A POSTSTRUCTURALIST DISCOURSE THEORY OF GLOBAL POLITICS

Dirk Nabers

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A Poststructuralist Discourse Theory of Global Politics

Dirk Nabers

For Linda, Ella, Flora, and Theo

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Acknowledgments

This book takes issue with the link between crisis and social change. The analysis weaves together various sets of literatures: social theory, philosophy and International Relations (IR) theory, and intertwines a number of different questions: What is reality? How can the reality of society best be understood? How does society transform? What role does the crisis-prone character of society play in its transformation? Large parts of the book are devoted to a genealogical discussion of the terms crisis, change, reality, difference, and ethics, culminating in a discourse theory of global politics that understands *crisis* as dislocation, difference, and incompleteness, and *change* as the continuous but ultimately futile effort to gain a full identity.

A lot of what is written on the pages of this book is owed to what has come to be labeled *poststructuralism*. Poststructuralism is at times superficially, misleadingly, and dangerously misconstrued as a marketing brand. However, there is no better place to poke around for notions of crisis and change than in the wide variety of poststructuralism(s) and political discourse theories. If taken seriously, these notions cannot speak to any form of positivism, nor can they address critical realism, if this is what the new mainstream in IR comes down to. I am therefore prepared to encounter criticism from many fronts, but I also trust the argumentative support of many colleagues, as I feel I am in respectful company.

Some of the people who have helped me on the way to finish this book need to be mentioned here, and I would certainly not be a good poststructuralist if I claimed consistency and comprehensiveness in the following list: The greatest academic debt lies with Ryoma Sakaeda, whose enormous insights into philosophy, sociology and IR have been of invaluable worth over the years. It is simply incredible how much Ryoma was able to read—hundreds of pages of Morgenthau, Laclau, and Mouffe apparently over the

talked in extended monologues about "mind," "world," subjectification, and ethics in global politics. Those who suffered most from the differential structure in which all this was articulated were my family. I therefore dedicate this book to those who most appreciably and lovingly, but also most mercilessly, generate me as a subject in the everyday struggles to gain a full identity: Linda, Ella, Flora, and Theo.

<div align="right">Dirk Nabers, Lübeck</div>

Introduction

Crisis and Change

Over the last decades, a lot has been written in the media as well as the humanities and social sciences about crises of different sorts, discernible in countless deviating and, sometimes, incongruous descriptions of economic, financial, ecological, social, and political emergencies, cataclysms, and messes. Structures such as the international financial or security architecture, the "Euro system," global capitalism, as well as individuals or groups of individuals have been blamed, and people from all parts of the globe have talked or at least heard of "predicaments," "shocks," "watersheds," "turning points," and "defining moments." Almost everyone seems to have something to say—be it at the level of barroom platitudes or through complex social inquiry.

Along with this crisis discourse emerged one of the well accepted clichés of our times, conveyed by the media as well as academics, which claims that we are living in a world of major and rapid transformations and societal change. Crisis and change are brought into a direct conceptual relation in this discourse. The accelerated pace of contemporary changes seems to bewilder more and more people, be they ordinary individuals, journalists, or scholars. Disorientation in the fields of global security, economic, environmental, or cultural change stems from the unanswerable nature of questions such as: Where are we going? How can we influence developments? How are we influenced by technological, economic, social, and political transformation? And also: Who are we? Perhaps there are no answers to such questions; at least there are no simple ones. Disagreement starts with definitions of crisis and stretches over the complicated task of identifying its objects to the question of responsibility and ethics. Are the countless crises we are facing "objective facts" that occur beyond people's control? What role does politics play in defining the reach of crises and—consequently—the policies to tame

their momentum? How are societies shaped and transformed by crises, and what are the measures to be taken to protect their most vulnerable parts?

While apprehending this array of unfathomable questions provided the impetus for a first undirected dive into the literature on crisis and change in the field of International Relations (IR) and neighboring disciplines, it soon became apparent and inevitable that there was a need to follow a path that questions the objectivity of social structures, their full constitution—which is only periodically threatened in times of extreme crises—and the individualist tendencies that prevail in these writings. Taking a step back, the initial question that will gradually lead to possible answers in this book can be expressed in a much more straightforward, unpretentious, and simpler manner: *How is it possible to conceptualize the "crisis of the social," and how can we best understand the relationship between crisis and social change?* Formulating the opening question in this way precludes a number of paths that have a long and manifest history in the social sciences in general and in IR in particular. It makes certain ontological and epistemological claims and disqualifies others. I will thus illustrate how a *discourse theory of global politics* can help finding answers to the stated question. As a start, several arguments can be briefly summarized which help legitimize the use of a discourse theoretical framework.

First, the question as it is formulated here demands a focus on crisis as a qualitative feature of the social instead of an understanding of crisis as "crisis decision-making" or "crisis management." Especially in times of immense global connectedness, agency is widely seen as increasingly restricted in resolving crises of global reach. The expression "crisis of the social" requires a theory of the social that shifts the focus toward the ontological analysis of society, for if we want to gain a better understanding of social change it might be wise to inquire into what exactly might change in the first place. In this restricted sense, ontology entails assumptions about the status of social structures and the nature of subjectivity, as well as the relationship between the two. In talking about the social, I set out by prioritizing the social over its unconnected elements. Talking about the social always entails some kind of association between humans. Different subjects intersect and fail to intersect at different points in time, which makes linear temporality a difficult issue in the scrutiny of social change.[1] Moreover, some meanings linger within others, which create incompleteness, instability, and lack. It is the situation of deficiency that perhaps comes closest to the understanding of crisis and change proposed in this book: Change is deeply rooted in crisis and vice versa. Crisis can be seen as a permanent attribute of the social, not some momentary condition that surfaces from time to time. If

conceptualized as a constitutive defining feature of the social, the very quality of crisis is related to the constantly disrupted structure of society. The latter part of the leading question almost becomes a redundant in relation to the former, for conceptualizing "crisis of the social" by necessity implies a theory of social change. "Crisis of the social" ineludibly infers "transformation of the social," while the social is always and at all times pervaded by crisis. In that context, it makes greater sense to twist the question around and ask what the social must look like for crisis to become possible.

This implies, second, that if crisis represents the underlying principle of society, the transformation of society rests on a continuous encounter with crisis. If, furthermore, crisis is a permanent and necessary feature of society, this encounter must be constitutive. This highlights not only the founding role of crisis as a lack, deficiency, or failure in the social fabric—what I will later refer to as structural dislocation—it also suggests that any political decision is taken in the context of structural failure. In consequence, the social and the political are mutually imbricated. Politics then amounts to "a practice of creation, reproduction and transformation of social relations," which occurs within the sphere of the political horizon.[2] Therefore, when I speak of ontology, I will refer to the construction of a specific social, or—more precisely—*political ontology*. Here the political is no longer treated as a subsystem of the social, but becomes fundamentally constitutive of every social relationship. It is the name for the ontological dimension of society, and points toward the absent foundation or essential uniting element of a society. While it entails the nonground of society, politics defines the continuous effort of grounding society in a particular way. Consequently, an inquiry into the manifold facets of social change requires a theory of the social that shifts the instituting moment of society into focus. Social change always means politically instituted change; it implies addressing the constitutive lack, or—as will be illustrated later—filling the infinite voids that pervade society.

Third, it is intuitively clear that a particular definition of a specific "crisis" will touch upon the question of democracy, as new forms of politics are obviously required to address new forms of social relations. The social structure that is founded on lack and crisis circumscribes our very social "reality." In this perspective, the ontological/political represents the ethical, for it provides the horizon in which particular normative orders can be established. However, society as an ontological limit never predetermines the actual ontic instantiation of a given order, but highlights contingency, temporality, and movement. The ontic circumscribes the plurality of particular, but eventually unsuccessful, efforts of grounding a society. This

has crucial ethical implications, and the normative question related to this theoretical program may be framed as follows: How does the social, with its constitutive lack, manifold crises, and voids, produce processes of inclusion and exclusion? How—if at all—is it possible to articulate the contents of a democratic politics that reflects the demands of a wide variety of subordinated and oppressed societal groups in an equal manner? Whereas the ontological and, therefore, the political can only be seen as the horizon for concrete practices, politics is necessarily normative by filling the gaps in the social fabric in a certain way, establishing particular links, while dismissing others. Hence, the concept of society put forward in the following analysis necessitates a questioning of borders and a theory that transcends artificial and illusionary domestic spheres. It was Michel Foucault who prominently demonstrated how an "analytic of finitude"[3] rests on numerous oppositions that may include the domestic versus the international and the sovereign versus the anarchic. For reasons which will become clearer in the course of this book, the term "global politics"[4] seems appropriate as a replacement for "IR," which has conventionally focused on sovereign states, interstate relations, and the international system as a metaphor for the sum of these relations. A focus on the "international" restricts the possibilities of formulating questions as to the nature of "the political, the cultural, the economic, the anthropological, the modern, or, the term that is most in question here, the social."[5] A name for the social fabric has to be introduced, which is capable of accounting for the political character of society, and its constitution by lack and crisis. This notion can be found in the concept of "difference," and it will thus be at the core of a theoretical program that addresses social change. Although not every communal relation is "global" in reach in the traditional sense of the term, difference is in principle infinite and therefore global in a more abstract sense. Even though, for instance, the "war on terror" (covered in part IV of the present analysis) at times appeared as a domestic issue in the United States, it soon turned into a "global war on terror." The infinitude of the social implies that foreign policy is necessarily global in character, a fact which accounts for the emphasis on the "global" in the book's title: *A Poststructuralist Discourse Theory of Global Politics*.

Therefore, given the results of the previous three arguments, and considering its widespread and omnipresent usage in everyday language, it might eventually be questioned whether the notion of "crisis" can serve as a *pars pro toto* for the manifold facets of social change. A tentative warning may be in order. As the argument matures throughout the chapters, the term needs to be qualified, for other concepts have been discussed, especially in the fields of political philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, and sociology, which seem

more appropriate for denoting the mutual entanglement of the social and the political.

Structure of the Argument

In the hope of finding some preliminary answers to the questions posed above, I will spend some time in part I deliberating how crisis has traditionally been conceptualized in the discipline of IR. I will contend that the bulk of the traditional IR crisis literature is strictly materialist and objectivist and highlights decision-making at the expense of more structural accounts of the nature of crisis, while the concepts of discourse and contingency have only entered the debate on "crisis" quite recently. The literature on change, which I will discuss in the latter half of part I, resembles the discussions of crisis in that it has only lately become more interested in dynamics and structural dislocation.[6] Although crisis and change are inextricably linked and cannot logically be treated as two separate conceptual domains, they are only rarely considered jointly in the IR literature, which is why they are treated as belonging to distinct IR discourses in this part of the book and will only later be consolidated into a comprehensive theory of crisis and change.

To remedy the shortcomings identified in the crisis and change literature, part II deals with the notions of "reality" (including a discussion of the problematic notions of "mind" and "world," as well as ethical questions) and "difference" in social theory, philosophy, and IR. The logic of the argument developed here requires a certain degree of repetitiveness, as, for instance, I will hint at the significance of the concepts of "discourse" and "difference" several times before properly developing them in chapters 3 and 4. These two chapters finally take us beyond the realm of an illusionary immediacy, with the aim of formulating a theoretical apparatus that stretches both beyond the mind and the emphasis on the subject as having any ontological significance apart from the practices it performs.

Part III represents perhaps the most significant segment of the book, for it is here where a discourse theory of global politics is presented. "Crisis" will from then on frequently be replaced by the concept of *dislocation*, which (in a nutshell) denotes temporally and locally split singularities, and societal change will be understood on the basis of a more thoroughly articulated theory of *difference*. This part of the book is greatly indebted to the inquiries of the late political theorist Ernesto Laclau and his co-authored work with Chantal Mouffe, but must also be seen as an attempt to complement their work by addressing the major criticisms voiced against their theory. The discourse theoretical model of crisis and change presented here will be based on the notions of hegemony, difference, and dislocation. While the

first half of part III deals mainly with the formal ontological underpinnings of discourse theory, the latter half of this part engages in a discussion of different methodical ways of translating the complex theoretical vocabulary presented here into a workable method. To evade naïve method-driven research, the analysis will critically engage with methodological discussions in philosophy, social theory, and linguistics. Discourse analysis, intertextuality, syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, and finally corpus linguistics will be introduced, before developing a method of integrated analysis that proposes combining corpus linguistic approaches with thorough theoretical analysis in order to probe the reciprocity of *dislocation* (crisis) and *hegemonic politics* (change) in the illustrative case introduced in part IV.

Part IV then traces the ideal-typical theoretical model from sedimented practices, over the structural dislocation of these discourses, hegemonic struggles and social antagonisms, and finally practices of institutionalization. This part has two purposes: First, the centrality of the developed ideal-type for any kind of inquiry into social and identity change will be substantiated. Second, the analysis will put the discourse surrounding September 11, 2001, and the ensuing American "War on Terror" into the perspective of sedimented practices in the United States. The conclusion will then summarize the major findings regarding the components of a *discourse theory of global politics* that addresses the nexus between crisis and change.

PART I

Crisis and Change

CHAPTER 1

Crisis

Essential, but Essentially Contested

The present analysis is not concerned with providing another collection of definitions of what crisis means and how it causally induces social change. The book focuses instead on the very nature of the social, and—a bit more to the point—it is a book about the social domain that has come to be known as international relations. "International relations" denotes a certain sphere of social life that expands beyond the borders of nation states and includes so-called inter-, trans-, and supranational relations. In its capitalized version, it is also the name of a discipline in the social sciences: International Relations (IR). As much as this book is on international relations, it is on IR, studying the philosophical debates in the field and its substantive matters at the same time. Philosophy is most aptly characterized as "the formal institutionalized academic practice and not some general dimension of reflective thought,"[1] and is categorized into diverse subfields, one of which represents the philosophy of science. Taking an interest in how science works, the philosophy of science is basically concerned with the epistemological question of "how is reliable knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) possible."[2]

Due to its principle openness, the present inquiry into global politics may possibly speak to many forms of social relations, surpassing the traditionally restricted emphasis on intergovernmental relations. As the social is conceptualized as a discursive space of infinite articulations, so is the local, trans-, supra-, and international inseparable from the global. For the sake of convention, the acronym "IR" still needs be employed when more traditional approaches to global politics are scrutinized or simply when the grand theoretical debates of the discipline are addressed. Yet, the boundaries

established in these literatures, between the local and the global, on the one hand, and between sociology and IR, on the other,[3] not only hamper the analysis of global politico-sociological problems, but the development of a political sociology with global reach in the first place.

As hinted at in the introduction, what is said here about the notion of the "international" can analogously be claimed with regards to the essentially contested concept of "crisis," which lacks ontological clarity and sociological content. According to the classic argument put forward by W. B. Gallie, essentially contested concepts are genuinely disputed, which implies that their use is necessarily and endlessly called into question by alternative uses of the term.[4] Although this is in principle applicable to all concepts, which are *per definitionem* overdetermined by their embeddedness in a complex system of relational terms, the term "crisis" fulfills the criteria for essential contestedness in a more fundamental sense: It has become an *empty signifier* in the description of the globalization and interdependence discourses of the 1970s and has later also been prominent in the description of the "Asian crisis," the "crisis of socialism," "9/11," the "Euro crisis" and the "world financial crisis." With its omnipresent usage in contemporary global political discourses, the term loses all dependability, and as a conceptual tool, it must be qualified later in this book, since other concepts can be drawn on which are more precise in denoting the constitution of the social by the political.

This is done with good reasons, for the analysis of the term—or its conceptually more suitable substitutes—can be seen not only as an inquiry into an *essentially contested concept*, but—if properly defined—also as a scrutiny of an *essential concept* for the study of the social. Any transformation of the social, of smaller or larger extent, must be seen as engendered by crisis. For the time being, as political, media, as well as academic jargon is flooded by a debate on the crisis-ridden condition of the world's economies, the environment, climate, social and political lifeworlds, I deem it appropriate to spend some time deliberating what crisis implies in the conversational language of media as well as IR discourses. Due to its omnipresence in spoken and written political language, "crisis" seems to be an opportune term to get to the essential questions related to global social change, the link between change and the nature of political reality, the makeup of the social, and the transformation of social boundaries, which are in turn connected to questions of inclusion and exclusion, power and subordination, democracy, and control. In order to do so, it may be worthwhile to start with Marxist notions of the term, for it is here where the longest tradition of crisis theories can be found. Moreover, one can legitimately argue that it was through Marxist theorizing that the notion of crisis first entered the field of IR.

Marxist Notions

In most strands of modern liberal political economy, crisis is not seen as a phenomenon that is endogenous to capitalist development, but is induced by defective exogenous interventions into an otherwise smoothly operating economic system. In contrast, Marxist critical political economy aims at conceptualizing crisis as necessary and immanent contradictions within the capitalist mode of production. Marxist crisis theories address underconsumption, overproduction, disproportionality, profit squeeze, and overaccumulation. For our purposes here, it is important to note that Marxist crisis theories concentrate on the implications of market anarchy and the unplanned activities produced by the market structure. For the approach developed in this book, Marxism and various forms of neo- or post-Marxism can be seen as crucial in three interrelated respects:

First, Marxism takes its cues from strong notions of structure, totality, and holism,[5] without, however, disposing of the role of the state versus an emancipatory class to account for structural change. It usually expects socialism to be an upshot of the crisis of the structure of capitalism, which in turn results in the proletarianization and precariousness of the working class. It is not the bourgeoisie as the agent that triggers the crisis, but the structures of capitalism constitute the bourgeois character in the first place. In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx claimed that it is "the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeois and of its rule."[6] Furthermore, in *Capital*, Marx contended that capitalism "breeds over-production, speculation, crises, and surplus-capital alongside surplus-population."[7] He identified "antagonisms" in the production process as the most important drivers of crisis and demanded a holist analysis of capitalism's internal relations. From the very early days of Marx's writings, it becomes evident that structures are put before agency. As Marx writes, it is "the relations of production and the distribution of the conditions of production," which puts the market into a position to dominate society.[8] Crucially, Marxism stresses capitalism's inherent tendency to cyclical structural crisis. It rests on deep-rooted economic contradictions and is apt to permanent instability, characterized by class dissolution. If crises endure over a long period of time, later Marxists speak of "organic crisis," a notion coined by Antonio Gramsci, which describes the incurability of contradictions within the market structure and the crisis of the whole "historical bloc," meaning that the entire societal structure is crisis ridden. Organic phenomena are located at the sociohistorical macrolevel, and economic crisis and revolutionary consciousness are related in this perspective. Crisis gains the character of a continuous state; it cannot be seen as the final moment of

capitalist development but must be understood as a permanent underlying feature.[9] Theorization of undirectional causality is futile in this context, for the term "structure" implies that the whole ensemble of social relations are crisis-laden, that the social per se is in crisis, which then means that social relations are inherently conflicting and dislocated. Change, in consequence, rests in the very definition of society as an unfinished project, for if society were complete, politics would lose its necessity.

In a similar vein, some contemporary Marxist strands see the symptoms for crises in the absent prospect for political and economic emancipation in times of "neoliberal" rule.[10] Post-Marxist theories[11] pick up on this finding in arguing that the socialist political project has encountered a double crisis since the mid-1980s: While the whole conception of socialism had been in crisis for decades—with the ontological centrality of the working class increasingly being called into question and a number of social democratic parties leaving their original working-class identity behind—a substantial crisis appeared to end the socialist project by dissolving the last self-proclaimed bastions of communism. The paradigmatic crisis was now accompanied by a political crisis, and the prospect of a global socialist society seemed to have subsided altogether after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact in the early 1990s. At the same time, the working class as the central emancipatory subject was replaced by heterogeneous and often disconnected struggles from feminist, ecological, ethnic, national, sexual, or peace movements, among others.

Second, via the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, later modes of Marxist theorizing question the objectivity and naturalness of capitalism, which—by suggesting that it is without alternatives—disqualifies any censure.[12] Instead, a strong notion of contingency again entered the debate. It is crucial to note that the discussion of what follows from the capitalist crisis can be traced back to Marx's examination of what he called "socialism," "communism," and an "associated mode of production."[13] While Deleuze and Guattari's work on contingency remains significant, it is often overlooked that Marx, in describing the fate of the plebeians of ancient Rome, formulated the classic notion of the term, which is worth quoting at length:

> And so one fine morning there were to be found on the one hand free men, stripped of everything except their labour power, and on the other, in order to exploit this labour, those who held all the acquired wealth in possession. What happened? The Roman proletarians became, not wage labourers but a *mob* of do-nothings more abject than the former "poor whites" in the southern country of the United States, and alongside of them there developed a mode of production which was not capitalist but

dependent upon slavery. *Thus events strikingly analogous but taking place in different historic surroundings led to totally different results.* By studying each of these forms of evolution separately and then comparing them one can easily find the clue to this phenomenon, *but one will never arrive there by the universal passport of a general historico-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being super-historical.*[14]

It is already in Marx's work that the contingent character of "crisis" is underscored, while the economic predicament loses its determining quality. Marx did not articulate a vision of history that progressively and necessarily unfolds in predictable stages.[15] On the contrary, contingency leaves the path open for multiple political decisions. It is important to mention that Marxist theorizing in its classic form shows numerous tendencies toward structural determinism, the primacy of material organization and the prevalence of an essentialist universal class as a privileged subject within the process of social change. This is mainly due to Engels's proposition of an "intrarelated emergent materialist totality,"[16] and overlooks Marx's method of social inquiry, which presents a relational picture of categories and objects. Social relations hence provide the conditions of possibility of existence for all objects. Objective presociality and the conceptualization of an object as an ontological relation take away the strict focus on intransitivity from Marxist thinking.

In the twentieth century, structural determination was replaced in Jacques Derrida's deconstruction by an emphasis on undecidability and contingency, implying, coterminously, ambiguity, multiplicity, and temporality. If crisis were somehow related to social objectivity and structural determination, politics would lose its autonomous room for maneuver. In fact, there are many hints in Marx's work on the subtleness of objectivity and material essences, which Derrida engages with in *Specters of Marx* (1994). Although Marx must be seen in a tradition in which objects cannot be separated from categories (Kant) and in which objects cannot be separated from consciousness (Hegel), he adds that reality develops through praxis.[17] According to Derrida, the "thing-in-itself" is, in Marx's work, described as "blurred, tangled, paralyzing, aporetic, perhaps undecidable (*ein sehr vertracktes Ding*)."[18] In essence, there can be no reality *out there*, which exists either independently of the mind or of some premental meaning structures, for "things," as Derrida explains, "always relate to what is proper to man, to the properties of man: either they respond to men's needs, and that is precisely their use-value, or else they are the product of a human activity that seems to intend them for those needs."[19] In this perspective, the "thing" does not rest in itself, it cannot remain independent, but is in a state

of constant metamorphosis that cannot be captured. "[The] commodity is a 'thing' without phenomenon, a thing in flight that surpasses the senses (it is invisible, intangible, inaudible, and odorless); but this transcendence is not altogether spiritual, it retains that bodiless body which we have recognized as making the difference between specter and spirit."[20] Here, the distinction between "mind" and "world" becomes indistinct (an issue that I will return to in more detail below), and observables are in fact organized as transfactuals. The whole distinction between the natural sciences and the humanities and social sciences comes to nothing when the experienced "thing" per se remains inaccessible or lacks any stable intrinsic characteristics. Yet, stability and the fixing of allegedly objective meanings continue to be important for social relations, for without the illusion of closure there would be no meaning at all. This leads to the conclusion that only a strict and very traditional Marxist materialism is consistent with Roy Bhaskar's scientific realism,[21] which has entered IR through books by Alexander Wendt (1999), Jonathan Joseph (2002), Fred Chernoff (2005), Colin Wight (2006), Milja Kurki (2008), among others, and at times seems to have gained middle-of-the-road significance within the discipline. This stance implies an almost natural prioritization of ontology over epistemology and the implicit claim that the nature of independently existing objects determines our cognitive options. Realist philosophy has been directed at the form and practices of the natural sciences and has entered the social sciences and humanities under the label of "critical realism."

