity between Waltz's reading of Rousseau and the alternative reading presented above. More specifically, Rousseau's political philosophy does not represent the type of structuralism that is manifested in Waltz's contribution to the literature.

Although full self-sufficiency in all states is impossible, according to Rousseau, it *is* possible to create in states the relative capacity for peaceful behavior. Rousseau's reformational and educational projects show that

instead of the systemic determinism that Waltz conjures from his reading of Rousseau, the latter's reductionist political philosophy has an important emancipatory quality. Rousseau is a sort of realist, of course, in that he seeks to show the discrepancy between ideals and realities. But he goes far beyond conventional realist analysis to suggest ways to accomplish a movement towards ideals. And although some ideals are not attainable, it is possible in Rousseau's view to mold individuals and states in ways that make them more peaceful.⁵⁰

Thus, despite the apprehension evident in some of Rousseau's "projects," his solution to the problem of war centered on the establishment of "good societies and good citizens."⁵¹ Since the locus of such movement lies at the individual and state levels, the question is not whether we should consider Rousseau a third image theorist; his political philosophy makes it abundantly clear that he is not. Rather, what we are left to ponder is whether 1st or 2nd image causes are the most important for Rousseau. In this sense, there is a striking irony in Waltz's systemic interpretation of Rousseau.

Furthermore, Waltz's analysis of Rousseau's theory of interdependence and his extension of it in *Theory of International Politics* is cursory and defective. That it is "...impossible to get a war going unless the participants are linked" is not a particularly controversial proposition. Even less defensible is the notion that "...the fiercest civil wars and the bloodiest international ones are fought within areas populated by highly similar people whose affairs are closely knit."⁵² Naive inductions such as these belie the deductive imperative upon which Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* is ostensibly erected. But, the greater theoretical significance of Waltz's misreading of Rousseau becomes even clearer when viewing current developments in world politics through the lenses of *Theory of International Politics*. The following brief analysis is meant to show that Waltz's adaptation of Rousseau results in a static and narrow theory of international politics from which inaccurate explanations and conclusions follow.

The recent chain of upheavals beginning in the late 1980s has upset the post-War equilibrium in world politics. Instability in the Soviet Union and the rapid-fire collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe have had important consequences for superpower relations, including an expansion of possible bases of common interest, cooperation and intercourse between the Soviet Union and the United States. But while the Soviet Union has lost economic self-sufficiency, the U.S. has at the same time become less economically independent and more vulnerable to disturbances in the global economy.⁵³ Thus, important changes—perceived and real—in the assumptions of superpower relations have established potential opportunities for political and economic cooperation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, such as has not been seen since World War II.

What are the implications of such developments as seen from the Rousseau/Waltz perspective of *Theory of International Politics*? According to Waltz, the likelihood of stability in the international system increases as the number of consequential units in the system decreases. This is so, he argues, because interdependence—an important cause of conflict and instability—decreases as the number of units in the system decreases. Since the lowest number of units in an international system is two, a bipolar system is the most stable configuration. A system in which there are two major blocs, each composed of a great power and a number of lesser satellites and each largely independent of one another, has the maximum stability.

Therefore, to interpret recent developments and predict the future course of events in world politics from Waltz's perspective is relatively simple. At best, the ability of the superpowers to manage international affairs will decrease, and chaos in international relations will grow markedly. At worst, instability and hegemonic war will result. The degree of interchange and enterprise between the superpowers has increased, and the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. are no longer as independent relative to one another (or to the other states in the system) as they once were. There has been no alteration of the ordering principle (there has yet to emerge a central authority), and it still seems fairly unlikely that any change in the identity or number of the superpowers will appear in the near future. But a consequential, relative growth (since, say, the late 1970s) of interconnectedness and interdependence between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and between these countries and all the rest, is indisputable. *Theory of International Politics* therefore provides a clear picture of what should follow from such developments. The growth of interdependence between the two poles of the bipolar system will destroy the stability of the past 45 years; as the necessary cause of war in the Waltz/Rousseau model (interdependence) combines with the permissive cause of war (anarchy), untoward consequences in superpower relations are likely to ensue.⁵⁴ Rather than constituting an encouraging improvement in the relations between former adversaries or any sign of growing harmony among nations, the new interdependence between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, according to Waltz, has to be seen as an ominous and foreboding development.

The influence of Waltz's reading of Rousseau on the theory embedded in *Theory of International Politics* is particularly evident in these projections. But it is equally evident that Waltz's "Rousseauian" theory of interdependence does not necessarily yield reliable predictions for the future of major power relations. This is so partly because of the inaccuracy of Waltz's interpretation of Rousseau's writings on the concept of interdependence. More importantly, even if we were to accept Waltz's interpretation as wholly credible, a crucial problem would remain: *the causal nexus between interdependence and war is anchored in assumptions that may have lost at least some of*

their relevance in reference to contemporary international politics. Therefore, while a full analysis is beyond the scope of this essay, it is important to consider the assumptional foundations of Waltz's theory of interdependence within this context.

The point to be made here is simple: where the preconditions for the outbreak of war between two or more states do not exist or are weak, there is no or little reason to expect that the growth of interdependence—alone—will cause such preconditions to emerge. More specifically, a direct causal link between interstate interdependence and interstate war presupposes the existence of normative and contextual conditions that permit a relatively smooth and unimpeded unleashing of warfare for the accomplishment of political ends. That is, for any international system in that the strategy of the foreign war is seen by the political elites of a great power as an acceptable means of achieving short-term domestic and international gains vis-a-vis its major rivals (a normative basis for war), and in which there are plenty of willing citizens to tolerate or even fight such wars (a contextual basis for war), it follows—in accordance with Waltz's interpretation of Rousseau—that the closeness of contact brought about by economic interconnectedness and mutual dependencies might constitute at least a permissive cause of war. On the other hand, for any international system in which the norm of war as a means of resolving conflict between major powers no longer holds sway or when contextual conditions do not readily permit the use of war for political ends (for whatever reasons), the deductive linkage between interstate interdependence and interstate war does not obtain.

Put differently, the proposition that a growth of interdependence between major powers enhances the chances for war between them is a cynical and ahistorical construct. It is cynical in the sense that it does not allow for learning or a transformation of norms over time; it is ahistorical in that it does not consider the possibility that consequential changes in the nature of international relations may have fundamentally altered the interdependence calculus.⁵⁵ This is not to grant undue credence to classical liberal theories of interdependence which suggest the opposite, that interdependence between states leads to peace, cooperation and stability in world politics. Rather, this is to suggest that the effort to establish the effects of interdependence on interstate relations must coincide with careful considerations of those factors in normative and contextual realms which are likely to influence interdependence outcomes.⁵⁶ While the exact nature and structure of interdependence in great power relations in the 1990s and beyond have yet to be specified, such a determination must be a key component of any analysis of interdependence in the modern states system. Waltz's uncritical adaptation of Rousseau's ideas on interdependence represents a clear failure in this regard.

Therefore, an important lesson to be garnered from a reconsideration of

Rousseau has been the realization that when we undertake to conform ancient political theories to the analysis of contemporary conflict, the possibility arises that both the structure and outcomes of international relations may have changed consequentially since such theories were penned. Not unlike many great political philosophers, Rousseau, living in a time of tremendous upheaval and violent conflict, "...endeavored to interpret the logical meaning of events, to forecast the inevitable issues, and to elicit and formulate the rules which, destined henceforth to dominate political action, were then taking shape among the fresh-forming conditions of national life."⁵⁷ This, in other words, is to say the obvious: Rousseau's theories and predictions are intrinsically linked to the historical, political, normative and intertextual context within which they were conceived.

Of course, this does nothing to invalidate the whole of Rousseau's political theory for contemporary purposes. On the contrary, many of Rousseau's writings provide useful insights which capture the underlying dynamics of even today's complex world. Still, it remains important at the levels of theory and history to note those contextual changes which may have diminished the relevance of parts of Rousseau's political theory and of Waltz's interpretation of it. The growth of interdependence is not necessarily coterminous with the march towards doomsday, as Waltz's framework predicts. Rather, on the basis of new norms, and international contexts, interdependence may indeed be related to the more benign or even beneficial outcomes which many have foreseen.

Notes

1. Holsti, K.J., *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory*. (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1985).
2. The political writings of Rousseau are invoked sometimes in connection with the "stag hunt" metaphor (for example, see Oye, Kenneth, ed., *Cooperation Under Anarchy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), or, as a contribution to the literature on international organizations, Jacobson, Harold, *Networks of Interdependence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984).
3. Important discussions of Rousseau in the literature of international relations are also found in Hinsley, F.H., *Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in International Relations* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1963) and Hoffmann, Stanley, "Rousseau on War and Peace" in Stanley Hoffman, *The State of War* (New York: Praeger, 1963).
4. Waltz, Kenneth, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).
5. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (New York: Random House, 1979).
6. This conclusion alludes to a similar pronouncement made by Waltz in reference to Hoffmann's analysis of Rousseau. See Waltz, *Theory*, p. 47.
7. Schmockler, A., *The Parable of the Tribes*, (Berkeley: University of California

Press, 1984).

8. Waltz, *Theory*, p. 18.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

10. Waltz, *Man*, p. 231.

11. In practice, this means that in the 19th century the system consisted of the five European powers, i.e., Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia, whereas the distribution of capabilities in the post-World War II era has dictated that the United States and the Soviet Union are the powers that comprise the international system.

12. Waltz, *Theory*, p. 88.

13. Waltz, *Man*, pp. 204, 210.

14. Waltz, *Theory*, pp. 138, 209.

15. In contrast to 19th century Europe, Waltz argues that there is little interconnectedness today between the two superpowers (the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.) and that they are largely unrelated to one another in terms of commerce and finance. Hence, the independence of the superpowers and the relative dependence of the rest of the lesser states on them produces a condition of equilibrium at a low level of interdependence (Waltz, *Theory*, p. 159).