In the following, a firm opposition of reducing the real either to thought or to brute materiality will be developed, and the very distinction between "mind-world dualism" and "mind-world monism" will be probed. This also entails a slightly modified notion of transfactualism, since even material objects remain unobservable in the sense that their entirety will never come to the surface, and the identity of a single physical or social entity cannot be determined in a definite and comprehensive manner. Social structure, in its form as a particular sum of articulatory differences, is not only physically unobservable, it is also conceptually open, continually transforming, and in-principle detectable entities also remain unobservable as they are percolated by an infinite number of other entities and lack any autonomous and self-contained character. However, confusion persists as to whether "ideas" and "reasons" can be seen as unobservables.[22] In this study, both concepts are considered virtually inexistent as long as they are unobservable. In a Heideggerian and Wittgensteinian tradition, ideas are seen as existing only as an offspring of discourse, and reasons are only graspable if practically employed, hence observable. While social structures are seen as enabling and constraining in many IR works,[23] they are first and foremost constitutive,

crafting, and forming social subjects in a radically contingent fashion. A subject can only become a subject by virtue of its contingent positioning in a social structure. Post-Marxist theorizing has stressed that the subject evolves precisely within the distance between the nonessential—or *undecidable*—structure and the decision that is taken within this structure.[24] In acknowledging this quality of structure, the study will also problematize the legitimacy of a distinction between the natural and the social sciences.

A third relevant aspect of Marxist theorizing directs our attention to the systemic and global repercussions of capitalist development, with its drastic impact on inequality and the environment,[25] thereby proposing an ethical stance that centers on the environmentally deteriorating and socially exclusionary effects of liberal economic practices. While social exclusion has naturally been seen as a core issue of Marxism over the previous century and a half, the issue of environmental destruction has an equally long history within Marxism, which reflects and substantiates Marx's and Engels's holistic view of society and its relationship with nature. In 1880, Frederick Engels wrote:

> The analysis of Nature into its individual parts, the grouping of the different natural processes and objects in definite classes, the study of the internal anatomy of organized bodies in their manifold forms—these were the fundamental conditions of the gigantic strides in our knowledge of Nature that have been made during the last 400 years. But this method of work has also left us as legacy the habit of observing natural objects and processes in isolation, apart from their connection with the vast whole; of observing them in repose, not in motion; as constraints, not as essentially variables; in their death, not in their life. And when this way of looking at things was transferred by Bacon and Locke from natural science to philosophy, it begot the narrow, metaphysical mode of thought peculiar to the last century.[26]

The individualism, isolationism, stasis and the "metaphysical mode of thought" criticized here forecloses a view of nature as a whole, in which "[c]apitalism has [. . .] alienated humanity from nature by privatizing the land and making all things into commodities—even pollution itself."[27] According to Marx, the natural condition of a mutual constitution of nature and humanity is gradually lost in capitalism; in the holist view this will eventually result in mutual annihilation. Changes in the natural and social system occur analogously, and it is without surprise that the term "biosphere"—which comprises all organic and nonorganic matter—was introduced by Bolshevik theorist Vladimir Vernadsky in the 1920s.[28]

At the social level, this holist view brought about a turn in Marxist theorizing to the *issue of right* in general, especially after the declared end of socialism and the obvious failure of any democratic rule in the "socialist" countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This new generation of theorizing gives us a hint at what is at stake in structural analysis, that is, the ethical implications of any inquiry. In the form of critical theory, it quickly took the form of a universal theory of justice, which gained its cues from authors like Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls and saw discursive communication as a fundamental requirement of democracy.[29] The structuralist starting point is complemented by a tentative introduction of agency in these strands of critical theorizing, and again, the notion of crisis gains a forceful ethical quality in this context. Marx himself tended to disregard organization in the form of the state, seeing structural concentration first and foremost in oligopolistic behavior, which he saw as a first crisis symptom on the way to market failure.[30] It was only in later work that the potential of the state to organize and regulate the market was properly outlined. For example, Friedrich Pollock had argued in the aftermath of the 1929 world financial crisis that the only possible remedy would come from a centrally planned economy.[31] In contrast, critical theorists like Jürgen Habermas have increasingly called into question the state's capacity to cope with inescapable economic and social dislocations.[32] Other neo-Marxists emphasize that *state power* needs to be held accountable for current global economic crises. Therefore, what is really in crisis is the emancipative project of humanity as a whole. The ensuing "Crisis of Marxism" after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact was seen as in fact representing a crisis of emancipation.[33] Of course, a domestic-international analogy is in order in this context: While the state has to intervene in domestic crises, global financial institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required to assure the continuity of worldwide capitalist development. From the dominant capitalist perspective, underdevelopment must be seen as deviating development, and the poorer countries in many regions of the global South "appear as overseas projections of the central economies—heteronomous, dislocated branches of the capitalist economy."[34] In that sense, the dominant discursive perspective on what crisis refers to is seen as an instrument of power in the hands of the rich, to be dealt with by institutions established by the rich. Against this backdrop, the treatment of the state in twentieth century Marxism is regarded by some IR theorists as one source of IR's focus on the state as the main actor in the international system.[35]

All in all, the development of North-South relations of subordination and exploitation as well as an expanding ethical lens led Marxist crisis

theorists to identify four mutually entwined crises: One crisis denotes the ever growing *material* gap between rich and poor not only domestically, and not just restricted to the "global south," but visible in many advanced industrial countries. Another points to the *political* dimension of an intensifying "legitimacy crisis," resulting from the inconsistency between ideological justification of authority and the erosion of consensus between the ruling and the ruled. From this stance, capitalism with its promise of accruing wealth through liberalization stands in increasing contrast to social and political processes of exclusion, subordination, and exploitation.[36] Directly related is a third crisis frequently outlined in Marxist or post-Marxist literatures, namely the crisis of the *Fordist* model of development, which incrementally and impalpably led to a disassociation between capital and governmental interests, the sphere of economics and finance, and the sphere of politics.[37] Economic activities are pursued detached from territorial restrictions, and traditional political power has gained new meanings in an era of accelerating "globalization." Finally, a fourth crisis is identified in the inevitable and large-scale destruction of the global environment. The "logic of profit" is seen as being coupled with a "logic of ineluctable destruction of the natural world around us."[38] Prominent sociological work has followed the Marxist path by employing this structuralist perspective, in which, for instance, the notion of symbolic generalization has featured prominently. Furthermore, modern philosophical work in the post-Marxist vein has attempted to remove the determinism from their theorizing.[39] I will argue later on that only an identification of the different structural qualities of crisis can enable subjects to engage in counterhegemonic practices; yet this requires a perspective that transcends the dominant focus on crisis decision-making and crisis management, which has been prevalent in IR for a long time.

Decision-making

Given the emphasis on structure in Marxist theory, it is astounding that IR crisis theorizing centers on decision-making to a large extent. It is all the more puzzling since the crisis literature habitually refers to Marxist insights, mostly informed by scientific or critical realist perspectives. The classic definition within the field of IR was offered by Charles Hermann as early as 1969, and it is still widely quoted in the crisis literature. Hermann declared that crisis refers to

> a situation that (1) threatens high-priority goals of the decision-making unit, (2) restricts the amount of time available for response before the

decision is transformed, and (3) surprises the members of the decision-making unit by its occurrence.[40]

As this definition is focused on the goals and capacities of actors, it forecloses a perspective on crisis per se, for it defines crisis through the "perceptions" and actions of decision-makers. Crises are treated solely as "independent variables" triggering some kind of governmental behavior; their structural quality is left out of sight. In the subsequent years, many theorists drew on Hermann, as well as Linda Brady's, James Robinson's, and Jim McCormick's definitional efforts.[41] All of those early figures agreed that no commonly accepted definition of the term "crisis" existed. During the 1970s and 1980s, crisis theorists largely tended to analyze international politics through Kenneth Waltz's first or second image, representing the individual decision-maker or interactions between nations. Both Waltzian images have been treated as mutually exclusive, leading Jim McCormick to the conclusion that "[t]he fundamental conceptual problem in relying solely on either approach is that situations identified as crises by one group of researchers may not be recognized as such by the other."[42] In both instances, the existence of a crisis depends on *crisis recognition*, which—in McCormick's perspective—implies both perception and interaction. Comparable to Hermann's definition, he classifies crisis "as a situation between two (or more) nations that is characterized by perceptual conditions of high threat, surprise, and short decision time, and by behavioral conditions of marked change in their interaction pattern."[43] This is an effort at combining the first two images, yet still without an explicit formulation of what exactly leads to perceptual change. I will contend in the following that this is due to the failure to attribute any independent roles to the social structures in which both individual decisions and international interaction are embedded. McCormick seems well aware of the problem of perceptual error, stating that different conceptual lenses on the "underlying phenomenon for defining a crisis situation"[44] would bring about different results as to the definitional criteria of a crisis. Again, however, this important problem is not addressed further in his analysis.

Many authors have attempted to inject conceptual clarity into this opacity, (in most cases) only to contribute further to the inflationary use of the term crisis. While the significance of structural failure is casually noted, the focus usually lies on decision-making, even when explaining a particular crisis is the declared aim, as in Graham Allison's book on the Cuban Missile Crisis.[45] To be fair, Allison's inquiry focuses on decision-making in times of extraordinary and objective external threats. It is not interested in endogeneity or construction, in the relationship between structures and agents, or

metatheoretical issues connected with the very notion of "reality." Allison's individualist view on a deeper level rests upon a dualist perspective that, first, does not question the objective nature of crises, and second, does not problematize the autonomous governmental room for maneuver. Instead, he advocates that "the serious analyst seeks to discover why one specific state of the world came about,"[46] and how governmental actions to deal with this state can best be understood. Interestingly, Allison at some critical junctures in his argument controverts his dualist position by drawing on the later Ludwig Wittgenstein. Against this philosophical background, Allison maintains, "[u]nderstanding that ordinary explanations, predictions and evaluations are inescapably theory-based is fundamental to self-consciousness about knowledge." He even declares that "[t]he proposition that what you see does not necessarily equal what you get can be confusing, even disturbing. Nonetheless, if we are successful, the chapters that follow will persuade the reader that categories and assumptions he has been using comfortably, unselfconsciously matter more than he suspected."[47] Unfortunately, this is a statement that remains unexplored throughout the rest of the book, which leaves the reader with a lot to ask about the nature of crises and their role in the transformation of global politics.

Some of the work in IR that followed on these early efforts moved itself toward Waltz's third image—the system—but remained stuck in a materialist and individualist hegemonic setup that takes its cues from work like *War and Change in World Politics*, published in 1981 by Robert Gilpin, which is greatly indebted to the power tradition in IR founded by E. H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau. Gilpin paved the way for many others in contending that "[o]urs is not the first age in which a sudden concatenation of dramatic events has revealed underlying shifts of military power."[48] At times, "systemic crises" are mentioned,[49] and Gilpin makes a helpful move in depicting the constitutional function of crisis. Furthermore, almost everything is at stake in a crisis—"the rights of individuals (or states) and the rules of the system," and crises precede wars.[50] Yet, Gilpin's work clearly falls into the materialist vein, thereby closing his eyes to the wide variety of social practices that are nonmaterial in nature. Most work in IR that falls into the first (realism versus idealism), second (traditionalism versus scientism), or so-called interparadigm debate (liberalism, realism, and radicalism) within IR is implicitly or explicitly materialist.

The deficits that have cursorily been outlined here apply to most of the crisis literature published during the Cold War, which has mainly been concerned with "crisis perceptions and the decision-making style of the other superpower,"[51] epitomized in the United States by the *International Crisis Behavior Project* (ICB) initiated in 1975. By its empirical focus, the project

seems to suggest that crises are self-evident variables that only need to be properly looked at to be identifiable; examples being wars, financial turmoil or environmental catastrophes. A dataset comprising *all* "crises" since the end of World War I forms the empirical basis of the project. Moreover, the project conducts experimental simulations of "crisis scenarios." For the time between 1918 and 2001, 434 "military-security" crises have been identified, including 956 crisis actors. The dataset consequently determines the motivation, which is directed toward the analysis of crisis mediation, not on the crisis as a structural phenomenon. This work has also been at the center of the *Crisis and Negotiation* (CAN) Project established in the year 2000.[52]

In the work related to these projects, crisis is equated with threat perception, violence and "tension," while the focus is on the decision-maker.[53] This is puzzling, to say the least, since ICB and CAN seek to distinguish between structural or systemic and foreign policy crises. According to Michael Brecher, a crisis is defined by "*a threat to basic values,* with a simultaneous or subsequent *high probability of involvement in military hostilities,* and the awareness of *finite time for response to the external value threat.*"[54] In contrast, a foreign policy crisis centers on the "perceptions of the top-level decision-maker, resulting from a threat to his or her basic values, constrained reaction time and the likelihood of military exchanges."[55] Central for all conceptualizing efforts are the perceptions of the highest decision-maker. Additionally, a crisis must be distinguished from a conflict, which is seen as much broader in focus and not necessarily issue-specific. It may be argued that in spite of its usefulness in realist analyses of military conflict, the definition is of minor service in an investigation of, for example, an international financial crisis, where neither the employment of military force nor the scrutiny of perceptions of highest level governmental officials are at stake. Rather, financial crises, as I will attempt to render plausible in the course of this book, are a structural phenomenon, which requires an analysis of these structures, and only in a second step the scrutiny of agential behavior. In fact, this argument can be extended to any sort of crisis, which would—due to the extent of contingency that rests in structures—call into question the whole definition of the ICB project and its emphasis on observability and generalizability.[56] The same may be said for the Crisis Management Research Program, which has brought forward many intriguing results on crisis decision-making and cognitive-institutional process-tracing, but remains mute on the structural features of international or global crises.[57]

Against this background, it is all the more surprising that a lot of the limitations connected with individualism and mind-world dualism can still be found in the crisis literature that was published after 1989/1990.[58] For example, Asaf Siniver argues that the prevailing deficits are due to the

dichotomous self-positioning of scholars, which leaves no room for integration between systemic and decision-making approaches. While locating himself in the latter perspective, he more or less reduces systemic approaches to the neorealist tradition,[59] and, again, his definition of crisis is actually one of *crisis decision-making*. This is helpful in the context of foreign policy analysis, but does not correspond to the objective of understanding "systems in crisis."[60] When structures are mentioned at all, such as in Russell Leng's work on interstate crisis behavior between 1816 and 1980, or in Charles Doran's work on systemic change, they are usually depicted as the distribution of material capabilities.[61] James Robinson's claim that "there is no such thing as a theory of crisis or even theories of crisis,"[62] formulated some four decades ago, still seems to hold true today, as much of the later, synoptic work in IR exhibits similar shortcomings.

This might even be true for some of the most comprehensive work on offer in the field of political science in general. For instance, Colin Hay has contended that the term's omnipresence derives from its imprecision. It is normally used pejoratively and employed simultaneously to designate momentary emergencies, recurrent derailment, and enduring cataclysm. Moreover, crises can be located in structures, but the hope for their resolution mostly rests in individuals who possess the power to modify these structures for the better. It is noteworthy that Hay's take focuses on crisis symptoms at most, giving rise to agent-based descriptions, often energized by a reference to therapeutic notions that see a patient's healing guaranteed by taking the proper medication.[63] By emphasizing the treatment of symptoms, his definition equally privileges decision-making over the accurate description of social structures.

Hay later labeled himself an "as-if-realist," apparently trapped in a "state of ontological insecurity."[64] Indeed, in Hay's work, the distinction between perception (a mental activity) and narrative (a discursive operation), structure and agent, as well as the dualism of subjective mind and objective world remain vague. As Hay explicates: "Crises are accessed in and through perceptions, in and through narratives. Decisive interventions are fashioned in response to perceptions of the nature of the condition afflicting the system—perceptions which may not correspond terribly closely to the condition itself."[65] Hay suggests that crises represent "moments in which [. . .] interventions are both possible and plausible," implying that actors have the autonomous capacity of solving them. While representation can have two meanings—re-presenting something real as well as symbolizing a discursive construction—Hay seems to restrict it to the former. In contrast, whenever "representation" is referred to in the present study, it is clear that it denotes "symbolization."

Furthermore, the prioritization of agency over structure is prevalent throughout Hay's work: "Crises, as moments of decisive intervention, involve the active display of agency by actors or bodies that have some autonomy at the level at which the crisis is identified—actors capable of imposing a new trajectory upon the system in and through crisis."[66] Although he depicts global economic crises as "global contradictions," the nature of these contradictions remains arcane. The almost undisputed assumption of a causal connection between "globalized capitalist accumulation" and "fundamental environmental-economic contradiction that threatens ecological catastrophe"[67] is necessarily coupled with the ethical imperative of responsibility. Most crucial in this context, responsibility is necessarily tied to the individual or a group of individuals; it has an obvious, easily identifiable location, which forecloses a more critical view on systemic faults. While Hay at some points in his work acknowledges that crises can be characterized by "fragmentation, dislocation and destruction,"[68] he seems to stick to his focus on decision-making at all times. Others have followed this path by privileging agency over structure and a focus on crisis management over deeper analysis of crisis per se.[69] In Hay's work on method, the ontological distinction between structure and agency remains equally indistinct, for they are "completely interwoven" in a way that we cannot identify one without the other, "only the product of their fusion."[70] It is hardly extraordinary to see that James Robinson's verdict on the unavailability of proper crisis definitions is reiterated by Immanuel Wallerstein some 40 years after Hermann's first take. Wallerstein observed after the beginnings of the global financial turmoil in 2007/2008 that "the notion of 'crisis' has abruptly resurfaced; but its usage is just as loose as ever. The questions of how to define a crisis, and how to explain its origins, have once again come to the fore."[71]

Contingency

Robinson's and Wallerstein's conclusions seem plausible when one takes a look at the literature that was published after September 11, 2001—an "incident" that was widely described as constituting a "focusing event" for American and world politics that "changed everything," at least in the United States.[72] In much of this work, which is summarized by Widmaier, Blyth, and Seabrooke (2007), the difference between crises as "exogenous shocks" and "endogenous constructions" rests on an agent-centered approach to exogenous events. Due to the separation between objective facts and (inter-)subjective constructions, the authors discount the possibility of a broader discussion of the relationship between agency and structure, fact and value, signification and practical engagement. Instead, their work stresses the

primacy of material conditions of possibility when they accentuate "the influence of intersubjective understandings on agents' *interpretations* of material incentives."[73] The argument rests on a rigorous separation of mind and body; it is individualist and only replicates Gilpin's concept of material structure, which exists prior to any mental activities, but which constrain these activities in the first place. In this perspective, crises are seen as existing independently of our minds but only acquire meaning through our mental activities. Consequently, they are defined "as *events which agents intersubjectively interpret as necessitating change*."[74] Although the authors insinuate that crises "occur in meaningful contexts," these "meaningful contexts" are not any further explicated. Here, "events" certainly exist outside of meaning-giving activities, and interpretation requires seesaw changes between exogenous "events" and the endogenous construction of those allegedly neutral "events." The question that meanings themselves are at stake in a "crisis" remains untouched. The deeper meaning of the term "event," in political philosophy understood as the dislocating moment in which foundations are cracking, is scarcely interrogated in this literature.[75]

A question that remains refers precisely to the antilogy inherent in the argument of the discursive construction of extradiscursive matter. Instead, in Widmaier et al.'s contribution, we are confronted with a number of "X as well as Y" formulations in the eclectic form of "we highlight the importance of intersubjective contexts which both give meaning to—and can be reshaped by—wars and crises";[76] or in the form of "agents frame such uncertain moments to make persuasive claims concerning the need for change, while also recognizing that frames can take on 'lives of their own' in generating future uncertainty";[77] finally, "it is not only shifts in power, but also tensions over prevailing understandings that drive war and change in world politics."[78] These arguments remind us of Wendt's so-called *via media*, which will be addressed in chapter 2 and which has been criticized for seeking too many, and too radical, compromises between materialism and what he dubs idealism, foundationalism, and the role of discourse, individualism, and structuralism.

The tendency criticized here for its ambiguity is replicated by Widmaier and Park's work on normative change. The central question, formulated in the very first line of their contribution, exemplifies an approach that is shown to be logically inconsistent in this book. They ask: "How do material structures or shared ideas shape agents?"[79] First, I will contend that material structures will not "shape" agents without discursive mediation; second, and perhaps more profoundly, the present study will speak against the rather naïve argument that "ideas" would form agential behavior. Instead, ideas will be understood as a product of the discursive structure in which "agents"

are embedded. Without a comprehensive conceptualization of this structure, the meaning of the term "idea(s)" will remain empty. While this argument will be further advanced in the chapters of this book, it is fair to conclude at this point that not much is said in the above quoted literatures on how allegedly objective crises are expressions of particular configurations of social forms of power.[80] Even less is said about how crises are related to structural change, and if so, what "change" exactly entails remains in the dark.

In Colin Hay's later work, it is acknowledged that "[c]rises are, in effect, what we make of them; and what we make of them determines how we respond."[81] This argument directs our attention to two crucial aspects with regards to the nexus between crisis and change: First, the Wendt-inspired phrase "what we make of them" indicates the significance of *meaning structures* in grasping crises. Picking up on Hay's claim, I will henceforth argue that the transmission of meaning through discourse is the driving force behind social change. One might already at this juncture cautiously contend that inherent crises of social structures are at the root of any kind of social, cultural, or institutional change, although this argument is surely in need of further clarification and expansion. Importantly, crises have always been seen as opening up new opportunities. As Richard Bernstein summarized: "When individuals sense that they are living through a period of crisis, when foundations seem to be cracking and orthodoxies breaking up, then a public space is created in which basic questions about the human condition can be raised anew."[82] This human condition, understood not as isolated individual entities but as historically contingent, albeit dynamic and structurally mediated social practices, are the focus of subsequent chapters. In contrast to most contributions discussed so far, crises will be seen as omnipresent within the social, making political interventions possible in the first place.

This leads to a second aspect that will be elaborated further in part III of this book: If crises are indeed "what actors make of them," then they are characterized by uncertainty over what they signify and imply. In other words, they can only be incorporated within existing, previously formulated frameworks of intelligibility. A number of "critical" interventions in the field of IR, which are characterized by their focus on radical contingency, draws on this argument. It is here where one can leave the familiar terrain of the traditional crisis literature and conceptualize contingent historicity instead. The metaphor of dislocation is constitutive of many critical and so-called poststructuralist works. It stresses societal fissures, antagonisms, and the impossibility of essentialist subjectivities.[83] Here, crisis refers to undecidability and the production of subjectivity precisely within this undecidable structure. It is only through the decision in an incomplete structure that the subject evolves; if the structure is complete and deterministic, the subject

recedes into the background. New structures evolve constantly, and whenever we talk of "crisis" from this angle, the indeterminacy and lack of the structural setting is put into focus and the radically contingent and political nature of structure is highlighted. "Securitization,"[84] for instance, means nothing but the temporary political effort of closing a particular social (or discursive) structure while precluding multiple alternative directions.

The most far-reaching and precise work in this context was perhaps published by Jutta Weldes in the 1990s.[85] Weldes did not take the quality of the *Cuban Missile Crisis* as a crisis for granted but asked for the conditions of possibility for it to be represented as a crisis. Claiming that crises are always "cultural constructions," Weldes illustrated that crisis management does not follow from crises, but produces crises in the first place. In other words: There is no ontology of crisis graspable beyond the practices that generate it in the first place. One cannot assume an objective status of crisis that requires nothing but immediate action. Instead, "events that are ostensibly the same will in fact be constituted as different crises, or not as a crisis at all, by and for states with different identities."[86] For instance, the *Cuban Missile Crisis* was represented as a challenge to the very identity of the United States, whereas the Soviet Union articulated a threat to worldwide socialism by US imperialism, and the Cuban government characterized it as part of the tremendous and all-encompassing insecurity the aggression of the United States entailed. Insofar, Weldes's analysis is a prime example of how sedimented practices engender particular foreign policy practices and how crises are nothing but precisely these practices in relation to discursively constituted identities.[87]

The following chapters of this book will engage with this argument and illustrate the significance of sedimented practices and the incompleteness of identities for a theory of crisis and change. In consolidating crisis and change by prioritizing structure over agency and highlighting the production of subjectivity in incomplete structures, some recent work in IR has pursued a comparable path, though mostly concerned with a reformulation of the notion of "crisis" and not with a consolidated theory of crisis and change. The tone was set by R. B. J. Walker's epic monograph *After the Globe, Before the World*, in which crisis is described as a structure of obtuse political vulgarization, which goes hand in hand with an appeal to conservative fundamentalism and an atmosphere of often apocalyptic levels. At these points spatiotemporal boundaries can easily be established and radical political measures can be implemented.[88] Walker draws on a variety of sources from continental and political philosophy to make his point, and the reference to literatures outside IR has become widespread in a particular critical and poststructuralist strand of theorizing the disciplinary limits. For example,

Bülent Diken and Carsten Bagge Lautsen draw on Hardt and Negri in their account of an "omni-crisis," and on Agamben when they argue that "[t]he exception signals the crisis of the distinction and the correspondence between membership and inclusion."[89] With regards to the world financial crisis that started in 2007/2008, one could add Oliver Kessler's suggestion of calling into question the erroneous but often formulated claim "that crises are exogenous to otherwise efficient and stable markets."[90] Instead, more and more work, like Kessler's, depict crises as "systemic" and rely on sources foreign to IR—economist and philosopher Friedrich Hayek in Kessler's case. In this vein, James Brassett and Chris Clarke ask how traumatic imagery transported by the media, academia, and politics has produced particular subjectivities during the subprime crisis, at the same time suggesting alternative ways of performing these subjectivities.[91] The FPA wheel is turned by 180 degrees by the proposition that the invocation of trauma is able to construct the crisis as a crisis in need of a response in the first place. There is, to reiterate one of the central tenets of my argument, no ontological status of the crisis beyond the social practices that perform the crisis "into existence." The range of responses is no longer determined by the ostensibly objective features of an external shock, but by the power of the discourse that makes certain choices possible and disqualifies others as illegitimate. Comparable to crises as "ill-structured messes," the problems at the ground of "crises" are constituted by complex systems, which are themselves interwoven with numerous other complex systems. This argument corresponds to some versions of Marxist crisis theorizing and the Foucaultian "consciousness of crisis,"[92] in which neoliberal governmentality seeks to motivate entrepreneurialism in all parts of society, up to the point of inescapable decay.

Furthermore, critical security studies have shifted our attention to the disruption of meaning structures that had been taken for granted before September 11, 2001, with Stuart Croft's work employing insights from cultural studies to develop a model of crisis as a social phenomenon.[93] Crises are seen here as "engines" of discursive change that have to connect with traditional narratives to become hegemonic. Closely corresponding to the approach developed here, Croft proposes a nonobjectivist, nonfoundationalist view of politics; yet, the dualism of the "crisis out there" and the narrative that results from it is still prevailing in his book. The "shock of the crisis" seems to correspond more to critical realist than to post- or nonfoundationalist language, and the "pattern of social responses to crisis"[94] that Croft puts at the center of his approach seems to limit the discursive options to a certain degree, as it implicitly relies on a strong causal connection between crisis and social change.

The same is true for Richard Saull's neo-Gramscian analysis of the world financial crisis, which identifies contradictions within American neoliberal hegemony as the trigger of global imbalances. Saull's empirically rich and analytically intriguing approach rests on theories of uneven development to explain the structural failures that became visible after 2007.[95] While Saull's study, by emphasizing capitalist investment and development—is convincing from a neo-Gramscian perspective that relies on a detailed scrutiny of the "neoliberal historical bloc" under American leadership, the criticisms that may be put forward against Gramsci—especially the problematique of certain essentialist or tentatively materialist remnants in his theory[96]—also apply to Saull's work.

Pointing in the direction being pursued here, a number of novel contributions refer to the structural character of crises—as dislocation, displacement, contamination and exceptionality. In their most radical formulations,[97] crisis embodies change, and change refers to the transformation of necessarily contingent but historically materialized discourses: Concrete social practices are always embedded in earlier, established discursive structures or customary meanings. This illustrates that crises or dislocations in the form of necessary contingency must be seen as constant *political* constructions. Without societal crises, politics would lose its substance and direction. Any political decision is taken within the sphere of a dislocated social structure. There are bigger and smaller dislocations, embodying changes of different magnitude. These are not located outside of its political field of constitution but are, on the contrary, fundamentally political.

In order to pursue this argument further, I will follow Wallerstein's conclusion and maintain that after 2007, "we have entered a structural crisis."[98] The argument is underlined by such authors as Michel Dobry, who hints at the internal disruption of a system in a crisis, to its dysfunctions and to fluid conjunctions of social systems. Dobry shifts our attention to the event of the crisis itself and—referring to Clausewitz's famous notion of "war as the continuation of state policies with other means"—argues that we must not take for granted the suggestion that crises break with routines and cultural traditions. Dobry also criticizes the predominant view that it is enough to look at a particular crisis' outcome to fully reveal its character.[99] Structural insecurity, institutional solutions, and "habitus" as the moment that is both structural and embodied in the individual are focused in this work and will be reflected in the stance taken in the discussion that follows. Before doing so, however, let us scrutinize the IR literature on social change in more detail.

CHAPTER 2

Change

Continuity

Radical contingency and a strict focus on endogeneity are almost absent from a century of inquiry into the nature of world politics. Since the works of Aristotle, change has instead been conceptualized as a result of "efficient causes,"[1] which puts emphasis on agency and not on structure. The literature on change resembles the discussions of crisis in that it has only recently become more interested in complex and unpredictable dynamics and structural dislocation. The three most influential and most widely cited books in the field, according to a study published by the journal *Foreign Policy* in 2005, are Robert Keohane's *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (1984), Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* (1979), and Alexander Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999). The Teaching, Research, and International Policy (TRIP) Project later unveiled the continuing relevance of the grand IR theories developed here.[2] According to the TRIP survey, "realism" is still regarded as the "paradigm" with the highest share in contemporary IR publishing, followed by liberalism and constructivism. Whether this reflects the actual distribution of shares in IR publishing will not be the question here; nor will there be an interrogation of the method of the survey.[3] Interestingly, Marxism, the English School and feminism are categorized as "also-rans," and the results are reflected in what IR experts in many countries name as the "scholars who have produced the best work in the field of IR in the past 20 years"—Alexander Wendt, Robert Keohane, John Mearsheimer and James Fearon—all of them Americans, and all of them more or less corresponding with a "mainstream" audience characterized by a rationalist-neo-positivist-materialist orientation—with only Wendt seeking a *via media* between different angles.

The results of the two surveys are broadly mirrored in the *Google Scholar* list of the most widely cited books.[4] These are Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (1979), Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1998), Kenneth N. Waltz, *Reflections on Theory of International Politics* (1986), Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (1998), Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (1984), and Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999). While the second and third appeal to a broader public, the works by Waltz, Keck/Sikkink, Keohane and Wendt are genuinely theoretical in nature.

The TRIP survey results name Wendt, Keohane, Waltz, Nye, and Mearsheimer as the most influential scholars in the discipline, with Barry Buzan listed as the only European scholar within the top-20. On the basis of these survey results, one can legitimately categorize the books named here as "mainstream" IR work. Interestingly, the approaches generally identified as the most important in the discipline (realism, liberalism, constructivism) can be characterized by their conspicuous neglect of an explicit conceptualization of structural change. To be fair, scholars like Kenneth Waltz or Alexander Wendt offer sophisticated, philosophically supported cues for how to deal with structure in the analysis of world politics. It is therefore necessary to take a closer look at their work in order to develop a fruitful theory of crisis and change for IR and global politics.

To start with, in his early work Waltz dealt with the "state system," and later stipulated the notion of the "structure of the international political system." He laid the groundwork for this theoretical move in *Man, the State, and War*, where he relies on the notion of difference to expound the variation between war and peace:

> But the search for causes is an attempt to account for differences. If men were always at war, or always at peace, the question of why there is war, or why there is peace, would never arise.[5]

From a critique of the reductionism of the first image, he derives his notion of structure. Variable structures engender different social conditions, stretching from war at the negative to cooperation at the positive end. Structures are apt to be manipulated to alleviate the causes of war. Change logically rests in the quality of structure, which Waltz describes in the context of his microeconomic analogy, claiming that actors "differently juxtaposed and combined behave differently and in interacting produce different

outcomes."[6] Waltz's notion of social structure, centering on "institutionalized restraints and institutionalized methods of altering and adjusting interest,"[7] rests on an only implicitly rationalist understanding. Changes in the structure of the international system are due to alterations in the organizing principle of the underlying structure. These changes can logically only be grasped when one makes one of the following two moves: either one introduces a tentative notion of agency into a systemic theory. This seems to be Waltz's preference when he claims that agent and structure have to be studied in their own right, while neither will completely determine the other: "If structure influences without determining, then one must ask how and to what extent the structure of a realm accounts for outcomes and how and to what extent the units account for outcomes;"[8] alternatively, the structure of the system is seen to be open, which makes agential power possible in the first place.

His position between positivist and alternative orientations, between agent-based and structurally oriented approaches remains unclear throughout the book. This indistinctness culminates in his dictum that "the structure of the state system does not directly cause state A to attack state B. Whether or not that attack occurs will depend on a number of special circumstances—location, size, power, interest, type of government, past history, and tradition—each of which will influence the actions of both states."[9] Causal claims like these have led generations of IR scholars to believe that Waltz was a reductionist, positivist, and methodological individualist. Waltz's main interest was in fact in disentangling causes and effects, thereby neglecting the dynamic possibilities that stem from a more sociological definition of structure. His concept of society, which is suggested to be purely positional, and emphasizes the arrangement of units, remains inherently static: structures, according to Waltz, endure, whereas actors and their interactions vary widely. Comparable to structural linguistics and anthropology in the version of Claude Lévi-Strauss, structures find expression in the arrangement of their parts, in the ordering of its elements. This ordering matters and can take different forms. Detecting the ordering principle of a system is the primary mode of investigation in structuralist analyses. In a departure from this approach, Waltz situates the sources for structural change at the level of the units when asserting that changes in the distribution of capabilities across nations trigger alterations of the anarchic structure.[10] This tension lingers on throughout his work. The distribution of capabilities originates in the units' qualities, which means that change rests in their qualities. As the specification of functions is only relevant in hierarchic (domestic) systems, Waltz's theory of the international system

eludes any concept of change. The international system is *per definitionem* composed of like, functionally equivalent units, which makes structural change a logically inconceivable issue. Changes at the level of the units lead to changes at the systemic level, but Waltz pretends not to be interested in the quality of the units. Yet, changes in the distribution of capabilities across states can only be apprehended when one inquires more deeply into the qualities of the units, as generated in a differential structure.

Therefore, Robert Cox argues from a neo-Marxist perspective that "neorealism sees conflict as a recurrent consequence of a continuing structure, whereas historical materialism conceptualizes conflict as a possible cause of structural change."[11] Cox sees realist theories mainly within the positivist problem-solving mode of inquiry. While historical materialism is sensitive to the dialectics of social transformations arising out of contradictory productive fields, neorealism is seen by him as neglecting this dimension of social relations and as falling back into structural determinism. In fact, Waltz himself acknowledges that "[w]ithin a system, a theory explains recurrences and repetitions, not change. [...] Structural concepts, although they lack detailed content, help to explain some big, important, and enduring patterns."[12] Waltz's ideal type thus focuses on the materially defined structure of the system and its constraining effects on state behavior. It consists of three layers: First, the ordering principle of the international system is anarchy; second, states are "like units;" and third, the structure of the system is defined by the distribution of power between these units. While the first two layers are static and are by definition not apt to change, the distribution of power is left unexplained by treating it as endogenous to the international system. After all, states are conceptualized as unitary rational actors ontologically, and as "black boxes" epistemologically; process is seen as consisting of continuous interstate relations constrained by the overall structure of the system. David Dessler has therefore described Waltz's theory as "positional," with the structure of the system resulting from the positioning of ontologically prior units, in contrast to a transformational model, which conceptualizes structure as material for action that changes as action unfolds.[13]

Other scholars, such as Robert Gilpin, have more or less adopted Waltz's notion of structure without modification, quoting Waltz at length in their analyses.[14] Gilpin's work is rationalist and strictly materialist, and although the main argument holds that structures are established on the basis of social relations, these social relations are not explored further and change is deduced from a variation in material capabilities between points A and B, not from the process that occurs between these two points. Certain "events" are then conceptualized as triggers for actual political change, which occurs

at the level of the distribution of material capabilities in the international system. Gilpin is interested in "generalizations based on observations of historical experience,"[15] implying that observations and experience are objectively measurable, which leads him to conclude that systems are apt to change in states of disequilibrium between costs and benefits. While he concedes that it is impossible to limit the consequences of social structures to self-interested behavior, he does not contribute anything to the social quality of structures.

As in many other contributions to the topic of change in IR, this is due to his individualist perspective and the resulting failure to conceptualize structure beyond mere materiality. Instead, the creation of social structures is driven by all sorts of processes, giving way to three possible international structures: imperial or hegemonic, bipolar or based on a balance-of-power between three or more states (such as pre-World War I Europe). By claiming that the "distribution of power among states constitutes the principal form of control in every international system,"[16] Gilpin is unable to offer a convincing account of the social processes that occur when structures change. He relies on Waltz's notion of the international system in his main argument, which is interesting, because he adopts a tentative notion of "difference" that will be seen as crucial for a deeper understanding of social structure.

Gilpin goes on to declare that "[t]he structure of the international system is significant because of its profound effects on the cost of exercising power and hence of changing the international system."[17] Once again, structure is equated here with the distribution of capabilities and change occurs when these capabilities alter over time. It is here where Gilpin's work departs from Waltz's. Whereas Waltz assumes a certain stability of bipolar structures, Gilpin at first sight seems to stress the power dynamics over time, allowing him to introduce a tentative concept of change, which is, however, solely based on the expected utility of state actors. It is without surprise that toward the end of his analysis, he concludes that "the nature of international relations has not changed fundamentally over the millennia."[18] As I will attempt to illustrate, to understand social change, one has to go beyond mere material structures and develop a notion of social structure instead.

A summary of Waltz and Gilpin must not lead to the conclusion that realism is necessarily static and confined to the sphere of problem-solving theory. As Robert Cox has argued, the work of classical realists has illustrated the historical conditions and aptness for change that are fundamental to international politics.[19] For instance, Hans Morgenthau was aware of the "contingent elements of personality, prejudice, and subjective preference," yet for

the sake of rationality seeks to "abstract from these rational elements."[20] It is no surprise that Morgenthau has been labeled a positivist when he stresses that "[m]an responds to social situations with repetitive patterns,"[21] which require *explanation*. It only becomes more complex when Morgenthau at times redirects his attention to "the forces underlying social phenomena,"[22] which can be unobservable and therefore apt to variable human construction. With all the "mind-world monist" allusions in his work,[23] he can hardly be categorized as a positivist. Moreover, he contends that the facts to be found in international politics are "essentially ambiguous and subject to continuous change."[24] Generalizing from "the perennial qualities of human nature,"[25] Morgenthau seeks to isolate differences and similarities in unique and contingent historical situations. Moreover, he is interested in the explanation of change through time. Illustrating his arguments by a series of examples from British diplomacy, he queries: "What is the meaning of those shifts in British foreign policy?"[26] Yet, it is only in the final chapters of *Politics among Nations* that Morgenthau makes some scattered, ostensibly pretheoretical observations about "peaceful change in international affairs" and "peace through transformation," thereby touching on the issue of social change.[27] Some of his remarks are worth noting, as they describe the crucial conflict between particularism and universalism that will be seen as one fundamental ingredient to any kind of theorizing of change in part III of the present study. Crucially, Morgenthau stresses that "[t]ensions are a universal phenomenon of social life,"[28] though without exploring the notion of tensions any further. Are tensions arising out of the nature of structures, or are they rooted in human nature, as Morgenthau's anthropological orientation might suggest? The answer to this important question is left open. It is only tentatively given in that Morgenthau directs the readers' attention to public opinion, which he sees as the ultimate trigger of change. The highly political frictions between particularistic and universalist standpoints are nonetheless visible throughout his book. Summarizing his findings on this topic, Morgenthau writes:

> Such is the normal process of social change in a free society. It is apparent that this process is not performed by any particular agency discharging its regular duties. Social forces, elevating their needs into principles of justice, capture public opinion.[29]

The elevation of particular needs into the status of universals makes Morgenthau a decidedly *political* thinker. As with Waltz, it remains problematic to put him into some sort of naïve neopositivist corner. For example,

in *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, published in 1947, Morgenthau stands against the dominant rationalist mode of theorizing:

> It is, on the contrary, a philosophical structure which gives the appearance of eternal verities to certain anthropological, social, and political assumptions which are true, if at all, only under the conditions of a particular historic experience.[30]

Morgenthau continuously lamented that rationalism had failed in apprehending the nature of human beings, the transformation of social structures and the logics of reason. Most significantly, however, as a political philosophy, it has developed an erroneous concept of politics and the political. According to Morgenthau, rationalism provides precisely this flawed notion of the political, which is at the root of twentieth century totalitarianism, and, concurrently, a suppression of political change. He also highlights that while "philosophy as a system of intellectual assumptions is static; life is in constant flux," and although he does not openly develop a notion of social change, his work indirectly adopts the notion by conversing on antagonism and the constantly looming threat of social crises from within social structures.[31] On these grounds, it is possible to contend that although various versions of IR realism have not explicitly taken into account its implications for structural change, they have taken useful moves toward developing concepts of structure, relying on the constant tension between particularism and universalism.

The strict materialist focus of institutionalist theories is of minor help in this regard. Robert Keohane has found in his work on US foreign policy in the fields of energy, money, and trade that changes in the material power resources of the hegemonic actor are insufficient to explain institutional transformation at the international level. Asking how international cooperation can be sustained in times of hegemonic decline, he claims that common interests of advanced industrialized countries are a sufficient variable to explain, though not always to predict, the relative stability of international regimes.[32] He thus proposes to complement systemic and solely material explanatory factors with domestic, economic, and cultural variables. Mainly absorbed in substantial issues and not in philosophical underpinnings, Robert Keohane in *After Hegemony* suggested that

> [a]ny act of cooperation or apparent cooperation needs to be interpreted within the context of related actions, and of prevailing expectations and shared beliefs, before its meaning can be properly understood. Fragments

of political behavior become comprehensible when viewed as part of a larger mosaic.[33]

While the depiction and substantiation of such a "larger mosaic" is the declared aim of this book, *After Hegemony* does not add anything to a theory interested in contingency and the transformation of social structures. In Keohane's work, such structures are seen as power structures, purely material and inducing rational behavior. When change in global political structures is identified, it is referred back to altering shares in material resources of particular (most probably "hegemonic") countries.[34] Though referring to structure habitually throughout his publications, the term is left undefined, eventually leading Keohane to dismiss the concept altogether in his later work. He maintains, against realism and Marxism, that, "[w]e would not observe variations in cooperation from one time period to another, or issue by issue, that were unexplained by the dynamics of capitalism or by changes in international structure."[35]

In conclusion, one might criticize the dominant practices of early institutionalist regime analysis as static.[36] While regimes are inherently dynamic, with the pulling and hauling that is the defining feature of politics circulating around the definition of principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures, the lack of process-centered epistemologies is conspicuous in rationalist and positivist accounts, in which preferences and interests are formed exogenous to the process of pulling and hauling and have strictly objective sources. Intersubjectivity and social construction were subsequently introduced by constructivist and critical IR theory,[37] and some crucial hints at how structures change can be found in this literature.

Viae mediae

Suggesting that the success of classic IR scholarship in helping us understand the concept of social change has been quite limited, I will briefly deal with some of the most widely accepted and processed constructivist approaches in IR, beginning with Alexander Wendt, in particular his monograph *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999). His theory offers intriguing insights into the ontological structure of international politics. His basic level of analysis is the international system as an "ideational" structure that gives meaning to the material capabilities of states.[38] According to Wendt, the nature of international relations is determined by the ideas and beliefs that states have about each other. This does not suggest that material power and interests are irrelevant but rather that their implications and effects are constituted by the social structure of the system.

This is a significant claim, resulting in far-reaching definitional efforts pertaining to the structure of the system, which Wendt conceptualizes as "culture." He defines culture as the totality of intersubjective structures in the international system.[39] To understand systemic change, one would need to identify a change of these intersubjective structures. This, however, poses some problems within the confines of his theoretical orientation, which are all connected to an insufficiently expounded notion of discourse: First, Wendt insufficiently clarifies his stance between "ideas" and material structures;[40] second, the "structural idealism" that he proposes focuses on intersubjective structures but ignores the significant distinction between "idealism" and discourse theory. In the latter's perspective, ideas are themselves constituted by hegemonic, albeit contingent, discursive structures; they lack direction without these constitutive processes. This leads to a third problematic aspect: I will show that structural change can only be grasped if seen as inherent in discourses.[41]

In constructing a *via media*, it seems as if Wendt was caught between two stools: While he concedes a material dimension of social life, he argues that it plays no role apart from the meaning that it is given by discourse. If so, why does the concept of discourse occupy so little room in his theory? How do we get to know ideas? What is the relationship between ideas and language? In Wendt's theory, these questions are approached via his three distinct cultures of the international system—Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian—which are constituted by certain ideas about the general condition of human association, norms of appropriate behavior, and specific roles constituting rivaling or collective identities, respectively.[42] Wendt derives three different hypotheses from his three "cultures of anarchy," referring to different theoretical approaches to the study of the international system, and leading to different grand strategies.[43] With realism, one might expect the familiar arms race, conflict, and war to be the dominating features of anarchy; with institutionalism, one might expect an independent role for international institutions and absolute gains seeking; with constructivism, or idealism, actors might have a well-developed sense of collective identity, each state identifying with the fate of the other. From a constructivist standpoint the sign of a completely internalized culture is that actors identify with it and include the wishes and ideas of others into their own ideas. If identity is nothing other than having certain ideas about who one is in a given situation, then the sense of being part of a group "is a social or collective identity that gives actors an interest in the preservation of their culture."[44]

In this theoretical context, several authors have blamed Wendt for neglecting the inextricable link between the role of ideas/culture on the one hand, and language/discourse on the other hand, and thus of having no

concept of speech and communication.[45] As Hayward Alker criticizes, "not much is said [in Wendt's book] on how to fill in the large, nearly empty, more or less grey, boxes of his three cultural ideal types of anarchic socialization practices."[46] And Petr Drulák consequently poses the question of whether Wendt's theory actually works without reflexivity and communication.[47] Indeed, the relationship between social structure and agency remains unclear at some points. It seems as if the causal power of a static reality (a Hobbesian, Lockean, or Kantian reality) guides states' behavior. Although Wendt advocates the idea that his model "can be readily extended to situations in which culture already exists,"[48] one could contend that the underlying conservative nature of a cultural structure represents an obstacle to change. It comes without surprise that Wendt sees structural (or cultural) change as "quite difficult."[49] Wendt furthermore argues that culture is a self-fulfilling prophecy, which means that actors act on the basis of shared ideas, and this in turn strengthens and reproduces these ideas. Somehow puzzling at first grasp, he maintains that culture still leaves some potential for change. He acknowledges that "[d]espite having a conservative bias, therefore, culture is always characterized by more or less contestation among its carriers, which is a constant resource of structural change."[50] This is a tentative introduction of agency into a systemic theory. If we assume that cultural structures always exist through process between agents, then we have to go a step further and ask what process is actually about.