16. Waltz, *Theory*, p. 210.

17. *Ibid.*, *Man*, pp. 166, 168.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 173–9.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

21. Hoffmann.

22. Waltz, *Theory*, p. 48.

23. Waltz, *Man*, p. 168. Waltz further illuminates the interdependence dilemma by relating Rousseau's parable (appearing originally in *The Discourse on Political Economy*) of the "stag hunt," now a popular and well-known metaphor in game-theoretic approaches to international relations. See, for example, Oye, Kenneth, ed., *Cooperation Under Anarchy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

24. Rousseau, *Inequality*.

25. Waltz, *Man*, pp. 180, 184.

26. Hybel, A., and T. Jacobsen, *Is There a Realist Tradition? Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes Revisited*. International Studies Association Conference paper, April, 1989, p. 9.

27. Bluhm, William, *Theories of the Political System*, 2nd ed., (New York: Prentice Hall, 1978).

28. Rousseau, J.J., *The State of War*, trans. Roosevelt, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), p. 191.

29. "Amour propre," Rousseau explains in his *Discourse on Inequality*, "must not be confused with *amour de soi* ... [which] is a natural feeling which leads every animal to look to its own preservation and which, guided in man by reason and modified by compassion, creates humanity and virtue." "Amour propre," on the other hand,

“is a purely relative and factitious feeling, which arises in the state of society, leads each individual to make more of himself than of any other, causes all the mutual damage men inflict on one another... I maintain that in our primitive condition—in the true state of nature—*amour propre* did not exist.” See Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, trans. G.D.H. Cole, (London: Everyman’s Library, 1973), p. 66.

30. Rousseau, *War*, pp. 187, 191.

31. Rousseau, *Summary and Critique of the Abbé de St. Pierre’s Plan for Perpetual Peace*, trans. Roosevelt, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), p. 222.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 222, 228, 223.

33. An allusion to Hobbes. Rousseau was known as the “most vigorous critic of Hobbes in his time.” See Roosevelt, Grace, *Reading Rousseau in the Nuclear Age*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990). According to Roosevelt, Rousseau could never tolerate Hobbes’ underlying assumption that human survival under conditions of anarchy required aggression.

34. Rousseau, *War*, p. 187.

35. Hoffmann, p. 318.

36. Rousseau, *Critique*, p. 221.

37. Hoffman, p. 325.

38. Bluhm, p. 326.

39. Rousseau, *Summary*, p. 204.

40. Rousseau, *The General Society of the Human Race*, trans. G.D.H. Cole, (London: Everyman’s Library, 1973), p. 162.

41. Kendall, Willmoore, introduction to Rousseau, *The Government of Poland*, trans. Willmoore Kendall, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972). Space does not permit it, but an even more thorough account of Rousseau’s sub-systemic peace plan would include an in-depth review of his educational project for *Émile*.

42. Kendall, p. xxviii.

43. Roosevelt, p. 89.

44. Rousseau, *War*, pp. 187, 189.

45. From the *Geneva Transcript of The Social Contract*, as quoted by Roosevelt.

46. Hoffman, p. 329.

47. Roosevelt, p. 99.

48. Waltz, *Theory*, p. 209.

49. Rousseau, *Summary*, p. 220.

50. As Hoffmann points out, Rousseau recognized that most of the states of his day were too corrupt ever to be capable of applying the principles of the *Social Contract*, and only a few small nations could be saved, thus not enough to enable a universal peace. The text of the *Social Contract* itself is replete with discussions of the difficulty in creating the ideal political society that Rousseau proposes. See for example, *The Social Contract*, Book II, Ch. 10, in which Rousseau says that the various preconditions for the good state are rarely found united, and therefore few states have good constitutions, with the possible exception of Corsica. See Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. G.D.H. Cole, (London: Everyman’s Library, 1973), p. 203.

51. Hoffman, p. 332.

52. Waltz, *Theory*, p. 138.

53. This argument evokes the debate regarding the apparent decline of the U.S. as the world's hegemon. Most participants in the debate agree that at least in relative terms, the U.S. is no longer as self-sufficient as it once was.

54. Mearsheimer has, in fact, made the strongest and most direct statement to this effect. See Mearsheimer, John, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War," in *International Security*, vol. 15, no. 1, Summer 1990. According to Mearsheimer's analysis, whereas bipolarity and nuclear weapons have fostered peace between the superpowers over the last 45 years, the demise of the Cold War and the erosion of the bipolar order only increases the chances that war and major crises will occur (p. 52). As Mearsheimer notes, his thinking on bipolarity and stability shares much in common with Waltz's, though the arguments are not identical (p. 14).

55. Factors identified by scholars that are peculiar to the present era of world politics contradictorily generate predictions that range from war being obsolete to war being more likely than ever.

56. Despite the accompanying proliferation of research on this topic, however, there remains little consensus on how properly to define or measure interdependence, or whether interdependence is a source of peaceful cooperation, violent conflict, or something in between.

57. From L.A. Burd in *The Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. 1, 1903, p. 200, as quoted by Sabine, G.H. and T.L. Thorson, *A History of Political Theory*, 4th ed., (New York: Dryden Press, 1973). The quote itself is meant to describe Machiavelli, but it applies equally well to Rousseau.