For instance, the question of how a Hobbesian culture can transform into a Kantian one still seems difficult to come to terms with. Furthermore, the problem of *how* identities and their corresponding interests are transformed in the cultural context in which they are embedded cannot be answered satisfactorily by just pointing to their endogenous character. The principle of "reflected appraisals" is a first step on the way to Wendt's solution to this problem. If one state treats the other as if it were a friend, then by this principle it is likely that this state internalizes that belief. Creating a basic confidence is therefore the fundamental problem of international identity-building. Wendt describes this process as "complex learning:"[51] The political acts of the states that communicate with each other constitute signals about the role that one wants to play and about the corresponding role into which it wants to cast its opponent. If State B modifies its ideas because of State A's political action, then learning has taken place. If this is the case, the actors "will get to know each other, changing a distribution of knowledge that was initially only privately held (a mere social structure) into one that is at least partly shared (a culture)."[52]

On the basis of his interactionist model, Wendt argues that endless conflict and war, as predicted by realists, is not the only logic of the international

system as an anarchic structure. Even the tentative optimism of liberals about international institutions and deepening interdependence facilitating international cooperation within anarchy might not go far enough. Using institutionalist insights, Wendt assumes that states initially engage in pro-communicative activities for egoistic reasons, for example, because state goals cannot be pursued unilaterally. The argument depends on a mechanism of functional institutional efficiency in order to account for social change. However, his social constructivist model maintains that agents themselves are in process when they interact, which means that their very properties, rather than just behaviors, are at issue. Interdependence, common fate and a homogenous culture—what Wendt calls his "master variables"—can in this sense be seen as "independent variables" (a term that he circumvents), good for instigating states' engagement in communicative processes, with social change as a logical outcome.[53] The master variables serve the purpose of setting off a state's engagement in communicative processes. Yet, they seem to be inadequate for explaining the erosion of egoistic identities over time and the creation of collective ones.

Wendt therefore contends that social relationships are constituted by discursive structures[54] and that contestation occurs through communication. However, his arguments offer no concept of discourse at all, as the major source of meaning and social change.[55] Wendt's model of "complex learning" does not rely on discourse, which is always characterized by lack, instability, and mutual infiltration of an inside and an outside. Instead, his model seems to be reduced to physical gestures, and the important features of discourse, which make social change possible in the first place, are not taken into consideration by Wendt, although he makes us think otherwise: "And these ideas exist and have effects because of the discursive forms (norms, institutions, ideologies) in which they are embedded [...]."[56] Had he formulated this argument more rigorously (which would have required a deeper engagement with the notion of "discourse"), perhaps he would have been able to present a better theory of social change, for discourse entails the very possibility of change: it rests on openness, lack, and the contestation of static subjectivities. At the end of the day, it is discourse, not ideas nor culture, that makes thinking possible in the first instance. This argument will be developed further in the remainder of this book.

Later, Wendt and others—like Mathias Albert and Barry Buzan—maintained that a teleological approach may be a step forward to understanding global social change.[57] Wendt argued that a world state might sooner or later be the inescapable solution to global political problems, as the instability of international politics under anarchy in any other previous anarchic logic (a system of states, a society of states, world society, collective

security) would require a move forward to the next, more stable structure. In another version of teleological theorizing—differentiation theory—social change involves the development from simple into complex forms of social organization.[58] This argument is compatible with some aspects of the theoretical direction followed here, if one considers that a structure of articulatory differences might grow in depth as well as breadth in times of intensifying mobility and temporality. However, the teleological logic remains questionable, since the underlying principle of individual action and social organization (rational choice, norm acceptance, communicative action, etc.) are similar at each level and could—due to its radically contingent quality—lead to regression as well as to progress.

Apart from Wendt's work, studying discourse has gained rising attention in constructivist IR thinking. Prominent constructivists have also hinted at the importance of studying language, yet mostly without further detailing a discourse theoretically inspired research program for studying international politics. Emanuel Adler, possibly among those who have gone the farthest toward developing a process-based communitarian approach to international relations by conceptualizing *cognitive evolution* as collective learning, emphasizes "language as the vehicle for the diffusion and institutionalization of ideas within and between communities, as a necessary condition for the persistence over time of institutionalized practices, and as a mechanism for the construction of social reality." He adds that "the communities around which knowledge evolves, which play a crucial role in the construction of social reality, are constituted by language."[59] In Adler's view, all communities are "communities of discourse," as they are producers and subjects of discourse at the same time. Cognitive evolution, then, delineates social change as the reconstruction and institutionalization of collective intersubjective structures, or what Adler conceptualizes as "epistemes."[60] While Wendt at times offers a materialist version of power,[61] Adler accentuates the power inherent in "speech acts, hegemonic discourses, dominant normative interpretations and identities, and moral authority,"[62] postulating a research program that reconstructs the process of discursive construction. He implicitly refers to the third dimension of Steven Lukes's famous three-dimensional view of power.[63] Nonetheless, the ontological dimension of discourse and its function of producing social practices are conspicuously absent from Adler's as well as many other constructivist accounts.[64] Most of the constructivist authors cited here are not to blame for this, since they usually rely on a critical realist ontology, which separates between transitive and intransitive objects and includes the claim that "a socially constructed reality presupposes a nonsocially constructed reality" as well.[65] The methodology underlying the present study does not rest on this claim; it must

rather be seen as a set of rules enabling us to analyze discourse. Ontological statements are related to discourse, that is, social reality, and it is difficult to compare constructivism with discourse theory one to one. Yet, Wendt eventually turns to poststructuralism,[66] formulating precisely the conclusion that would summarize the main thread of the present study:

> When confronted by ostensibly 'material' explanations, always inquire into the discursive conditions which make them work. When Neorealists offer multipolarity as an explanation for war, inquire into the discursive conditions that constitute the poles as enemies rather than friends. When Liberals offer economic interdependence as an explanation for peace, inquire into the discursive conditions that constitute states with identities that care about free trade and economic growth. When Marxists offer capitalism as an explanation for state forms, inquire into the discursive conditions that constitute capitalist relations of production. And so on.[67]

The problem is that Wendt's "structural idealism" just does not correspond to the claim made here, and it does not correspond to the critical realist stance on the independent causal power of material reality, either. In fact, Wendt cannot even lay claim to being an idealist, nor can he assert that he is a realist, since he sees ideas as culturally constituted, which boils down to claiming that they are discursively generated. Discourse, in turn, renounces the realist distinction between the transitive and the intransitive. Ultimately, Wendt's assertions can only be substantiated by moving "beyond constructivism," and by illustrating the deeply political nature of ostensibly brute material reality.[68] I will turn to this endeavor in the next section.

Beyond Constructivism

Some of the abovementioned theories seem to suggest that the world presents itself to us in the form of essential, ready-made categories, while neglecting the conceptual nexus between meaning and power. Moreover, in these perspectives, subjects are shown as preexisting any social construction and are not constituted by dominant discursive structures, which will be revealed to be an essential prerequisite for an understanding of the nexus between crisis and change. Only a few contributions in IR have brought crisis and social change into a direct conceptual relationship. While over the decades it has become intuitively evident that crises are somehow related to political change,[69] Vasquez and Mansbach's ground-breaking article on global political change delineates an ideal-type process in a precise manner. The issue

cycle that they introduce seeks to delineate how issues are put on the agenda, how they are contested, and removed. It develops through the following stages: (1) genesis, (2) crisis, (3) ritualization, (4) dormancy or decision-making (or both), (5) authoritative allocation and, finally, (6) removal from the agenda.[70] Most crucially, their theoretical model allows for an abstraction of specific logics of social life on the basis of the ideal-type. However, in their model, decision-making remains crucial. Process is understood through the actions of agenda-setters, which is apparently due to their Eastonian definition of politics as "the authoritative allocation of valued things"[71] —a definition that has influenced generations of political scientists and that is centered on political actors' capabilities of allocating resources. Structures change because of the practices of actors, and—vice versa—structures do not seem to impact on actors' decisions.[72] Every single stage of global political change forms on the basis of the perceptions of some individuals, and so the most crucial problem for Vasquez and Mansbach's model is the lack of individual decision-makers at the global level. The particular form of behavior that is unique to each stage is highlighted in this context, while structural factors, that is, dominant discourses and cultural credibility, are neglected. Their model is helpful in a structure-free world society; yet, it is in need of reformulation if structures are treated as socially relevant.

In contrast, both static and dynamic features of global structures are incorporated in Robert Cox's approach, which seeks to understand the diachronic moment of social structures by identifying its inherent contradictions. However, Cox—as a historical materialist and Gramscian IR theorist—differentiates between material factors and "ideas," and sees organic intellectuals as the leaders of hegemonic and counterhegemonic formations. Although many of the central components of a theory of social change are espoused in Cox's approach—a historicist epistemology, the limited nature of structures and the recognition of difference—he eventually sticks to a materialist version of Marxism, in which the relationship between forces of production and hegemonic discourses remains unclear.[73]

Going a step further in directing our attention to the features of hegemonic discourses, poststructuralist approaches to the study of world politics do not claim to offer a coherent model or theory but rather propose a position that emphasizes the differential construction of meaning and its underlying power structures, the significance of political subjectivities and the undecidability of social identities. They challenge the analysis of objective facts that exist independently of discursive constitution, and they refuse to engage in a logic of explanation, embracing instead a radical distinct logic "that acknowledges the improbability of cataloguing, calculating, and specifying the 'real causes'"[74] that is so dominant in positivist accounts of

social inquiry. Scientific interest is directed into analyzing the production of meaning in discourses. This is also the point where classical Marxist theorizing offers no further clues to a theory of crisis and change, for it is the essential notion of "class" that triggers revolutionary change. If, however, social structures produce social subjects in the first place, then an essentialist notion of agency must be overcome, and one has to move into so-called post-Marxist rather than classical Marxist theorizing.

A considerable number of authors in a nonessentialist vein have endeavored to emancipate the field of IR from its preoccupation with foundations and direct our attention to the fluidity of structures. Change, in this perspective, is fundamentally engrained in the very notion of "poststructuralism." Undertakings in this theoretical field go back to authors like Richard Ashley in the 1980s,[75] who argues against a fully defined ontological status of actors, states, or nations. Others, like James Der Derian and Michael Shapiro, in their "postmodern readings of world politics," have set the stage for what has from then on been labelled "poststructuralist IR."[76] Der Derian pointed to the "stickiness of the web of meaning"[77] in his account of Keohane's differentiation between "rationalism" and "reflectivism" and accentuates "irreconcilable differences and multiple identities"[78] in his insertion of Baudrillard, Foucault, and Virilio into IR discourses. The same IR researchers also hinted at the role of foreign policy in mediating the strange and unknown, as well as the function of foreign policy as a cultural practice that constitutes identity.[79]

Theorizing the "Other" as both threatening and constituting the ephemeral identity of the "Self" stands at the center of a strand of IR beyond constructivism.[80] Moreover, the materiality of discourse is focused against the idealist tendencies in constructivist IR, and correspondingly, the possibility of any presocial or prediscursive identity is ruled out. Any social "meaning" develops within the realm of the discursive, which is never fixed but always shifting and, to a large degree, indefinite, leaving open the possibility of social change. The "many timelags and contingencies" are highlighted in this literature,[81] while the temporalization of the present and the erosion of allegedly stable national cultures is put into focus. Moreover, crisis constitutes change; social transformation is inherent in crisis. If the world is ordered, it remains stable, while change means rupture and dislocation. Change entails alterations of symbolic orders, as, for instance, discernible in the process of the dissolution of the Soviet Union.[82]

Eventually, social change results in the material but inescapably contingent institutionalization of symbolic orders. In that sense, it depicts a "process of hegemonic orders 'in the making.'"[83] In a radical fashion, Michael Dillon, discussing the "force of transformation," hints at the future-oriented

character of change. Social change always entails a promise, an unrealized and unrealizable potential, a social order that strives at perfection but will necessarily remain limited.[84] This highlights the essentially political nature of social change, which bears immense ethical implications (an issue I will return to in more detail in chapter 3), for if we lived in a perfect society, all politics would have to sojourn immediately. In a comparable fashion, Maja Zehfuss speaks against practices of normalization, the state as existing *a priori*, and stable identities,[85] and R. B. J. Walker rejects the tendencies of drawing well-defined temporal lines between points A and B, for what could these points possibly refer to, if not fuzzy, shifting, fundamentally political, and highly contingent spatiotemporal boundaries within the sphere of global politics?[86]

Yet, although "[t]emporal themes such as development, transformation, continuity, change, repetition, or stasis are crucial for understanding and analyzing the construction of identity with foreign policy discourse,"[87] a comprehensive theory of social change that describes an ideal type cycle from dislocation, over the rearrangement of differential subjectivities, to the sedimentation of practices, is almost absent from this literature as well. There are few instances where change is indeed related to crisis. In this understanding, crisis represents a situation in which our everyday beliefs of how the world works are thoroughly disrupted by an event that is out of our control. In that sense, it can be compared to trauma, that is, a situation that is hard to describe and yet demands to be communicated: "[. . .] it is outside the frameworks of normal social reality and thus outside the linguistic and other symbolic tools we have at our disposal for making sense of the world."[88] As we will see in the course of this inquiry, a likely result of this process is social change in the form of community-building and the construction of a collective identity. Change is deeply embedded in the "impossibility of pure presence" and the questioning of metaphysical closure.[89]

Against this summary of certain strands of the crisis and change literatures, it will henceforth be argued that the transmission of meaning through discourse is the driving force behind social change. One might already at this stage cautiously argue that inherent crises of social structures as well as the disruption of all fully constituted subjectivity are at the root of any kind of social, cultural, or institutional change, although this argument is surely in need of further clarification and expansion. Importantly, crises have always been seen as opening up new opportunities. Hence, Laclau and Mouffe contend that "It is in the multiple, meandering reflections in the broken mirror of 'historical necessity' that a new logic of the social begins to insinuate itself, one that will only manage to think itself by questioning the very literality of the terms it articulates."[90] The social, understood not

as isolated individual entities but as historically contingent, albeit dynamic social practices, is the focus here. *Social* positionality, that is, shifting and multifariously constituted positionality, is at stake, an argument that inescapably directs our attention to difference.

In contrast to most of the contributions discussed so far, crisis will be seen as omnipresent within the social, making political interventions possible in the first place. These interventions are characterized by radical contingency, which reveals the impossibility of final grounding. Foundations can only be established temporarily, in the form of "contingent foundations."[91] Institutional change then means the transformation of necessarily contingent but historically materialized discourses: Concrete social practices are always embedded in earlier, established discursive structures or customary meanings. This illustrates that crisis or dislocation in the form of necessary contingency must be seen as constant political constructions. Without societal crises, politics would lose its substance and direction as any political decision is taken within a horizon of dislocated structures and subjectivities. There are bigger and smaller dislocations, expressing changes of different magnitude. These are not located outside its political field of constitution but are, on the contrary, fundamentally political.

Conclusion

In part I, I discussed the literatures on crisis and change from IR perspectives and those foreign to IR. The inquiry was conducted in order to unveil the shortcomings in previous research as well as to identify work that opens avenues for a discourse theoretical conceptualization of crisis and change. To further elucidate the argument proposed in part I, I will trace the relationship between crisis and change in a more detailed manner. I maintain that two steps have to be taken on the way toward a clearer understanding of the nexus between crisis and change: First, the "nature of the social" shall be discussed. This appears to be crucial as we always imply crises of the social when we speak of crises. This move also takes us beyond the realm of an illusionary immediacy, with the aim of formulating a theoretical apparatus that stretches both beyond the mind and the emphasis on the subject as having an ontological significance apart from the practices it performs. Mental activities will be seen as relative to an historical and cultural structure of differences. Reality loses its objective substance and instead becomes a function of social practice. In the sense of the later Wittgenstein,[92] who has become omnipresent in the social sciences as a point of departure for practice-oriented inquiry, language, and action will henceforth be fused into a whole, labeled *discourse*. In opposition to all forms of physicalism and naturalism,

one of the main arguments to be developed in part II holds that the reality of the social is characterized by instability, contingency, and the lack of secure foundations. It is therefore fundamentally and necessarily crisis-ridden. In chapter 3, I will present one of my main claims—referring to the political constitution of the social. In chapter 4, to approach the notion of the social even more closely, I will introduce the concept of "difference" as presented in structural linguistics, anthropology, French poststructuralism, and critical theory. I claim that a discussion of "difference" within social theory and IR, respectively, poses the most crucial element on the path toward a larger theory of crisis and change.

PART II

Reality and Difference

CHAPTER 3

Reality

Mind and World

The question as to whether, and to what extent, crises are real phenomena can hardly be solved merely by catching a first glimpse of Marxist and International Relations (IR) crisis literature, as conducted in chapter 1. A number of questions follow from this, touching on issues of ontology and epistemology as traditionally discussed in philosophy. One overriding issue to be elucidated lies in the separation of "mind" and "world" that has been taken for granted in the different positivist and critical realist research strands in the social sciences.[1] First of all, what do these two concepts—"mind" and "world"—refer to? Does it make sense to draw a clear line between mind and world and treat the two concepts as mutually exclusive? If yes (which will be shown to be highly problematic), is it possible to speak of reality as existing independently of the mind, as put forward by Marxists over more than one and a half centuries? Or can we reduce "world" to concepts, as has been popular among idealist philosophers in the tradition of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel? Both "mind-world monism" and "mind-world dualism" are renounced in what follows: First, understanding is not conceived as the activity of an autonomous subject;[2] and second, one may legitimately ask whether it is beneficial at all to speak of an independently existing "world," particularly when we address problems of the social. The concept of "reality" might only be expedient if embedded in a system of differential practices.

Meaningful social practices will thus be described using the label of "discourse", as certain strands of discourse theory seem to offer promising answers to the above raised questions. Discourse will eventually become coterminous with reality—indeed with a very material notion of reality. The separation between "mind-world dualism" and "mind-world monism"—which in IR

has been quite prominently and rigorously discussed in Patrick Thaddeus Jackson's path-breaking and widely discussed *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*[3]—collapses altogether if, first, one takes discourse to be the constitutive sphere of all meaningful reality; second, one assumes that subjects are not preexisting, self-contained entities, but are to a large extent generated by discourse; and third, if one reformulates the notion of reflexivity (the historical situatedness of the researcher within the "object of inquiry") in a nonhumanist fashion. As political theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, who will later assume a central position in our theory of crisis and change, succinctly put it:

> The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has *nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to our thought. [. . .] At the root of the previous prejudice lies an assumption of the *mental* character of discourse. Against this, we will affirm the *material* character of every discursive structure. To argue the opposite is to accept the very classical dichotomy between an objective field constituted outside of any discursive intervention, and a discourse consisting of the pure expression of thought. This is, precisely, the dichotomy which several currents of contemporary thought have tried to break.[4]

This attempt to "break" the hegemonic discourse in the (so-called) social sciences represents one of the aims of the present study. Numerous poststructuralist, analytic, as well as continental philosophers have in a similar vein inferred that there must be a level preceding the very distinction between thought and world, something that makes both concepts possible in the first place. For example, Gilles Deleuze maintained that "[t]hought is nothing without something that forces and does violence to it. More important than thought, there is 'what leads to thought.'"[5] This abstract thing that leads to thought is precisely what I call *discourse*. Discourse makes people see things differently; it has a historical and a contingent implication, which is nicely explained in Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, who writes about the distinctive character of a work of art: "[I]t is the work of art itself that displays itself under different conditions. The viewer of today not only sees in a different way, but he sees different things."[6] It is clear that the viewer as a subject has changed over time. One might add that under different historical circumstances, the very substance of the artwork takes on a new form.

A number of problems related to this understanding of discourse have to be discussed in subsequent sections. This is because discourse remains an over-complex, undertheorized term, which draws from a plentiful array of research traditions in social and linguistic theory, and also recently in IR.[7] In

its most general sense—and perhaps corresponding best to a common sense definition of the term—discourse is associated with the structured totality of verbal exchanges in a particular social field, examples being "medical discourse" or "religious discourse." Most of the theories dealing with the concept accept that discourse does not "objectively" portray the "world out there," but constructs this "world" in the first place.[8] Differences exist with regards to the extent of this construction: Are the world, social relations and identities constructed "all the way down" within these discourses? In other words: Do we have access to extradiscursive reality? Or is there anything that needs to be treated as the "context" of a particular discourse? Where is discourse theory located on a spectrum between so-called mind-world monism and dualism? Does it fall into that spectrum at all, or does it represent a third, completely independent and incompatible perspective? There are multiple possible answers to these questions. While Jackson, following the example of Nuno Monteiro and Keven Ruby in this regard,[9] makes an intriguing argument for a pluralism of ontologies in IR, his solutions rest on a narrow treatment of monism and dualism, which precludes the possibility of a third take. He develops a taxonomy of four "methodologies" by blending a pair of what he calls "core wagers" (mind-world dualism versus mind-world monism and phenomenalism versus transfactualism). These wagers devise the frame for "philosophical ontology" in contrast to "scientific ontology." Cross-combinations between them engender a total of four methodologies, which in turn designate the range of scientific alternatives in the *Conduct of Inquiry in IR*. These are neopositivism, critical realism, analyticism, and reflexivity.

Although Jackson's book is innovative, dense, and well situated in the philosophy of science and IR literature, neither his starting line (the "core wagers"), nor his depiction of the range of "scientific" options in IR (the four methodologies), is companionable with those offered here. Although I attempt to expose the limitations Jackson's book presents, I am at the same time building on his fundamental contributions to IR. In terms of critique, I am in good company. Many philosophers from different origins have argued that the very distinction between something that is "known" and the various ways of knowing it ignore the conceptual conditioning that takes place previously.[10] Beyond this principal objection, a number of reasons can be summarized here against Jackson's typology: First, where his notion of science seems to be indebted to the "empirically grounded,"[11] this study will problematize the very concept of a boundary between the empirical and the nonempirical. If the empirical is coterminous with "empirical evidence" or "empirical reality," as Jackson suggests,[12] then it opens up the classical avenues of verification and falsification and precludes reason, reflectivity,

discursive constitution, and transcendental reference. If empiricism rests on sensory impressions, one wonders whether this is actually a monist or a dualist endeavor. To put it simply: Is the experience of concrete phenomena, as inferred by the phenomenalist position, dualist or monist? Does not the phenomenalist position that all reference to an external reality must be relinquished and knowledge must be restricted to sense-impressions require some sort of dualism? As Jackson himself concedes with reference to Kant, an unmediated perception that eludes language and social convention is nonsensical.[13] If, however, the very notion of the ground is called into question, as it will be further on in this chapter, we are moving into a postfoundational as well as postempirical field of theorizing, in which essence and closure are questioned on a substantial as well as an ontological level.

In fact, Jackson's account cannot liberate itself from Karl Popper's categorization of science on the basis of "three worlds"—World 1 (the physical world), World 2 (the subjective world) and World 3 (an objective body of knowledge that cannot be reduced to World 1). This categorization refers back to René Descartes's distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* (the latter denoting mere material substance), which subsequently paved the way for the dualism so neatly described by Jackson.[14] Against this background, global politics as a social space can certainly not be conceptualized as a coherent and independent "empirical fact" that can be outplayed against a "normative standard."[15] Difference—as one of the core concepts necessary for a definition of the social—can also not be treated like a positive empirical fact. The empirical equals the "directly detectable," and difference does not fall into this category. If it did, social science would remain restricted to what Jackson summarizes under the heading of "neopositivism." The other three "methodologies" on offer in his book—critical realism, analyticism, and reflexivity—in one way or the other entail the situatedness of the researcher within his subject of inquiry and therefore rely on at least tentative (critical realism, analyticism), and in one case (reflexivity) even fundamental, normative standards.[16] It still remains unclear what "factual knowledge" refers to in Jackson's account and how it can be produced. As "knowledge" is highly problematic in itself, for it conceals the social (or power) structures in which it is embedded,[17] obscures the normative implications that come with it and disguises the political nature of shared understandings, Jackson's definition of science must be disclaimed. It rests on the collection of "evidence" and precludes a deeper engagement with what Jackson calls "monism," which obviously refers to the sphere of the perceived.[18] Moreover, it takes stable frontiers between body and mind for granted, and relies on the problematic notion of a preexisting, autonomous subject capable of perception. If, however, the empirical applies to those domains that are experienceable

or in some form intelligible, then the transcendental is equally excluded as the unthinkable, the unidentified, and the unfinished.

Second, if Jackson's "broad definition allows us to focus on the knowledge-production techniques in our own field,"[19] progress will be the result of an advancement precisely in the area of those "techniques," which boils down to an emphasis on epistemology understood as more sophisticated methods. "Big data" are then due to replace theories in the not too distant future. Techniques, conceived as advanced methods, cannot function without theoretical guidance, even more so when it comes to social kinds. A deeper understanding of the social will quickly expose the argument that this is impossible without centering on transfactuality—a transfactuality properly understood, that is, not as a provisional placeholder to be substituted by an observable once scientific knowledge progresses, but as *in-principle unobservable*. In this understanding, unobservables remain concepts and are impossible to be directly perceived by the senses. The international system would not qualify as a "detectable unobservable,"[20] for this would reduce it to a number of autonomous entities. Social structures essentially transcend their physical bases, and one cannot be a realist in this perspective when it comes to social kinds. When critical realists resort to physical constraints and possibilities in their analyses of, say, war, they usually point to the real, lethal consequences of weapons, which not even the most radical poststructuralist would call into question. The difference between the two perspectives narrows down when critical realists like Milja Kurki concede that "[o]f course, material resources emerge from previous social structuring and practices and derive their meaning from social structures and practices."[21] In any way, a narrow IR critical realism, which focuses on the relationship between material and ideational structures but disregards the constitution of ideas by hegemonic discourses, is rejected in this book.[22]

In chapter 4, this will become very clear in the discussion of difference, which defines the social but will never be experienceable beyond conceptual confines. Phenomenalism excludes this conceptual dimension and relies on the enlargement of the range of experienceability through an augmentation of methodical means. Both "neopositivism" and "analyticism" take this perspective, and the differences between the two methodologies blur when both take repeated experiences of objects as their point of departure. It makes no difference whether these "experiences" are dualist or monist; they both lead directly into method-driven research aimed at perfection of those experiences. Method, in turn, is never neutral but shapes the mind significantly. This exemplifies how dualism and monism do not represent separate categories. In a similar vein, the distinction between phenomenalism and critical realism somehow obscures when unobservables are merely

seen as placeholders for undetected but in principle detectable observables. Of course, this qualification does not apply to methods of detection, which are conceptual and not physical in nature.[23] In any case, the dualist shadow adumbrates any deeper discussion of the generative and constitutive powers of transfactuals. In consequence, Jackson's typology also impedes a thorough reflection on ethics, because how is it possible to reflect on ethics if "what there is" is pregiven and hence falls outside the sphere of political constitution? Also, if difference is the fundamental constituting moment of society, critical realists' obsession with "hammer-and-nail" arguments must be criticized: While "the hammer has a set of properties that allow it to function in that role,"[24] difference cannot be measured according to such standards. It cannot be reduced to materials we find in the world. The question is why critical realists bring in these arguments all the time and the next minute maintain that everything happening in the social world is concept-dependent. The reliance on the dualism-monism distinction is a constant feature of critical realist discourse; yet, equally it is often criticized as futile.[25] Therefore, by relying on certain strands of what is often dubbed poststructuralism, I will introduce a way of overcoming this very distinction.

Third, the problem with Jackson's typology is reflected in his differentiation between scientific and philosophical ontologies,[26] which he adopts from Patomäki and Wight (2000), yet can only be upheld if one takes for granted the allegedly dualist argument that the world exists independently of our minds and "scientific theories" refer to that world in a direct manner. What the fuzzy term "world" refers to—if not to secure foundations—remains in the dark. Although Jackson takes issue with Monteiro and Ruby's taxonomical proposal, he concurs with them in claiming that when it comes to philosophy, "there are no further commitments to which one might turn to justify knowledge."[27] Jackson's interest in philosophical ontology leads to a neglect of concrete IR research, and his book is more about the scientific identity of the discipline than about its substance matters or scientific ontology. While Jackson initially repudiates Wight's claim of a primacy of ontology and emphasizes the significance of epistemology in securing the "truth" of an ontological assertion,[28] he follows Wight in postulating a distinction between scientific and philosophical ontology, the former understood "as bestiary [. . .], concerned with what exists," the latter seen as "the conceptual and philosophical basis on which claims about the world are formulated in the first place."[29] It is highly questionable that "the conceptual and philosophical basis" that Jackson speaks of is one and the same thing, and in *The Conduct of Inquiry*, a reflection on the nexus between "philosophy," on the one hand, and "science," on the other hand (in terms of whether a cognitive

hierarchy exists between the two levels), seems to be elusive. Especially one question could have been addressed more thoroughly in this context: Can the philosophy of science assume the role of a master signifier, or would it make more sense to concentrate on political theory and philosophy, hermeneutics, and history, in other words: *continental philosophy*? Being in essence political, the latter's interest concentrates on lines of exclusion, which make order, community, and identity ontologically possible.[30]

On this background, the strict separation between the humanities and the natural sciences is in need of further discussion. While the "traditionalists" in IR (English School, some strands of "Classical Realism") negate the categorical separation between philosophy and science, almost all critical strands of theorizing in social theory (e.g., the Frankfurt School, French poststructuralism, postcolonialism, etc.) have doubted the value of such a separation. In other words: Metaphysics cannot be related to scientific ontology, yet ontology would be inaccessible without a thorough embeddedness in metaphysics. Metaphysics, however, denies direct observability and understands *Being* as a system. Therefore, the typology of mind-dependence (*monism*), mind-independence (*dualism*), experience (*phenomenalism*) and unobservability (*transfactualism*) has to be overcome in this book, and the question of whether phenomenalism and transfactualism are monist or dualist has to be further delved into, without, however, returning to these two terms too often.

Beyond the Mind

The argument of the previous section was developed in order to elicit the possibility of a discipline of global politics *beyond the mind*, for it is here where the most serious dangers can be seen: Both "mind-world dualism" and "mind-world monism" take their cues from the centrality of the mind—from an emphasis on humanism, which conceptualizes the social and political as exclusively the results of the rational capacities of human beings. In this context, monism itself can be understood as an essentializing and totalizing concept, since it reduces existence to a single principle, that is, the mind. While appearing maiden-like and neutral, for it seems as if the mind represents a sphere that is not tainted by ideology, the "reality" of the mind is in fact deeply ideological and embedded in dominant "realities." In consequence, *intersubjectivity* is neither politically neutral nor a prediscursive category.[31] Likewise, ideology always restricts a universe of meanings to a particular one, and it is the mind that produces this fixture. For Jackson, autonomously functioning minds "generate" theories; the structure of the social, which might provide an independent horizon for what is possibly

generated by the mind, is not taken into account.[32] Monism has got nothing in common with postfoundationalism, as Christine Sylvester elucidates in her review of Jackson's approach.[33] In contrast, it must be seen as seriously foundational, if not fundamentalist, if it involves the reduction of reality to some subjective or intersubjective truths *about the world*. Finally, this also shows that monists are in a sense also dualists.

Phenomenalism is only another specification of monism, and a combination of the two comes down to tautology, because—from the phenomenalist perspective—what else could deal with *experience* in the first place, if not the *mind?* However, the mind is definitely not independent in processing incoming data, and this book firmly disagrees with the standpoint that monism can soften the dichotomy between mind and world. In what follows, a rigidly anti-mentalist and anti-realist standpoint will be proposed. The failure to grasp the transformation of global social structure in the field of traditional IR is mainly due to a dualist *and* monist orientation in the leading journals and books—and not first and foremost to the fact that monism is actually dualism, as critical realists would contend.[34]

Rather, I follow Wittgenstein's argument here that "[t]he world is the totality of facts, not of things."[35] Of course, it is difficult to define in a precise manner what "facts" are. Consider, for example, analytic philosopher Michael Dummett's suggestion that a fact rests on a statement, which is a linguistic entity or a *proposition*: a commitment to or assertion of something. It then becomes clearer why—as Wittgenstein insisted—reality is constituted by facts, and why Dummett—though not rigorously following the Austrian philosopher in this regard—explains with reference to Wittgenstein that "[t] he world is composed not of bare objects, but of objects situated in relation to one another, that is, of complexes of objects."[36] We get a first glimpse here of what I will specify as relations of difference in the next chapter. "Truth" becomes relative on this account. I depart here from a traditional understanding of the term, which would require us to fix meanings.[37] It would thus be worthwhile for logical reasons to abandon the concept of truth in favor of a thoroughly developed concept of difference. A certain ontology can never be prioritized in the meaning-related social sciences; metaphysical statements are regulated by semantic, or—more precisely—discursive conditions of possibility. A conception of an "independently existing reality" can only be attained by studying the structure of the meaning systems in which it is embedded. We understand it when we see a tree, a house, a car, or other people, but any grasp of what we see is no more than an image, embedded in systems of signification; there are no facts apart from those that the particular grammar of a discourse has framed, and metaphysics can only play its part in this debate at a very general level, that is, in denoting

the nature of propositions and their conditions of possibility.[38] Jackson hints at this important argument in his discussion of a hammer in the analyticism chapter, by maintaining that, "[in] fact, I have not even encountered the hammer as a simply 'occurring thing', but in using it *as a hammer* I have already entered into a whole series of interrelated functions and purposes in terms of which my activity is guided."[39]

This statement comes close to the argument I am developing here. In his discussion of Clifford Geertz's work, Jackson takes a crucial step in acknowledging that it might not be of principal importance to analyze "what people perceive, but on (so to speak) what they perceive *with*."[40] However, Jackson does not proceed further along this path, as he continues by arguing that "[s]omething like this is the basic conjecture of a certain kind of IR constructivism, which privileges the ideational and in this sense subjective aspects of social life."[41] Such a conclusion is only consequential within Jackson's typology, as constructivism epitomizes "the highest of highs" in the matrix of monism and dualism. Poststructuralism, however, is situated outside this matrix.

Poststructuralists do not necessarily deny the existence of a physical world "out there." They are simply not interested in how far we should go in claiming that such a world exists. Instead, interest is directed into how "things" are made factual, in what goes on in meaning systems and the interface between the systems and culture. Critical realists like Wight concede that "the methods required to study atomic particles, for example, would be wholly inappropriate when applied to the study of social processes."[42] He nonetheless refers to examples from the natural sciences time and again when making the case for the primacy of ontology in the study of social phenomena.[43] Poststructuralism parts company with critical realism's two most fundamental tenets: causality and empirical grounding.

While many principles of critical realism are in fact compatible with the standpoint adopted in the following, it is exactly the notion of causation that must be repudiated. The understanding of international politics formulated here is ostentatiously situated at the center of the split in the discipline of IR, which has widened between those who favor so-called constitutive theorizing and those who claim that causation has to be reformulated in order to gain a better understanding of social and political affairs.[44] It has become popular through Alexander Wendt's *Social Theory*, in which he argues that structures constitute the positions of subjects, as in the case of the master-slave relationship or in a marriage, where the normative structure of the matrimonial relationship constitutes wife and husband. If structure is seen to produce constitutive effects in this sense, causality becomes at least partly problematic. The debate is closely connected with the one found

in *Explaining and Understanding in International Relations*, as influentially formulated by Martin Hollis and Steve Smith.[45] This pertains to the differentiation between explanation as the study of regular patterns in international politics and understanding as the investigation of deeper meanings and reasons for particular political behavior. While Milja Kurki argues that ultimately both forms of inquiry have to be labeled "causation" and can be combined, Hollis and Smith see them as embedded in completely different forms of nature and the social world and, thus, not combinable. The first is seen to be related to a Humean concept of science that rests on the study of regularities, which are empirically observable. This concept of science hinges on a probabilistic account of regularity-determinism and on a reduction of causation to *moving* or *efficient causes*.[46]

Wendt helpfully distinguishes between causation and constitution, the latter meaning either "to define" or "to produce/to generate."[47] It is exclusively this second meaning of the term that has to be emphasized in social theorizing. In Wendt's understanding as well as the one proposed here, it is the more dynamic or "active" form of constitution, and it cannot be equated with causation, for this would also imply a temporal dimension in the sense that "A leads to B." In the deeper analysis of the notion of difference conducted in the next two sections, the point will be made that even temporal "variables" like past and future are solely constitutive, not causative. In his discussion of Wendt, Jackson follows Wight (2006) by claiming that causal relations are manifest at the behavioral level, since masters and slaves alternately cause each other to behave in particular ways.[48]

Three counterarguments are in order in this context: First, even in a dyadic master-slave relationship, it is the larger and more complex social structure rather than the direct interaction between the two that "produces" them as subjects and allows particular actions to occur and delegitimizes others. Second, difference dismisses unidirectional causation and denotes multidirectional constitution instead. The "active" dimension of constitution is so significant in this regard that "causation" seems inappropriate to capture its complexity. Third, and perhaps most significantly, causation at least tacitly relies on stable frontiers between A and B (*"A has a causal effect on B"*). Against this position, poststructuralists advance a critique of foundations or ultimate presence and suggest that one subject is always plagued by others, that others are absorbed into the self. Presence does not rest in itself, but is haunted by absence and otherness. Furthermore, there is a fundamentally different concept of temporality at play in this process, as every subject necessarily bears the traces of the past and of a possible future within itself.

At the end of the day, both dualists and monists are confronted with the same kind of problem: How are the world-independent "mind" and the

mind-independent "world" mutually imbricated and constituted? To pick up from where we started this discussion, if discourse mediates any contact with reality and at the same time is not a mental product, then the very distinction between monism and dualism must be replaced by a third alternative, which Jackson eschews in his book. If, in other words, both *naturalism* (the reduction of reality to the physical) and *idealism* (the reduction of reality to thought) are ruled out, Jackson's four methodologies (neopositivism, critical realism, analyticism and reflexivity) do not exhaust all metatheoretical options.[49] Jackson's most sublime methodology—reflexivity, a combination of monism and transfactualism—is still haunted by unmediated materiality. Robert Cox's Gramsci-inspired critical theory is the prime example in this context, and again, one could argue that critical realism would serve just as well in explaining this stance. No wonder, then, that scholars inspired by poststructuralist theorizing have criticized Jackson for his account of reflexivity. Others have classed critical realism and reflexivity together as comparable approaches.[50]

In the perspective taken here, facts are constituted in different, competing discourses, such as modern physics, on the one hand, and astrology, on the other. Quite similarly, ideas—as mental products—do not constitute the experienced (whether observable or not), but are themselves an upshot of discursive variation. Undoubtedly, this is a definition of discourse that remains disputed by dualist as well as monist stances. For example, compatible with what Jackson—as a combination of dualism and transfactualism—dubs critical realism,[51] Marxists view discourses as the ideological underpinnings of the exploitative forces of market structures. In a comparable fashion, *critical discourse analysis* (CDA) "studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context,"[52] which includes "processes of production and interpretation."[53] Critical realism advocates reflexivity and cannot be strictly separated from the latter. Furthermore, the mutually constitutive relationship between discourses and social structures that is central to CDA builds a conceptual bridge into poststructuralist and post-Marxist theories as developed in French critical theory and discourse theory, but essentially remains in the realist framework.[54] As Christine Sylvester aptly put it in her discussion of Jackson: "Clearly, poststructuralism [. . .] is not Jackson's forte."[55] While CDA often reads discourse rather narrowly as rules governing speech or writing, poststructuralists argue that all kinds of social practices are to be considered meaningful and therefore fall under the category of discourse. Quite confusingly, poststructuralism seems to fall under the category of monism in Jackson's typology. This view stands in stark contrast to the notion of discourse put forward here. Instead, it takes Ludwig Wittgenstein's

concept of a language game as a general starting line, which would comprise both words and the actions that surround these words.[56] The relational and structured totality of the interplay between these two dimensions of the social is what I call discourse. It could appositely be replaced by the notion of practice, as Ernesto Laclau has at times suggested,[57] for discourse is still frequently reduced to its linguistic connotations. Discourse as understood here, however, at all times implies a performative and a structural dimension. Action is fundamental to discourse, and so is the social structure in which action takes place. Words and actions regulate each other, which precludes any naïve form of realism, but also rejects *idealism,* the reduction of what is real to what can be thought. This also includes *linguistic idealism*, in which the world would be constructed entirely by our linguistic practices. Furthermore, it rules out the unity of a preexisting subject, which only needs to represent the world "out there" correctly—an argument made by idealists as well as realists.[58] It has to be clear that in discourse, language, and social practice are interwoven and mutually dependent. Preexisting subjectivity is substituted by a focus on the structure between potential subject positions, which are organized in a structure of differences. These differences generate the substance of the social, that is, "sedimented practices" or institutions. These are stabilized forms of collective human behavior around which communication becomes possible in the first place. Discourses are generating, anchoring, and dissolving these institutions and, in this sense, are highly material. In this view, the sedimentation of discourses becomes existential of the social. Poststructuralist political theory maintains that our understanding of the world always rests in systems of differences comprising both language and action. Neither interaction—as outlined by George Herbert Mead and drawn on by Alexander Wendt (1999) —nor language exhausts all dimensions of the social. This is why in the following I will turn to particular strands of poststructuralism, which take both language and other forms of "action" seriously.

Poststructuralism in that sense is not a "philosophy of science," as problematically claimed by Wendt. Wendt suggests the following: "Neither positivism, nor scientific realism, nor poststructuralism tells us about the structure and dynamics of international life. Philosophies of science are not theories of international relations."[59] While positivism and scientific realism are described as methodologies in Jackson's account, this argument also applies at least partly to poststructuralism or discourse theory, which is both a *political theory* that seeks to unveil how some ontological claims are granted credibility, while others are denounced as illegitimate, and a *methodology* that structures the analysis of text in all possible forms. Regarding this understanding of poststructuralism, Wendt is wrong when he claims

that poststructuralism offers no theory of structure and structural change. On the contrary, we will see that the combining element of all the different theories labelled poststructuralist, is a reliance on structural theorizing and the relationship between social structure and subjectivity, time, power and truth, often summarized under the label "discourse." If poststructuralism is about anything, it is about dislocated structures and social transformation, in other words: it is about *crisis and change*. A clarification of these issues seems necessary, for what the brief discussion above illustrates is that beyond a general and incomplete usage of the term discourse, no consensus exists as to what discourses refer to ontologically and how to analyze them. It is therefore suitable to speak of ontology in the plural—of the *plurality of ontologies*.[60] This plurality must not be conflated with the plurality of worlds. Rather, it designates *difference* in its most general terms, which implies no hint of an independently existing world but leaves open the possibility of manifold, historically contingent "realities."

Following this latter theoretical approach, and based on the emphasis on practices introduced by Wittgenstein, any meaning system has a linguistic and a practice dimension. It is the shape of the meaning system that is of interest, and which will from now on be further specified under the label of discourse. Departing from the numerous concepts of discourse outlined above, the term will gain a more specific character, denoting *the structure of articulatory differences in a social or political field*.[61] This definition allows for a reconceptualization of the social as politically instituted; the social only gains contours through some kind of political articulation. What is more, the definition incorporates the prospect for change: On the one hand, no discourse is closed or total, which leaves potential room for development toward completeness; on the other hand, the possibility of its transformation rests in its continuous contacts with other discourses as well as in its internal deficiencies. Numerous societal sectors within the wider sphere of social infinitude—such as ethnic, national, sexual subgroups, economically and ecologically underprivileged groups—struggle for their diverse political demands. These are the subjects emblematizing the nexus between structural dislocation and democratic politics. It is their combined effort, which one may call a *discursive struggle*. The temporary solution to these struggles is called hegemony, a term used here in a post-Gramscian sense, meaning that it stretches far beyond the classic definition intended by Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci.[62] Crisis and hegemony are inextricably entangled, and it is only in situations of fragmentation that hegemony becomes possible: in fact, hegemony attempts to close the structural gaps left by a crisis. Eventually, it is the temporary naturalization and objectification of a necessarily contingent social structure that will be specified as *hegemony*.

It needs to be emphasized that while discourses can be relatively stable at times, in principle they remain partial and historically contingent at all times. Contingency means that certain configurations of the social are historically possible, but not necessary. It is based on a *postfoundationalist* view of society, which rejects the argument that knowledge claims can be made on a solid metaphysical base. It is also anchored in a nonessentialist view, which rebuffs any claims of a pregiven, external, and objectively defined "world out there." On the contrary, the social is set up by means of politics; it gains contours through some kind of political articulation.[63] Following Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, the study defines *politics* as "a practice of creation, reproduction and transformation of social relations."[64] It is the sphere of the decision in and for a society, in that it transmits and promulgates certain particular meanings of the social as universals. Since there is no essential common ground that binds a society together, different identities have to be politically articulated.

The structure of the social or political system is consequently also discursive; the social, and what is sometimes called the culture of the system, are constituted entirely by discourse. Therefore, changes in the constitution of the social are reflected in changes of the structure of discourse. While IR theorists like Colin Wight draw a line between the "linguistic structure of social life" and the "social" itself,[65] this differentiation is rejected in the following argument. Meaning, it will be argued, does not depend on reference to the world "out there" or on ideas about an external reality. Instead, ideas are conceptualized as constituted by the meanings we learn and reproduce, not their source, nor are they the origin of the language we speak.

That said, it is only consequential to repudiate the distinction between the transitive and the intransitive, as widely employed in realist ontology. The intransitive, understood as real objects that exist independently of mental activities, creates an independent level of causality, and is seen as dogmatic by poststructuralists, "because why exclude from the transitive variation this object which is beyond the realm of transitivity?"[66] Instead, any knowledge claim builds on transitive objects, that is, previously formulated statements. The conduct of inquiry beyond these knowledge claims becomes impossible, which explains why scientific discourses change continuously. The distinction between the transitive and the intransitive dissolves insofar as the intransitivity of objects is nothing else but another discourse constituting the object in the first place. Any sort of final ontology is renounced.

Postfoundationalism

It becomes quite obvious by what has been said so far that "reality" is a difficult concept that requires extensive clarifications. Against this background

one might also see the analysis in this book as a tentative discussion of the fundamental problem of metaphysics in asking what reality refers to. What kind of "reality" are we talking about when we talk about crises? Do crises constitute objective phenomena? Or are they, to use a noun that has become widely used in the study of global politics, "social constructions?"[67] If crises are indeed constructed, who constructs? Furthermore, when do we know that we encounter a crisis? Can we grasp or "detect" crises in all their dimensions? How can we be certain not to look at the wrong aspects of a purported crisis?

In answering these questions, positivism, neopositivism, objectivism, and foundationalism still seem hegemonic in large parts of the social sciences. Regularity-determinism, mind-world dualism, but also representation, the reliance on ideas, monism, and subjectivity still loom large within social inquiry, and in most of these perspectives, metaphysics designates the effort of grounding a society in essentialist terms. The perspective taken here has nothing to do with skepticism or even nihilism, described by Richard Bernstein as the implications of relativism.[68] Rather, three fundamental insights are at the root of the argument: First, a "post-Kantian" recognition of the phenomenal world as always already interpreted by subjects, who are themselves generated in complex systems of dominant discourses. Second, the conviction that we do not have direct access to this world "as it is," but—if we are able to interpret "the world" at all—we must necessarily interpret it through the mediation of language or discourse as the site of the production of meaning. From Plato to Hume the philosophy of science basically rested on the assumption that cognition mirrored real world objects. Kant later directed our attention to the conditions of possibility of cognition. It is fair to conclude that Kant asked for the mind's involvement in the construction of objects, though he also left open the possibility of inquiring into the circumstances under which thinking becomes possible. The third argument—most prominently developed in the field of structural linguistics, which evolved in the century after Kant—involves the claim that language is a system of differences without any positive content. This implies a shift in last century's philosophy from things in themselves to a focus on relations between what is described as factual in language and discourse.[69] Martin Heidegger's post-Kantian existential philosophy and Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language set the stage for poststructuralist critiques of structural linguistics.

The separation between "mind" and "world" that has been discussed in the previous sections is of minor help for the following inquiry. Richard Bernstein claimed in 1971 that the Cartesian worldview, which requires ontological certainty and relies on the separation of body and mind, assumes complete self-awareness (*cogito ergo sum*) and often leads to naïve forms of

rationalism, objectivity, realism, and materialism, must be seen as obsolete: "Most contemporary philosophers have been in revolt against the Cartesian framework," Bernstein maintained.[70] Debates revolve around the character of human rationality, often formulated as binary oppositions between objective foundations on one side and pure relativism on the other. According to the Cartesian framework, human reason is capable of freeing itself from all bias by referring to secure foundations. On that basis, it would be possible to formulate the framework of a universal science.

The concepts of representation and correspondence, which claim that scientific theories refer to an objectively portrayable world that exists independently of our minds, are renounced as logically inconsistent.[71] In contrast, concepts such as reality, rationality, and ethics are to be seen as a product of a discursive structure. Reason, therefore, is history- and concept-dependent. In his book *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (1983), Bernstein thus coined the term *Cartesian anxiety*. The expression confronts objectivist hopes that there must be some eternal foundations to which rationality can appeal:

> *Either* there is some support for our being, a fixed foundation for our knowledge, *or* we cannot escape the forces of darkness that envelop us with madness, with intellectual and moral chaos.[72]

Bernstein himself attempted to escape this Cartesian anxiety, seeing it as a dangerous and misleading dichotomy. Quoting Richard Rorty, Bernstein concludes that, "Like Rorty, I think we are coming to an end—the playing out—of an intellectual tradition (Rorty calls it the 'Cartesian—Lockean—Kantian tradition')."[73] The naïvely purported historical stability of cultural structures, which is logically unverifiable given their dependence on continually shifting relations of difference, is sometimes seen as permanent by what Bernstein dubs "objectivists." In contrast, for "subjectivists," a given theoretical framework is what creates the pictures of the world available to us.

The rejection of the Cartesian framework has been accompanied by a refutation of method, which authors like Paul Feyerabend, Richard Rorty, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Richard Bernstein criticize as disfiguring the ontological dimension of "knowledge."[74] Method has to be open, not mechanistic, and first and foremost designed to facilitate and quasi improve the process of reading and understanding complexity. In the Cartesian perspective, method needs to be mechanistically calculated to generate a precise and indubitable picture of the world. A universal method would be able to ascertain precise and fixed foundations and overcome the Cartesian anxiety. Against this perspective, numerous authors have shown how method can

be treacherous by presupposing the subject of inquiry, thereby "shaping (or rather misshaping) human life in the modern world."[75] Method understood as universally applicable must be given up.

This also implies a critique of epistemology, for the very question of what we can know hints at the Cartesian dilemma of drawing a distinction between knowledge and reality. Instead, Richard Rorty, in line with what has been said so far about Bernstein, points to the problem that knowledge is formed by our understanding. This understanding is in turn molded by historically contingent conceptual schemes. Contingency can take a radical form, which claims that any identity is possible but not necessary; or it can take a weak form, which accepts that certain identities can assume a necessary character.[76] On the radical account outlined here, "knowledge" of the world is thus impossible beyond the schemes that create this world in the first place. Moreover, identity will no longer be prioritized over difference. In fact, identity loses its static, antecedent quality and cannot be isolated as an independent variable any longer. What the Cartesians aspired to attain by the search for foundations is replaced through the trust in impressions employed by empiricists. Both an idealist tradition, which tends to see reality as "what we think," and the empiricist convention, which is inclined to see reality as "what is perceived," seem to be trapped in the Cartesian dilemma. In contrast, one can reasonably argue that there is no need for an ultimate foundation or universal truth. While some contingent foundations need to be referred to in order to avoid pure relativism, these foundations are never ultimate.

The so-called linguistic turn in the social disciplines was a serious challenge to the perspective of ultimate foundations. It is a renunciation of a long tradition in Western metaphysics that takes a "true" conception of reality or "true" knowledge as its point of origin and adopts a stable, unified, and integrated conception of subjectivity. Within the debate between these two opposite poles, the crucial tension between the subject's essential quality and its constructedness, the opposition between immediacy and representation, or what French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan termed "being" and "meaning," remained unresolved.[77] However, as Andrea Hurst has observed, "the 'linguistic turn' has irrevocably destabilized the bias towards limit in Western metaphysics."[78] It sketches a path toward understanding the world as always ultimately constituted by meaning structures—structures that have widely been dubbed discourse, to be understood as social or political practices transmitted through language (i.e., written and spoken text, visual images, and symbolic meanings).

Following a group of scholars influenced by Ludwig Wittgenstein, I doubt that we can understand the actions of individuals independently of

social structures. Reasoning, acting, communicating, and of course also walking down the street and shopping are embedded and made possible by social relations. Among others, Peter Winch maintained that the work of the later Wittgenstein and the linguistic turn in the social sciences had an important impact on our understanding of the social, which is meaning- and rule-based. Winch developed a conception of the social sciences that strictly departs from the natural sciences.[79] The view that the social sciences differ from the natural sciences in scope but not in kind still seems to be widespread. It is often implied that whereas the latter is formalizable and unambiguous, the former only needs to strive for accuracy in its applied methods more resolutely to achieve comparable precision. The counterargument would imply that even the natural sciences are concept-dependent and therefore not representing the world "one-to-one." Eventually, the meaning of "nature" is theoretically mediated in all sciences.

Metaphysics can hence be seen as the always fruitless effort of grounding society conclusively, to define the essential character of a society. The argument developed here takes a particular stance within the spectrum between individualism and holism, questioning that individual action can be understood detached from their social embeddedness. Crucially, the individual loses its prestructural quality. However, the structure is never fully constituted and completely embracing the individual; therefore, holism seems inappropriate as a term to capture the quality of social structures. I contend as an alternative that societies at all levels, from the local to the global, are politically constituted. There is no necessity in the shape of societies, which makes the realm of society equivalent to the realm of the political. The ontological referent in the study of societies becomes the social meaning that is produced in the sphere of the political. Any analysis of the political starts from the postulation that "all objects and actions are meaningful, and that their meaning is conferred by particular systems of significant differences."[80]

In consequence, the notion of subjectivity developed here breaks with humanistic accounts of discourse, "because they posit a founding human subject that serves as the origin of discourse, as well as guaranteeing its continuity and identity."[81] It contains a contrast to the essentialist Marxist notion of a world historical proletariat, which is supposed to fulfill the role of reconstituting a "pure" society-as-totality. Any kind of structuralist or essentialist determinism must be rejected from the perspective of poststructuralism. As indicated above, some theorists of poststructuralist orientation would even contend that "our conception of 'nature' is itself discursively constructed in that our knowledge of supposedly natural phenomena is given to us through historically specific theoretical discourses."[82] A case in

point is Judith Butler's argument that sex is a strategically constructed fiction and that concrete subjects are constructed through the discursive formation of identities.[83]

Similar paths have been taken by postcolonial and so-called postfoundational thinkers.[84] The former theories, in company with a growing literature on indigenous thought, pose the following question: "How might the narratives of nationhood be retold, the founding moments of a state reconstituted or its fundamental documents reinterpreted?"[85] This includes the construction of counternarratives against reifications of indigenous subjects, as well as the strengthening of diachronic accounts of colonial histories. The prioritization of heterogeneity and difference over identity is seen as one possible source of social change in these literatures.

In a comparable vein, postfoundationalists claim to go even further than poststructuralists by transcending the mere critique of structuralism and scrutinizing instead all kinds of metaphysical foundation. Postfoundationalism represents precisely the opposite of Cartesianism, which is characterized by the search for secure foundations. Societal totality, universality, essentialism, and final grounding are constantly interrogated in this strand of theories. In that sense, postfoundationalism is also post*empiricist*, as the search for empirical foundations, which are somehow situated outside of the historically contingent conceptual grid, is seen as futile. It is only the logical consequence of this argument that the ontological or political level cannot be retrieved in a direct manner, and no method can be appropriate to capture a ground that is essentially absent.

Crucially, postfoundationalism must not be conflated with antifoundationalism. It is not the illusion of groundedness that is probed in this literature, but the pursuit of *final* grounding. As Oliver Marchart, referring to Martin Heidegger, puts it, "the ground remains present in its absence."[86] It is the place of the political in which continuous, contingent efforts of grounding occur. Any decision in a society is due to encounter at least tentative counterclaims, since the shape of the social is never built on essential characteristics. On the contrary, politics has to be seen as an open-ended practice. This practice is a contingent endeavor in a double sense: temporally by circumventing regularity-determinism, and objectively by being counterfactually constituted.[87] The very notion of structure, which features so prominently in the theoretical direction taken in this study, rests on the argument that contingent foundations set the frame for societal interactions. Contingency therefore assumes the status of one of the central pillars of postfoundationalism. The concept shifts the role of the political into the center of the analysis, for every principle that society is erected on must be open for revision. Contingency, in a nutshell, refers to *the essential impossibility*

of a final ground. Niklas Luhmann has appositely described the concept by claiming "that all connections are now described as *contingent*. They are *temporally* contingent in that they are no longer determined by the past, by an immutable Nature, by social origin; they are *objectively* contingent in that they could always be different; and they are *socially* contingent in that they no longer depend on consensus (keyword: 'democracy')."[88]

Against this background, the differentiation between politics and the political is a crucial one. The moment of contingency has been labelled the *moment of the political.*[89] Especially in the Francophone and Hispanophone world, the nexus between the two words has led to an extensive renovation of political theory and political philosophy. Names like Alain Badiou, Ernesto Laclau, Claude Lefort, Chantal Mouffe, and Jean-Luc Nancy are prominent in these developments and take their inspiration from such heterogeneous authors like Martin Heidegger, Walter Benjamin, Carl Schmitt, and Hannah Arendt.[90] The distinction between the two terms has been labeled "political difference," and their meaning is most visible in political theory as a subfield of *political science*. Politics is in this field often reduced to its organizing principles, to the process and form of politics, thus to a pregiven and predetermined form. To employ Heideggerian vocabulary, it points to the *ontic* dimension of society, to the always only temporarily fruitful effort of lashing and thereby grounding society, by codifying principles, norms, rules, institutions, etc. This effort is dubbed "contingent foundations" by Judith Butler and "sedimented practices" by Ernesto Laclau, indicating that dominant—or "hegemonic"—practices will be at most temporary.[91] In contrast, the political brings in an ontological dimension. It circumscribes the very possibility of society by representing its precondition, while exposing its logical impossibility at the same time. Oliver Marchart explains that

> The political (located, as it were, on the "ontological" side of Being-as-ground) will never be able fully to live up to its function as Ground—and yet it has to be actualized in the form of an always concrete *politics* that necessarily fails to deliver what it has promised.[92]

The ontological circumscribes the horizon of infinite possibilities of being, while the plurality of ontic instantiations is never able to secure final grounding and establish solid foundations. The two terms are not of the same order, the one directing our attention to the impossibility of a final ground, the other stressing the numerous actual attempts at closure. While continuously and infinitely trying to ground society into one single—essential—identity, this process is equally infinitely doomed to failure. Therefore, one could say that ontology refers to the general conditions

of being, while the dimension of the ontic denotes its historic specificity. Whereas the ontological remains empty, the ontic can be conceptualized as the contingent attempt to fill that emptiness with content.

Further on, I will explicate the political difference in more detail by discussing the tension between universalism and particularism. This tension permeates all dimensions of the social, and in that sense it is possible to speak of the political constitution of society. The precedence that the political takes in this equation reminds us of the impossibility of final grounding, but it also emphasizes the imperative of striving toward the aim of completion. Societal principles, the ontic contents of a society, are politically produced by society for itself. These principles are contingent and any pretense of final closure must be witnessed with caution, for it is ideology that is veiled in the mantle of purported objectivity. Society will inescapably remain incomplete; otherwise politics would lose its substance and direction. If we lived in paradise, politics would come to an end. As I will contend in the remainder of this chapter, declaring an end to politics represents one of the greatest ethical dangers of our time.

Ethics and Power

Stressing the political character of society in the way it has been done in the previous section has important ethical implications. Erecting solid, objective, and therefore unquestionable foundations implies the exclusion of alternatives. From this follows another aim of this book, which lies in the development of an ethical dimension to the study of world politics. Poststructuralism is essentially critical theory, but critical theory can also learn significantly from poststructuralism. Both stand in stark contrast to what Robert Cox has famously dubbed *problem-solving theory*, which often seems to take the world as it is and recognizes as its only purpose to make the established order work efficiently.[93] The identification, measurement, and correlation of isolated independent variables with dependent variables would be the method of choice for this kind of theory. In contrast, critical theory offers a comprehensive understanding of politics that calls for the transformation of the established political order. Both poststructuralism and critical theory inquire into structurally veiled power relations and offer alternatives to the established order. In that sense, both are necessarily about change. However, differences exist, as many poststructuralist authors have difficulties with the notion of "critique," which seems to presuppose some standard or foundation from which this critique can be formulated. Most significantly, poststructuralist theories address the artificial and belying view of social order as a fixed state of affairs that is dominant in positivist

social sciences. In Michel Foucault's tradition, normalization and reification are principal constitutive elements of "disciplinary power."[94]

Research on Foucault in global politics is exemplified in analyses of punitive practices. Torture, punishment, discipline, and prison, the four main parts of Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, have in the first decade of the new millennium been pertinently translated into Guantánamo Bay, economic sanctions, incarceration, surveillance, and—not least—redistributive justice.[95] Ideally, discipline of this kind serves to globally enforce widely accepted, though not authoritatively safeguarded human rights norms. Unintended consequences of such practices do, of course, exist, and have inadvertent consequences for the universal implementation of a human rights regime: Detention camps become the locus of empathy and admiration for all the uncared-for in the world; conflict and unrest swell throughout the world, especially at cultural borders, and the whole planet seems to turn out to be more violent and unfair.

Discipline, according to Foucault, generated a whole new form of individuality for subjects, which enabled them to perform their duties within society. Foucault-inspired research in IR points to the opacity of current procedures in global anti-terror campaigns. According to these sources, medieval practices of truth construction can be transferred into today's hegemonic practices of the "war on terror."[96] "The idea of evil as the motivating force behind punishment"[97] is highlighted in these studies. Examples can be found in the view "that U.S. policy has been based upon the criminality and inhumanity of perpetrators—as animalistic criminals who have wronged all citizens of a sovereign state,"[98] or in the argument that punitive practices create identity and order and have to be understood as a masculine act of power.[99]

Other Foucault-inspired contributions appositely show how subtle forms of power work to instigate a hegemonic discourse that works both to domesticate the media and influence it so that it becomes an instrument of supervision.[100] A just world order—if that is possible—needs to be based on an understanding of power that is all-encompassing, as in Foucault's sense. Here, power defines conditions of possibility; it relies on a hegemonization in its purest form. In this context, some work also inquires into how power can be used against power as a means of resistance.[101] Undoubtedly, Foucault-centered global studies offer a very intriguing way to grasp the interconnection between practices and disciplinary power and, importantly, open up spaces for surmounting the current world order. In this fundamentally political sense, philosophy is closely related to politics, ideology, and morality.

It is in dissecting this ubiquitous form of power where perhaps the most significant value-added of Foucault in IR can be found. And here is also where the further development of a normative theory of "punitive practices" might start. The view of power and order presented by Foucault acknowledges that change is possible, since an "international order" is never fully constituted, and power is never absolute. Punitive practices, in turn, are discursively embedded and historically contingent. These practices "result in part from the nexus of power and knowledge."[102] Against this Foucaultian background, I aim at unveiling the nexus of truth and power: What is true? What is the nature of power? How are truth and power generated and structured and how are the two related? Going back to the different theoretical roots of de Saussure, Kristeva, Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida, poststructuralists maintain that both concepts are reciprocally associated. One of the leitmotifs for all these theorists whom I summarize under the heading of poststructuralism can be summarized as follows: Who controls meanings? Who controls language? Who controls society? Does critique require a fundamental measure or standard, and is the very perspicuity of critique led *ad absurdum* if any privileged critical position is called into question? However, does normativity prompt "normalization," as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault have continuously maintained? And how is the "normal" related to the "abnormal?"[103]

By taking a postfoundational stance, I claim that ethics is possible without an appeal to normative foundations. This argument necessitates a reformulation of the relationship between the ethical and the multitude of possible normative orders. Many of the arguments made above also apply to the concept of ethics, which is not pregiven as essentialized or standardized codes of conduct, but is seen as a result of the many and varicoloured practices arising from within the political. The ontological/political horizon never predetermines the actual ontic instantiation of a normative order but again accentuates its contingency and temporality. Contingency—as stated above—is directly related to the questioning of exclusionary practices that go hand in hand with the erection of seemingly eternal foundations.[104] The ethical signifies the universal—a perfect society that is impossible and necessary at the same time. It epitomizes "the relationship between what is and what ought to be (between ontology and ethics)."[105] This tension can, however, never be entirely settled. As Maja Zehfuss contends: "Law represents the element of calculation. Justice, however, requires the experience of aporia."[106] Due to the incomplete nature of society, moral standards must be developed that can do without both the illusion of some predetermined normative foundation, without universalism and without some hidden human

Table 3.1 Contextualizing the ethical

Ontology	*Ontics*
Universalism	*Particularism*
The Political	*Politics*
The Discursive	*Discourse*
The Ethical	*Morality*
Ideology	*Ideological critique*

essences that merely need to be discovered. A way out may be found on the basis of accepting a notion of "justice as recognition," which would "include external recognition of the identity, or identities, constituting any individual or group."[107]

In doing so, an ontological dimension would be added to the question of the ethical. Against this background, the position of the ethical developed here may be contextualized as depicted in table 3.1. The concepts on the left signify the most general horizon, in which the specific instantiations of the right can occur. Subjects cannot free themselves from the field of discursivity in which they assume particular positions, and it is equally impossible to formulate a critique of ideology from a position outside of ideology. Morality must necessarily be formulated within the discursive horizon of the political, and ideological critique is inescapably intra-ideological. This also implies that dislocation can only occur within the discursive, at the level of the political, the ethical, and the ideological, but continuously rests on particular ontic instantiations within discourse and through morality. Eventually, what we describe here is the interplay between ontological horizon and ontic transformation, universalist ethics and particular morality, ideology and ideological critiques. Original meanings, metaphysical closure, and an ethically fully constituted society remain an illusion; they are always the result of politics and ideological critique. The ethical circumscribes nothing but a universal horizon, which is continuously, and by logical necessity, being filled by the politics of particular moral or normative standards. If, at one point, the ethical and moral would fall into one, the perfectly sutured society would be the result, and politics, discourse, as well as ideological critique, would come to an end.

In addition, table 3.1 entails another, perhaps more fundamental argument: If discourse, constituted within the field of discursivity, is arranged on one level with the particular ontic fillings of politics and the moral standards that are set in this context, the normative and the ontic orders are inextricably linked. In other words, the difference between fact and value dissolves; morality is entirely constituted by the practical means of politics

and cannot be traced back to any universal standard resting either in some intransient human nature or in the properties of society as a whole. The ethical represents fullness, morality epitomizes lack. If the two concepts became coterminous, ideological critique would no longer be possible, and totalitarianism would be the result.[108]

A philosophical ethos that takes critique seriously but disavows any appeal to standardized normative conduct was developed by Michel Foucault, especially in his later essay "What is Enlightenment?"[109] and in three interviews he gave in the 15 months prior to his death: (1) "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress,"[110] (2) "Politics and Ethics: An Interview,"[111] and (3) "Polemics, Politics, and Problematizations: An Interview with Michel Foucault."[112] In these works, he maintained that the scrutiny of the historical genealogy of power relations was fundamental in order to proceed with a critique of unquestioned normativity. "Power is not discipline; discipline is a possible procedure of power,"[113] Foucault maintained, thereby parting company with the dominant strands of power theorizing in sociology and political science. In contrast, the disciplinary society produces normalization, and normalization is the primary challenge for critique.

This also implies that power must somehow be located in social structures. Steven Lukes's[114] famous definition of the term power provides us with a helpful starting point to discuss the nexus between power and ethics, but it clearly stops short of the Foucaultian notion. With Lukes, power has to be understood as having three dimensions: First, power is exercised if A can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do. The second dimension of power looks at the *de facto* power of the members within a group in the decision-making process. Lukes maintains that the rules within any decision-making system naturally bias the mobilization of resources for competing for agenda formation against some individuals and groups versus others. This dimension of power therefore incorporates coercion, influence, authority, force, and manipulation. Third, a state exercises power over another state by influencing, shaping, or determining its wants, beliefs, and understanding about the world. This third dimension is entirely neglected by overly materialist approaches to power.

In detail, Lukes argues that power is most effective in this unobservable form, that is, when *willing compliance* to the powerful is secured by means of influencing others "perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things."[115] Subtle forms of power, such as the control of information and the process of socialization, fall into this category. It is an essentially social view of power, which may involve thought control and the indoctrination of people's wants. As Lukes

has maintained, power does not necessarily have to be exercised. As a capacity, it can be turned into leadership, hegemony, or domination, but this is not a *conditio sine qua non*.

What all three dimension of power have in common is that they are tied to specific, identifiable actors who are in principle observable, while power is in some sense quantifiable. Not so in Foucault's conception of power, which has no location, is total, and produces the very subjects that are seen to exercise power in most other perspectives on the term.[116] Foucault employs the famous analogy of the *panopticon* in order to illustrate the absolute nature of his conception of power, "[n]ot because the disciplinary modality of power has replaced all the others; but because it has infiltrated the others, sometimes undermining them, but serving as an intermediary between them, linking them together, extending them, and, above all, making it possible to bring the effects of power to the most minute and distant elements. It ensures an infinitesimal distribution of the power relations."[117] In consequence, all parts of society are permeated by this kind of power, and it is this absoluteness that contains the core of Foucault's critical ethos.

If power is embedded in the very structure of society, it is this very structure that must be at the center of normative critique. Foucault thus aims at connecting the historical investigation of institutionalized power relations with deviating practices.[118] He understands politics as an ethics and seeks to undermine preestablished political opinions and ideological political projects, continually posing "ethico-epistemologico-political question[s]"[119] with regards to the alleged foundations of normative standards. These standards are seen as the product of historically contingent power structures, which constitute the three dimensions of power depicted by Lukes in the first place, and are not the result of these dimensions. Therefore, according to Foucault, "a whole morality is at stake, the morality that concerns the search for the truth and the relation to the other."[120] There are no objective, and ultimate, solutions to this sort of morality, but the permanent questioning of political solutions can eventually lead to a more just society.

The interrogation of politics illustrates the already mentioned, fundamental notion of "sedimented practices." These social practices—or discourses—are constitutive of all social relations, and a deeper understanding of this notion unveils the necessarily contingent character of ethics. As Laclau explains: "So, to the questions, Why prefer a certain normative order to others? Why invest ethically in certain practices rather than different ones? the answer can only be a contextual one: Because I live in a world in which people believe in A, B and C, I can argue that the course of action D is better than E; but in a totally presuppositionless situation in which no system of beliefs exists, the question is obviously unanswerable."[121] Against

this background, it is also clear that for Foucault, all social relationships are politically constituted, even when it comes to the most private spheres of the social, as, for example, in the domain of sexuality. At this juncture, Foucault argues that "it [sexuality, D.N.] doesn't exist apart from a relationship to political structures, requirements, laws, and regulations that have a primary importance for it."[122] Community-building, identity, and subjectivity can only be the contingent result of this questioning; it has no ontological status prior to the act of questioning. We return here to the postfoundational argument that establishes equivalential logic between the universalist concepts of the ontological, the discursive, the political, the ethical, and the ideological. This is an essential step to be taken in order to understand the contingent relationship between crisis and change.

Another crucial step can be grounded in Foucault's radically anti-mentalist ethical theorizing. In a further repudiation of the "monist" tradition of "social science," ethics is neither treated as private subjective preference, nor as some non-cognitive emotional response to a conflict of values. An ethical stance is not coterminous with Jackson's combination of monism and transfactualism, or *reflexivity*. Reflexivity, in this account, addresses the very "practices of knowledge production" and "the social and historical conditions under which knowledge is produced."[123] At one point in his book, Jackson directly refers to Michel Foucault when legitimizing his methodical approach—"a combination of textual explication and disciplinary history," which Foucault called a "history of the present."[124] This is his only reference to Foucault, and by neglecting the French author, Jackson also abandons the radically anti-mentalist stance of the late Foucault. Instead of considering the primacy of practice over cognition, which is prominent in many poststructuralist works following Foucault, Jackson's monist version of reflexivity includes as many dualist allusions as his other three methodologies—neopositivism, critical realism, and analyticism. For example, Jackson asks whether "it is sensible to refer to an object as existing outside of all possible references to it."[125] In this quote, the quality of the *object* referred to is as unresolved as the problems related to *reference*. What else can be implied by "reference" than, first, an "external world," or second, a "mental world?" Reference might be possible in both worlds. The problems that arise with Jackson's formulation of reflexivity become all too evident when Jackson relates it to social context, a notion that is prominent in critical discourse analysis (CDA), which is in turn inspired by critical realism. As Jackson suggests:

> Instead, reflexivists ask: does this characterization of social context, produced with the best and most widely accepted tools presently available

to the scientific community, highlight ways in which we fall short of the
scientific ideal?[126]

It is perhaps here where Jackson's project reaches its logical limits, as
it repeats the fallacies of a King, Keohane, and Verba-style scientism that
divides up the world into unchangeable facts and relative values as well as
material objects and social context. This might also be the point in Jackson's
endeavor where the notion of "science" does more harm than good, for the
quality of science will eventually be measured by the proper application of
"widely accepted tools," that is, by conservatism rather than by theoretical
innovation. Apart from the spontaneity, inspiration, and imagination that
reflexivity also entails, adhering to "tool"-driven science might have more
vital ethical implications in that it induces political closure and social inflex-
ibility. In the tradition of Cox's critical theory and Feyerabend's critique of
method,[127] the remainder of this study will oppose the introduction of fixed
rational criteria for science. Different "tools" tell deviating, sometimes con-
flicting, historically contingent stories.

Apart from this general criticism, the sources Jackson cites to make his
case for reflexivity—Robert Cox, Andrew Linklater, and others—could
have been referred to as well in his chapter on critical realism. Jackson is
not to blame for the materialist and Marxist arguments of those authors;
their discussion just does not fit with a methodology that combines mind-
world monism with transfactualism. Reflexivity, as all other methodolo-
gies Jackson proposes, rests on the notion of a preexisting, stable subject
that—in this case—reflects on the world from a particular social position.
When Jackson's analysis of the conduct of critical scholarship culminates
in the claim that "[t]here is absolutely no necessity to use categories such as
'hegemony' as a part of doing so,"[128] one can only respond that this is true
to the extent that one prioritizes stable agency over the subjectivating effects
of structure.

In fact, Jackson seems to contradict himself in claiming that "[r]eflexivity
might contribute to the achieving of a holistic view of the social world; it
might also contribute to the critical clarification of a particular social group's
ideas and sensibilities. There is also a third way that reflexivity might war-
rant a claim in accord with transfactual monism: by helping a social scientist
to contribute to the overcoming of a systematic bias or distortion that has
repressed or otherwise marginalized the perspective of a particular group."[129]
First, it remains unclear what the "holistic view" might infer, if not a view of
structure as discourse, with its hegemonic effects of inclusion and exclusion.
Second—this argument has been raised several times already—"ideas" and

"sensibilities" seem to be the property of preexisting agents, and structure, again, plays no role in this account. Third, how can the marginalization of "the perspective of a particular group" best be apprehended if not through a conceptualization of the interplay between universalism and particularism? The very marginalization mentioned here occurs through hegemony—a concept that Jackson seems to discard all too easily.

Instead, the "social location" from which a researcher theorizes must take precedence in reflexive scholarship. Jackson cites the work of feminists like Cynthia Enloe as an instance of IR work in this vein. Enloe's studies, in spite of their importance in raising the question of where women are located in the study of global security, are organized from what one might dub a "liberal feminist perspective," aiming at a "more realistic approach to international politics" that rests on basically essentialist and dualist perspectives on gender.[130] At no point does Jackson take into account the possibility that there might be something that is neither monist nor dualist, but transcends both options of describing the relationship between mind and world. In fact, when Michel Foucault speaks "of a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era,"[131] this implies an imperative and a question: the imperative insinuates an investigation into the "contemporary limits of the necessary," resulting in a scrutiny of the foundations that constitute ourselves as subjects. The question is formulated as follows: "in what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints?"[132] The ethos of permanent critique thus incorporates the possibility of normative infringement and makes possible a reformulation of the notion of freedom, as Foucault declares:

> Criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as historical investigation into events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking saying. [. . .] [B]ut it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, thinking what we are, do, or think. It is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science; it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom.[133]

Eventually, the kind of freedom depicted here can only be grasped as an *Ausgang* (exit) in Kant's understanding of enlightenment,[134] as liberation from the limits that are imposed on subjectification, and, finally, their

transgression. Freedom thus implies the nonground in Martin Heidegger's terms. This perspective represents a turn away from the dogma of the pre-existing agent who develops an ethical perspective from his or her position in society. Again, it denies the distinction between monism and dualism; it is neither monist, as ideas are not produced by a preexisting agent but are to be seen as a result of discursive articulation; nor is the perspective dualist, as it does not imply a "world out there" that we can have access to without the mediating work of discourse. A Foucaultian stance on critique also forbids the imperative to express "value-expressive" claims,[135] for what might the ground be on which such intertemporally valid claims could be formulated? If critics cast doubt on the distinction between the ethical and morality/ethics, then the postfoundational answer would point precisely to the absence of any ground as a fundamental prerequisite for democratic and truly ethical politics.

In pointing to the equal status of the political and the ethical, we are at least partly leaving the field of the empirical by stressing the theoretical. As Marchart reminds us, "the political difference is nothing we can describe with empiricist instruments. It therefore cannot be an object of political science, it can only be 'the object' of a political theory that dares to take a philosophical point of view—without however lapsing into an unpolitical philosophism."[136] Inquiring into the very essence of politics entails mutual repercussions for philosophical and political concerns. Due to its radically contingent structure, the domain of the political does not deliver any essential truths. Political outcomes are in principle strictly incalculable, and only due to its penetration by past truths can a political decision appear as naturally given. It is precisely within this connectivity between past and present institutionalization that an ethical moment appears. Once certain institutions become naturalized and therefore depoliticized, the "end of politics" is reached and a "post-political politics of consensus which goes under the name of deliberative democracy" can gain ground.[137]

In his final interview, Michel Foucault thus suggested that in ethical questioning, three elements are fundamental: "a game of truth, relations of power, and forms of relation to oneself and others."[138] I will illustrate that a deeper understanding of these elements first requires a more detailed comprehension of the structures in which they are embedded and which constitute them. To this end, I will turn to an analysis of the central concept of "difference," as it has evolved in philosophy, linguistics, political theory, and IR. As I will attempt to demonstrate, it is only on the basis of this concept that a thorough understanding of the ethical, a reformulated notion of subjectivity, of crisis and change can be achieved. In particular, the notion of a preexisting stable subject and a hidden human nature will be called into

question. Foucault is a good starting point for this project as his theoretical program always involved the exposition of instabilities in structures as well as subjects, in effect providing a basis for a further theorization of the interplay between crisis and change. The concepts that will henceforth be employed to make sense of this interplay and the fractures that make it possible are "difference" and "dislocation."

CHAPTER 4

Difference

Identity and Difference

In the previous chapters, I have at various points hinted at the crucial significance of the notion of difference, without, however, specifying precisely what difference consists of and how it constitutes the social. To do so, one can draw on a rather rich history of theoretical writings. The relationship between structure and agency has, most often implicitly and only sometimes explicitly, been discussed in the humanities and social sciences for centuries. It seems prudent to start with a thorough search of what has been published in the field of sociology over the past two centuries. Names like Georg Simmel and Norbert Elias and their contribution to the relationship between societal structure and individual agency are taught across the board in sociological seminars; and the role of structure achieved prominent status not least due to contributions from anthropology, just to mention the work by Claude Lévi-Strauss, and following efforts in what is today often dubbed poststructuralism, born and matured in France in the latter half of the twentieth century. It is in these strands of literature where the notion of difference has been prominently elaborated. While in its most minimal definition, poststructuralism seeks to enrich classical structuralist thinking by building on its weaknesses, yet without resorting to reductionism,[1] difference—which controverts evenness, consistency, symmetry, constancy, stability, regularity, and sameness—plays a key role in its consolidation. Structure is expressed through underlying systems of differences, exemplified by nation, class, gender, religion, political system, and others. Difference, in the domain of the social, has an internal dimension, when it is surmounted by equalization, that is, when a number of individuals form a group by identifying with a common denominator (nation, class,

etc.). It also has an external dimension in constructing relations of opposition, say, between Canadians and Americans. Most crucially, it is important to accept that these logics—of what will later be specified as the logics of equivalence and difference—reveal the delusion of reference and highlight instead the constructedness of what appears to be a reality that is objective and timeless.

Let me start a discussion of this key term by reiterating one of the main arguments of this book: *The social, and every social identity, is constituted by the logic of difference.*[2] Difference points to the ontological claim of a plurality of beings, as no being can be grasped as such in isolation. In contrast to the notion of identity, however, difference has been rather marginalized in Western thought. This is unreasoned at the very least, since a basic understanding of one term is essential for a comprehension of the other, and both are fundamental to a theory of crisis and change. The privileging of identity is, at the same time, reasonable, for it seems much more straightforward to denote identity as an intrinsic property of an actor, constituted by homeostatic structures, based on physical stability and psychological equilibrium and therefore scientifically comprehensible. German philosopher Martin Heidegger has summarized this banal finding in *Identity and Difference* by stating that: "The matter of thinking has been handed down to Western thinking under the name of 'Being.'"[3] Later, French philosopher Gilles Deleuze contended in *Difference and Repetition* that "the majority of philosophers had subordinated difference to identity or to the Same, to the Similar, to the Opposed or to the Analogous."[4] Deleuze replicates Heidegger's fundamental insights here, and it is Heidegger who first claimed that we have to ask where the notion of difference comes into play when we think about *Being*:

> Whenever we come to the place to which we were supposedly first bringing difference along as an alleged contribution, we always find that Being and beings in their difference are already there. It is as in Grimm's fairytale The Hedgehog and the Hare: "I'm already there." Now it would be possible to deal with this strange state of affairs—that Being and beings are always found to be already there by virtue of and within the difference—in a crude manner and explain it as follows: our representational thinking just happens to be so structured and constituted that it will always, so to speak over its own head and out of its own head, insert the difference ahead of time between beings and Being. Much might be said, and much more might be asked, about this seemingly convincing, but also rashly given explanation—and first of all, we might ask: where

does the "between" come from, into which the difference is, so to speak, to be inserted?[5]

This is a crucial question, for if we take the ontological *Being* and its ontic instantiations as *beings* as always already there, then what place does that leave for *difference*? Heidegger seems to be radical in his conclusion, claiming that beings can only come into being "by virtue of the difference,"[6] thereby reversing the truism that Western metaphysics has produced. Insofar as *beings* can only be thought in its difference to the general *Being*, the single element can only be grasped in its relationship to the whole. In this perspective, *Being* takes precedence over *being*; *Dasein* only follows on *Mitsein*. *Being* is the unthematizable horizon, against which *beings* gain meaning. Following this view, Deleuze claims that the subordination of difference by identity rests in a particular concept of the subject, which precludes a perspective on the difference between subjects.[7] Deleuze has therefore maintained that any society is grounded in the repetition of difference and therefore remains groundless. This claim comes down to a prioritization of difference over identity.

In fact, Deleuze maintains that difference is all too easily conflated with the production of unproblematic identities, or what some theorists have called subject positions. Identity, however, cannot be taken for granted as undivided and uncomplicated. Stable identities remain a chimera, their existence can only be imagined on the basis of difference, which means that difference takes priority: "Every object, every thing must see its own identity swallowed up in difference, each being no more than a difference between differences. Differences must be shown differing. [...] difference is behind everything, but behind difference there is nothing."[8] Thus, difference is also constitutive of historical change. Meanings vary over time, later moments are sedimentations of former ones, and the inseparability of these moments is equivalent to historical difference. The perspective is radicalized in Alain Badiou's *Being and Event* (2005 [1998]), in which being is seen as pure and contingent multiplicity, leading Badiou to conclude that one can grasp it on the basis of mathematical formalism. Here, *being* finally comes down to nothing, not to an external substantiality, but to the infinite and variable diversity of *beings*.[9] In effect, the notion of an intrinsically constituted identity loses all its meaning, since it can only be conceived as an identity vis-à-vis the difference that puts it in opposition to something else.

I claim that every being can only be understood when placed in a system of meaningful differences and contend that we are confronted with a circular argument: the identifiability of any particular being depends upon its

differences to other beings, while these differences would not be graspable if there were no beings between which differences could be established. Due to a focus on the observable, phenomenal object in the philosophy since René Descartes, the identity of beings with themselves has been given precedence, and difference has only later, inspired by the emergence of structural linguistics and Heidegger's inquiries into the question of Being, risen to the status of a serious contender. On that basis, structural anthropologists like Claude Lévi-Strauss have transferred the notion of difference to the social domain, arguing that social beings occupy particular positions in the make-up of the social. Structural elements of institutions, relations of opposition, association, rearrangement, and social change eventually rest on shifting relations of difference. Others, like Clifford Geertz, have analyzed symbolic forms like language patterns, visual images, institutions, and everyday practices, which represent groups of people vis-à-vis others.[10] In short, difference epitomizes the essential defining criterion for any notion of society, be it a local community, a nation-state, a supranational group of states, or a transnationally operating network. It works invisibly in a dyadic relationship as well as in complex, even global social linkages. Difference defines the borders of social groups and therefore what has come to be called their identity. Without difference, there would be no variation between human beings, no communities, no borders, no politics of inclusion and exclusion, no conflict, no peace.

A thorough conceptualization of the notion of difference must be seen as part of a larger discussion in Western metaphysics. For the time being, however, a treatment of the seminal work of Ferdinand de Saussure, the forefather of modern linguistics, seems fruitful for the elaboration of a poststructuralist understanding of difference.[11] Without at least a rudimentary, albeit intuitive grounding of social inquiry within Saussure's differential notion of meaning, social behavior would have to be studied as sheer physical events. While—as argued previously—there is also a meaning structure to be studied in the natural sciences, the social sciences are certainly in permanent need of deciphering complex meaning systems. Believing that we are looking at things in the world, we are actually confronted with a complex system of meaningful differences in which particular meanings evolve. Systems of differences fabricate things and objects, and it is this ostensibly counterintuitive way of looking at things that makes their constructedness visible in the first place. Crucially, this is a genuinely political undertaking, since it deconstructs the naturalness, objectification, and commodification that our language systems produce. Social events only make sense when analyzed in their sociality, that is, in a social framework of values, norms, and social positions—something that is often but deceptively referred to

as *culture*. This is equally true for what is referred to as the states system in the study of international politics, for people as well as states never exist in isolation from others.[12]

This framework is, after Saussure, to be apprehended as a system, consisting of a structure and particular elements. The investigation of the interplay between structure and elements, or, in the words of Saussure, structure and signs, is today habitually referred to as *semiotics*, the science of signs and systems of signs. Difference as a conceptual tool to comprehend systems of this kind plays a fundamental role, as any element in a system gains significance only through its relations with other elements rather than through some essential qualities to be found within the elements themselves. In order to get a better understanding of that system, it is worthwhile taking a deeper look at Saussure's work, who famously maintained that

> [In] language there are only differences without *positive terms.* Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system.[13]

In language, Saussure claims, something is what it is only through its differential relations to something else. The referential function of signifiers like "tree" or perhaps seemingly more complex ones like "Ocean" is only an illusion. Any act of signification is generated by a system of distinctions, be they obviously present or just implicated. This gives us a first crucial hint at the characteristics of language, which represents a relational system of signs. Language can no longer be reduced to some form of simple representation of a mental process, but needs to be construed as produced entirely within the linguistic system itself: "We must not look through words. We must look at them, and sideways, to the absent others that are the basis of any signifier's intelligibility."[14] The system consists of an autonomous formal arrangement of signs. These signs are generated by an amalgamation of a form, which signifies (the *signifier*), and a signified concept (the *signified*). For instance, the signifier *brown* only exists as an element in a larger system of expressions for colors, in Germany, for example, depicting the far right political spectrum. Any signifier can be part of numerous relations, which leads to different possible articulations of "the world" at different points in time. A particular combination of a signifier and a signified is seen to be arbitrary, which means that, first, no natural or essential links between the two exist; second, that innumerable, and on occasion, illogical arrangements are possible; and third, that each language organizes and constructs the world in an idiosyncratic and arbitrary way. This leads Saussure to the conclusion

that "[i]t is after many detours that one discovers them, and with them the fundamental importance of this principle."[15] When we contend that there is no intrinsic link between signifier and signified except linguistic convention, this means that the signified itself must be of an arbitrary quality. This leads to the controversial claim that the signified does not refer to an object "out there" in the world but merely designates a linguistic relation. The signified, therefore, is not coterminous with a mental construct, but represents a linguistic entity.

Most crucially, the purely differential character of language produces a system of possibilities and impossibilities. Different languages establish different combinations of signifier and signified, diverse systems of differences, and—consequently—dissimilar "worlds." Language—or, more precisely, discourse—becomes synonymous with culture and society. Certain combinations of signifier and signified are valued at the expense of others. Writing about the concepts that emanate from this system of inclusion and exclusion, Saussure argues that "[t]heir most precise characteristic is that they are what the others are not."[16]

In Saussure's perspective, taking meaning as differential, not referential, simply gives language priority in the study of meaning: If the world, the things, and concepts we seem to know, existed somewhere outside language, words would be the same from language to language, culture to culture, and no ambiguities would arise. For de Saussure, meaning exists in the sign and only there; the reference points of the sign are situated within the system, not in a world outside of it. According to Saussure, it is linguistically constructed; people talk, write, and argue the world into existence. As Saussure maintains that a linguistic sign connects a concept with a sound-image—a signified with a signifier—rather than a thing and a name, the meaning of the sign remains nonreferential; it acquires significance through its function within the linguistic system as it exists at any one moment in time. Therefore, the linguistic sign is both arbitrary and differential.[17] It depends on practices of combination and association within the system of language. Particular meanings are privileged by singling out one combination in favor of another, and it is for this reason that any sign has a purely relational identity. As Jonathan Culler summarizes: "Identity is wholly a function of differences within a system."[18] Identity is never self-regulating and straightforward, but gains abundant meanings by being a part of a larger, historically contingent system of differences. Contingency in this context carries forward the main theme of the present inquiry, that is, the impossibility of reference and stability of systems of signification, and the necessary dislocation of societal structures.

The susceptibility of many scholars to transfer this kind of thinking to the social realm and to see society as a system of differentially constituted relationships is due to the relational character of the identity of the sign. Saussure offers the example of a chess piece, which gains its substance not out of itself, but out of the broader system that differentiates it from the other pieces of the game.[19] The same applies to human identity, which obtains its meaning not from the biological composition of the body but from its situation in a system of social relations. Personal or type identities, as delineated by Wendt, are presocial and therefore to be excluded from the social inquiry conducted in this study. Moreover, collective identities formed between the members of, for instance, a nation or a group of nations, must be apprehended as socially or relationally formed, not as given out of the inherent qualities of a nation (such as "race" in Nazi Germany). Difference therefore does two things which are of importance for our subsequent theoretical moves: it allocates positions in a system, thereby creating particularity, and it denies that particularity by stressing relationality.[20] Particularity emphasizes difference as distinction; in contrast, relationality brings about a logical negation of subjectivity and the hollowness of all particularity.

Besides the distinction between signifier and signified, the success of Saussure's thinking within the social sciences can also be traced back to another crucial characteristic Saussure introduced in the study of language, that is, the opposition between *langue* and *parole*. While *la langue* denotes the system of signs or language system that is present only in the minds of the speakers, *parole* refers to concrete speech, or the contingent externalization of the language system. Moreover, following a tradition established by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in France and going back to Plato and Aristotle, Saussure maintained that writing can only be the external representation of the inner system of speech, establishing a clear hierarchy between the two. He contends that "[l]anguage does have an [...] oral tradition that is independent of writing"[21]—a claim that Derrida later takes issue with. Comparable to the structuralist study of society, Saussure favored the rules of arrangement, the manifold leaps and twists of the system of differences over the scrutiny of actual realizations: "In separating *langue* from *parole*," Saussure maintained, "we are separating what is social from what is individual and what is essential from what is ancillary or accidental."[22] It is in this formulation of the relationship between structure and agent where the prelude to later social theories can be seen:

> The distinction between langue and parole has important consequences for other disciplines besides linguistics, for it is essentially a distinction between institution and event, between the underlying system that

makes possible various types of behaviour and actual instances of such behaviour.[23]

Anthropologists and sociologists in particular have gratefully followed up on the distinctions between signifier and signified, *langue* and *parole*. Though the unqualified reduction of language to its linguistic dimension has been widely questioned, the formal and relational theory of language developed by Saussure has had an enormous impact on the humanities and social sciences. At first sight, Saussure's insights into the nature of structures seem to be restricted to the sphere of language structures. Yet, they may easily be diffused to the whole social realm as long as the latter is appreciated as the field of *meaningful* objects, relations, and actions. Saussure himself envisaged a new way of thinking that would inquire into "the life of science within society."[24] Everything in the conduct of social inquiry is dependent on a comprehensive understanding of difference, and—as Saussure put it-"without this elementary operation a science cannot develop an appropriate method."[25] While I will return to the notion of method in more breadth in chapter 6, what is crucial here is that notions of Self-Other relationships and related questions of subjectivity and identity are central to the later thread of political theory that has developed out of Saussure's thinking. Saussure's depiction of the sign as nonunitary, nonstable, and relational strongly reminds us of poststructuralist notions of identity, which display the same features. Moreover, his concept of difference has inspired the development of linguistic theories of *intertextuality*, which are strongly intertwined with poststructuralist political theories. This, however, is only possible if we leave behind us Saussure's focus on word and sentence structure and expand our inquiry toward larger discourses.

Différance and Deconstruction

It is Jacques Derrida who most prominently translated Saussure's semiotics into a poststructuralist vocabulary. Derrida discusses Saussure in his book *Of Grammatology*, and it is in these passages where some clues on how to rework Saussure can be found.[26] Although his discussion of the Swiss semiotician in his chapter "Linguistics and Grammatology" represents only a tiny part of Derrida's whole work, it enables him to draw rather broad conclusions about linguistics, science, philosophy, and politics. Starting with Saussure's assertion of the primacy of speech over writing, and the claim that the latter is derivative and representative of the former, Derrida contends that the purportedly external form of writing *can* sometimes corrupt the internal structure of speech. This is not to say that writing is in any way

superior to speech, but implies the claim that both have common roots. For a contamination or usurpation of speech by writing to become possible, speech must be in principle open to contamination, thus structurally incomplete. On the basis of what Derrida has to say about Saussure, one might therefore argue, first, that the dualism between the internal and external cannot be preserved, and second, that perhaps any system is defined by the very possibility of external usurpation. According to Derrida, Saussure disregards the option that "the outside is in the inside,"[27] thereby reproducing the momentous metaphysical delusion that is so common in the Western world. However, as Derrida contends,

> This and some other indices (in a general way the treatment of the concept of writing) already give us the assured means of broaching the deconstruction of the greatest totality—the concept of the episteme and logocentric metaphysics—within which are produced, without ever posing the radical question of writing, all the Western methods of analysis, explication, reading, or interpretation.[28]

Dealing with Saussure's argument of the nonreferential character of the sign, Derrida advances a general critique of metaphysics—that is, the concept of foundations or ultimate presence—which revolves around the notion of the "instituted trace" and reveals itself as "[the] absence of *another* here-and-now, of another transcendental present, of *another* origin of the world appearing as such."[29] If the arbitrary character of the sign is taken seriously, one sign is always plagued by others. Presence never rests in itself, but follows upon the infiltration by the trace-relation, and is therefore influenced by absence and otherness. One can no longer accept the distinction between signifier and signified, for, as Geoffrey Bennington explains, "a 'signified' is only ever a signifier placed in a certain position by other signifiers."[30] If there are origins, foundations, and essences, these can only be found in a trace, which is nothing but a myth, an *original signifier*, so to speak.

There is an inherent temporality in this process, as the sign necessarily bears the traces of the past and of a potential future within itself. This does not mean that the sign is present prior to its infiltration by the trace, as the trace becomes constitutive to its being: "it is [...] always (already) becoming but never quite become."[31] Accordingly, the differentiation between the synchronic and the diachronic dimensions of language makes little sense, as the trace is *always already there* in any synchronic moment, and change is inherent in this very moment. In other words: the diachronic moment is constitutive of the synchronic.

The critique reveals that the structuralist account of language proposed by Saussure can only serve as a starting point for an analysis of difference. Although poststructuralism remains indebted to structural linguistics, the generalization of language into a model of the structure of society, and—with it—the determining character of structure, cannot be accepted as it stands and needs to be modified. The structure in Saussure's account resembles "an intrinsically ordered totality,"[32] a set of formal differences within a closed synchronic system in which any change would be random or illogical. Jacques Derrida thus deconstructed the structuralist conception of a closed system of differences and broadened the concept of difference to include a spatial and temporal dimension. Each spot in a differential structure needs to be analyzed according to two criteria: (1) place, and (2) time. Yet, both are difficult to apprehend, as structures never rest, and so the inquiry ultimately attempts to identify that which is unidentifiable.[33]

In contrast to this more complex view of structure, classic structuralist conceptions of difference appeared to stick to the simplest form of analysis, that is, the focus on binary oppositions. This creates the escapist impression of stable frontiers, isolating two signs from the many others in a structure of multiple differences. To understand a word such as "woman" by relating it merely to "man" is an oversimplification of the gravest kind. The poststructuralist endeavor is thus partly aimed at the liberation of structural analyses from the sheer emphasis on binaries. It is interested in the undeterminable spaces which are dwarfed by the allegedly unambiguous dichotomies of natural signifiers like "man" and "woman;" it accentuates the contestedness of such binaries and deconstructs the forceful oppositional logic that comes along with their reification. Binaries are never innocent; they always imply power relations by suppressing one and privileging the other of two signifiers. Opposition is not given by nature, but is fabricated in complex systems of differential relations. Often found connotations of "woman" in the past have been weak, tender, loving, affectionate, warm, caring, sensitive, and compassionate, etc., while "man" has often been connoted by adjectives like strong, robust, tough, resilient, heavy-duty, powerful, passionate, and bold. Both what is said and what is unsaid but implied in a discourse can be analyzed that way. Again, these examples show that signifiers lose their referential function; instead of finding a signified outside discourse, one has to find ever more signifiers to generate broader meanings.

The critique entailed in such an investigation has come to be known as *deconstruction*. Derrida himself maintained that deconstruction was, first, directed at the exposure of hierarchies in binary constructions; second, it aims at overturning (*renverser*) the established hierarchical order, which would involve privileging the second, inferior of the two terms: "To fight

violence with violence;"[34] and third, the hierarchy will be reinscribed into the discourse after the opposition between the two terms has been disrupted.[35] Interestingly, Derrida had used the term "destruction" in the first version of *De la grammatologie*, which Paul de Man explains as follows: "His text, as he puts it so well, is the unmaking of a construct. However negative it may sound, deconstruction implies the possibility of rebuilding."[36] Or in Derrida's own words: "the task is […] to dismantle [*deconstruire*] the metaphysical and rhetorical structures which are at work in [the text], not in order to reject or discard them but to reinscribe them in another way."[37] That way, deconstruction offers an egress from the closure of meaning systems. Any meaning system is deeply political, which entails the impossibility of closure.

The structure that would deconstruct Saussurean structuralism is, after Derrida, referred to as *différance*. Given the complex structural arrangement of differences, the structuralist's reliance on binary oppositions loses its dependability. Crucially, *différance* constitutes a critique of the nontemporal nature of structuralist analyses. Writing about conceptual oppositions, Derrida explains that: "The one is only the other deferred, the one differing from the other."[38] The meanings of the two verbs contained in this quote— defer and differ—are both present in the French term *différer*, leading Derrida to formulate a graphic joke in the form of a neologism: *différance*, which is pronounced in the same way as *différence* (difference). This move not only affirms the priority of the written over the spoken (symbolized in the inaudible variance between the two terms), but also implies a criticism of the static and synchronic nature of structuralist views of oppositions. While emphasizing the spatiality of structure, Saussure ignored its temporal dimension. In contrast, Derrida maintained that signs are always shifting, and that any sign bears the traces of infinite other signs that surround, precede, and follow it. Due to these traces of the Other in the present, the present itself remains an illusion; *différance* signifies "the non-existence of presence"; hence *crisis and change* are inherent in any sign.[39] Discourse has a necessary diachronic dimension by being contaminated by traces of the past. And the signs of the future are already looming on the horizon: texts are provisional and contingent, new texts will take their place.

The internal division of the sign, its loss of purity, is what can be characterized as the poststructuralist innovation with regards to Saussure. The sign loses its identity; it is adulterated by the structure of differences, by other signs. It is not autonomously constituted but radically constituted by difference. One identity is, so to speak, subversively present in another. Therefore, structures are by no means autopoietic; they are incomplete and permanently threatened by internal crises, or, in poststructuralist vocabulary: they

are *undecidable*.[40] Later on, I will show that deconstruction is inextricably linked to the concept of *undecidability*—a notion fundamental to post-structuralist political theory and the *conditio sine qua non* for hegemonic politics.

The Saussurean conception of the sign needs to be developed into a post-Saussurean, or postfoundational, conception of meaning as constituted by difference. Unqualified and uncontradictory structural determination must be disqualified as absurd; an alternative view must be developed instead. If complete structural determination is dismissed in the present inquiry, this is also due to the essentially diachronic nature of any differential meaning system. In privileging the synchronic (i.e., timeless) study of language, it seems as if Saussure tended to disregard its deeply contingent nature. Contingency, however, symbolizes the breakdown of stable systems of signification, and—simultaneously—"of society as the (impossible) totality of all signification."[41] Instead, Derrida's concept of *différance* reveals the potential that comes with a deeper analysis of differential relations, their contingency, and hierarchical quality. As Derrida concludes:

> At the point where the concept of differance intervenes [...] all the conceptual oppositions of metaphysics, to the extent that they have for ultimate reference the presence of a present, [...] (signifier/signified; sensible/intelligible; writing/speech; speech [*parole*]/language [*langue*]; diachrony/synchrony; space/time; passivity/activity etc.) become non-pertinent.[42]

Yet, by calling attention to the arbitrariness of signs, Saussure leaves open the prospect of historical change. He asserts that a language "is a system of pure values which are determined by nothing except the momentary arrangement of its terms."[43] Although being entirely historical and therefore apt to permanent change, according to Saussure, we have to focus on momentary snapshots of signs in the analysis of *la langue*. Diachronic statements are to be inferred from series of synchronic statements; diachronic facts rest on the displacement of one synchronic by another synchronic element. According to Saussure, it would be impossible to relate a particular sign back to a different time and a temporally as well as qualitatively disparate structure, because it only exists within the confines of its momentary contingent sign system. Following Saussure, change is set off by *parole* in that individual elements of the broader system of *la langue* are altered: "[It] is not that one system has produced another but that an element of the first has been changed, and that has sufficed to bring into existence another system."[44] Thus, suffice it to say at this point that any synchronic system inevitably resorts to diachronic elements, such as historical analogy, archaisms, neologisms, allusions, and

others. This is particularly evident in the study of intertextuality, outlined in the context of the methodical discussion in chapter 6.

What we inherit from Saussure is, first, the insight that we always need to start from a discussion of structure and structural positions, as featured in Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole*, which leads us to unveil the system of rules enabling social action. From this follows, second, a deep interest in structure: analyses in linguistics are essentially structural; it is the underlying system of relations, of underlying oppositions and differences that we need to be concerned with. Third, we learn that nothing is pregiven in these structures and that the main task of inquiry is the discovery of particular identities created within the larger system of differences. A position within a structure is created through contingent relations of difference. Be it a linguistic or a social structure, the analysis must be concerned with temporary and shifting positions, that is, *identities*, and differences, that is, *oppositions*. These oppositions produce a complex algebra of diverse positions, and different positions combine with others in chains or sequences, all of them communally delimited and conditioned as well as mutually permeated.

Due to the manifold combinatory possibilities and infiltrations, it is sometimes misleading to talk about identities and oppositions, as the structure produces unstable identities and only minor differences, which must not be conflated with mutually excluding oppositions. The whole scale of possibilities—from minor differences between friends to severe, sometimes disastrous opposition between countries—can be seen in global politics, which is perhaps why many scholars qualify the strong noun "opposition" and employ the word "Other" instead. The implication of "natural opposition" and utmost difference can be precluded that way, and the highly political and therefore contingent character of difference can be highlighted.

In sum, what has become famous under the heading "semiotics" after Saussure has influenced countless anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, and political theorists, as scholars have sought to demarcate the borders of their own disciplines. Most eminently, French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss imported Saussure's concept of structure into the study of culture. In contrast to the main thread of arguments in the present study, Lévi-Strauss postulates the exploration of a mentally anchored, unconscious system of relations and distinctions.[45] Mental structures and their treatment in cognitive linguistics are not the matter of this study. Difference is not investigated from a psychological, but from a social perspective. The focus must be on social practices within discursive structures, as has been a tradition exemplified in the late work of Michel Foucault, the theory of social practices developed by Pierre Bourdieu, but also in the line of interpretative cultural theories in the version of Erving Goffman,

Clifford Geertz, and Charles Taylor. Crucially, the possibility of change is rooted in the indifferent multiplicities of difference. Subjects rest in multiplicities. This means we are no longer able to speak of a self-contained subject. They are constituted by multiple differences. A subject thus defined is not an individual with preexisting intrinsic properties that exhaust its meaning. A subject is a sign in Saussure's sense: it can be a human being, but also a text, intertextually interwoven with multiple others, a work of art, or a scientific theory, but also (as we will see in part IV) a nation, to name just a few examples.

By conceptualizing structures that way, I do not just develop a poststructuralist understanding of society but also a pragmatist approach to theory. Many of the authors treated here contend that no ultimate ground for what we think exists, and that our views of "the world," our values are created rather than naturally given. Most of the issues discussed so far in this book—crisis and change, mind and world, the notion of foundations, ethics and power, difference, *différance,* and deconstruction—conjoin at this juncture. Values have to be adjudicated by what they do, what their results in societal practices are. It is important to note that there is no necessity in these practices. Michel Foucault's archaeology is one of the prime examples of how to excavate the suppressed parts of historiography.[46] History as historical writing, which produces the misconception of an autonomous, self-supporting, and consistent historical continuity, is what Foucault has dubbed "discursive formation." It was one of Foucault's accomplishments to have linked the structuralist conception of difference with more political questions of power in his later work. With all the differences that persist between Foucault and authors like Derrida and Deleuze, they all—in one or the other way—bring to the forefront the political and highly contingent nature of society. To this end, the concept of "difference" is fundamental. I will now briefly illustrate that the notion has already entered the confines of IR theorizing, albeit with a still marginal status.

Difference in IR

Whereas the lack of a deeper scrutiny of the concept of difference is not surprising in the case of positivist theorizing, it is astonishing in the case of *IR constructivism*. In his *Social Theory of International Politics*, Alexander Wendt makes little explicit reference to difference at all, except for a discussion of the so-called Foucault effect, in which subjects are seen as produced by differentially constituted discourses. "Postmodernism," according to Wendt, holds that objects are not understood as what they are, not by their "essential properties," but by their position in a differential structure. In

contrast, Wendt defends an at least partly essentialist position and eventually abandons "difference" as the central constituting category.[47]

The notion of "difference" has thus reached the margins of IR theorizing via political philosophy. Some works bear the notion in their title,[48] and according to the issues described in the previous sections, the focus is on otherness, temporal identities, the normative implications of exclusion, and the questioning of foundations. It is the political in which subjectivity is differentially instituted, and any foundations, on which global politics is enacted, are produced entirely within the political. Corresponding to the arguments on difference discussed in the previous two sections, all communities are defined by lack and illusion. Arguments are derived from Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenological discussions, and stretch into Derrida's and Lévinas's philosophy of the ethical Other. The notion found its way into the spheres of the discipline, brilliantly introduced by William Connolly in his concluding chapter to Der Derian and Shapiro's volume on postmodern readings, here again defined via the bypass of "Otherness," in which difference represents a threat to identity, and not a constitutive and indispensable element in the search for fulfillment. Many critical and poststructuralist writers in the following decade hence stressed that identity is unthinkable without *different* identities.[49] It is the multiple and volatile articulations of "Self" and "Other" that are focused on in these literatures.

Perhaps the most prominent contribution to this discussion came from R. B. J. Walker. Walker conceptualizes an inside/outside relationship, whereby the mere existence of an external "Other" constitutes a threat to the true identity of the "Self."[50] It is critical in this context to stress that the "Other" is not necessarily a threatening one. There are "Others" of diverse kinds: Significant Others, like, perhaps, the United States for Canada; threatening Others, like North Korea for South Korea or Japan. Significant but non-threatening Others, as in the relationship between Germany and France.[51] In that case, an "externally" induced crisis or event is not a necessary condition for threat creation to ensue. Most crucially, difference remains *in* the Other, or the Other becomes coterminous with difference in this account, and is not understood as the "in between" different elements in which the single element can only be grasped in its relationship to the whole.[52] Furthermore, difference represents the Other, it *is* the Other, and is not seen as the space that exists between various constituents of the social. Undoubtedly, this has serious political consequences, as James Der Derian explains: "Until we learn how to recognize ourselves as the Other, we shall be in danger and we shall be in need of diplomacy."[53]

It is clear that the separation between "Self" and "Other" goes hand in hand with a modernist agenda that tends to categorize the world into

binaries, including inside/outside, mind/world, subject/object, domestic/international, good/evil, realist/constructivist (or institutionalist), and so forth.[54] In this theoretical setting, some work also introduces the notion of discourse into the study of "Self" and "Other," directing our attention to the crucial argument that the "Self" can never attain complete self-awareness, since this would always be discursively mediated.[55] Discourse as a structure of articulatory differences produces incomplete identities, and it is at this point where IR theorists implicitly pick up on Heidegger's claim that the traditional hierarchy between identity and difference must be reversed. As R. B. J. Walker put it:

> The principle of identity embodied in Christian universalism was challenged by the principle of difference embodied in the emerging state. [. . .] International politics became the site not of universalistic claims but the realm of difference itself.[56]

Nationalism, xenophobia, gender binaries, and global inequality—in principle all political processes of inclusion and exclusion are affected by the interplay between identity and difference, and it is only via this interplay that ontological significance can be achieved. The same argument also elucidates quite well why the study of difference in IR, given the discipline's focus on inter*national* politics, results in an emphasis of security: "An identity that differs from mine may well constitute me as other, and I may have to try to fend it off."[57] Difference quite logically denotes "Otherness," and this is what the ontology of international relations boils down to. To make this argument clear, David Campbell has appositely emphasized that

> States are never finished as entities; the tension between the demands of identity and the practices that constitute it can never be fully resolved, because the performative nature of identity can never be fully revealed. This paradox inherent to their being renders states in permanent need of reproduction: with no ontological status apart from the many and varied practices that constitute their reality, states are (and have to be) always in a process of becoming.[58]

Identities remain indeterminate, and allegedly stable "Selfs" and "Others" at all times mutually infiltrate each other.[59] From this it follows that there is no objective essence of a state or nation; rather, the ontological referent becomes the meaning that is produced in a differentially constituted discourse. Any discourse analysis as it is understood here starts from the postulation that "all objects and actions are meaningful, and that their meaning is conferred by

particular systems of significant differences"[60]. This formulation derives from the view that discourse is coterminous with the very being of social objects. In his well-known work on American foreign policy, Campbell deconstructs threat as an objective state, emphasizing that it is always functional to political purposes. It is a result of interpretation and has to be treated as such. This does not deny the fact that there are "real" dangers, like terrorism, AIDS, environmental disasters, and others. The question remains, however, why some dangers are constructed as threats and others are not, why some modes of being are seen as intimidating, while others are not.

The most radical steps in articulating subjects as products of differential structures have perhaps been taken by feminist IR theorists and postcolonial as well as indigenous writers. As Jenny Edkins puts it, "feminism has challenged another aspect of the Cartesian subject: its disembodied, sexless, and gender-blind character. This has in turn gone alongside wider challenges to the Cartesian subject's claim, as white, Western, heterosexual male, to a position of neutral universality."[61] IR feminist studies introduced gender difference into global politics, coupled with feminist critique and the questioning of masculine hegemony (a term that I will discuss in detail in part III). The materiality of the body is replaced by the materiality of gendered discourse; sedimented practices, which have produced dichotomous gender constructions over millennia, are complemented by radical performativity. Again, the mind/body opposition is queried in this context, alongside binaries such as rational/irrational, inside/outside as well as public/private, and theorists ask "whether the [t]raditional hierarchical rituals of global power relations are indeed integral to the everyday practices of the world's peoples and their various modes of life."[62]

In an equal manner, indigenous conceptions of justice and injustice, inclusion and exclusion, culture and ways of institutionalizing access to property have relied on the notion of "difference." Reflecting Neta Crawford's groundbreaking work in bringing indigenous thought into International Relations (IR), the homogenization of aboriginal people is replaced by an emphasis on difference, complexity, contradictions within societies, and multifaceted relationships between humans and nature.[63] Corresponding to Derridean arguments, discourse in this perspective has a necessary diachronic dimension by being contaminated by traces of the past, and the signs of the future are already looming on the horizon: realities are provisional and contingent, new realities will take their place. The accent in numerous studies on indigenousness shifts to "periodic intersections between several forces in the world," as William Connolly prominently puts it in his discussion of the *new materialism*, thereby introducing an alternative concept of temporality into the discussion of the social.[64]

Finally, it must be added that the very concept of "postcolonialism" in IR rests on a deep understanding of "difference" and a repudiation of the notion of "identity" as "pure identity."[65] Instead, different historical narratives appear within the same temporality, the heterogeneity of the world's peoples is acknowledged as axiomatic for an understanding of world politics. This understanding can never be found "out there," but must be seen as the contingent result of contestable stabilizations of meaning. In addition, obscuring parochial histories bears an ethical dimension: it normalizes one-sided histories and masks the particularity of historical "truth."[66] Difference from both without and within political communities stains their purported purity, which sheds new light on easy communitarian ethical answers to complex cultural questions. Otherness is necessarily instituted through the perspective of the "Self," which has two significant repercussions: First, the "Self" is homogenized into a coherent entity, even when it is obvious that it consists of a heterogeneous ensemble of disconnected elements; second, the "Other" remains painstakingly opaque in that is has no quality in itself, but is constructed and thoroughly infiltrated by the alleged intrinsic qualities of the "Self."[67] If "*culture* points at once to universality and commonality *and* to partiality and diversity," as Inayatullah and Blaney contend,[68] then an important aspect of culture is obscured by the homogenizing tendencies of articulating the political world solely in binaries.

A number of authors have added insights to this strand of thinking after the turn of the millennium. Lene Hansen's work on the Bosnian war is but one example of constitutive, poststructuralist research on the nexus between identity and foreign policy. It relies on insights gained from the method of intertextuality, originally developed by Julia Kristeva (1980). At the heart of any political decision is the question of difference, relying on the construction of an "Other" and the subjectivity of the "Self." This digs deeply into the concept of identity, which is defined here as the sum of available self-understandings and antagonistic relationships to an outside subject. Identity must therefore not be misunderstood as an independent variable that determines the outcome of foreign policy. It might sometimes be the case that identity gains a relative stability and thereby organizes a frame of possibilities for foreign policy, but it is at the same time instituted by foreign policy.[69] Other examples include Xavier Guillaume's dialogical reading of Otherness as "alterity," in which—from the perspective of social and political theory—"processual identity" is seen as a continuant "narrative event,"[70] as well as Eva Herschinger's analysis of discourses on terrorism and drug prohibition, which illustrates well the mutual constitution of hegemonic orders and differentially constituted collective identities, and maintains that differences—in the form of antagonism—block the full constitution

of identities.[71] These are arguments that will be drawn on in developing a discourse theory of crisis and change in part III of this book.

Finally, in terms of a critical stance on difference and a theorization with regards to "justice," a number of cues can be taken from the IR literature on cosmopolitanism. In this context, it is once more R. B. J. Walker who directs our attention to the crucial argument that "as a structure of inclusions and exclusions, the modern international must itself have a constitutive outside."[72] In true Foucaultian critical theory, this claim can be seen as a fundamental imperative for an ethical theory of crisis and change. If the issue is what lies beyond a conceptual or discursive limit, then the answer can only be that it is just one more difference in a system of infinite differences. Then again, the limit between internal and external structure, between "Self" and "Other," would become impossible to identify, and it becomes clear that in processes of crisis and change, mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion are purely artificial. This is perhaps the most significant cosmopolitan issue. As Richard Shapcott writes: "A universal community, one that in principle includes all members of the species, must by virtue of being a community, exclude or deny important differences amongst its members."[73] The tension between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism centers around dichotomies of difference and identity, universalism and particularism, legitimacy and legislation, humanity and citizenship, inclusion and exclusion, openness and closure. In cosmopolitanism, "cultural difference" is seen as an obstacle to the development of inclusive political communities. Therefore, it is the central concept for any normative discourse questioning the naturalness of normalized rules of exclusion, and it is directly related to the question of material redistribution. Equality can be achieved through discursive engagement. What is obvious in this context is "that morality and justice can only be practised within a shared discourse."[74] How this discourse might look and how it might make a symbiotic conceptualization of the nexus between crisis and change possible will be analyzed in part III. It is in this crucial part of the book that a theory of crisis and change will be presented.

Conclusion

In the course of the previous two chapters, a path toward an "IR beyond the mind" was embraced, which disclaims the exclusive reliance of the social sciences on either concepts or real objects. The approach preeminently capable of grasping complex processes of change seemed to be positioned within the poststructuralist realm. If poststructuralism is about anything, so it was argued, it is about crisis and change.

One aim of part II was to inquire into the general character of the social. The result shows that the concept of difference speaks more directly to a nonmetaphysical history, which permits resistance. Referential content has to be understood on the basis of structural analyses. On that basis, in part III, I will move a step further by asking how differential structures produce so-called dislocations and how the "suturing" of these dislocations must be conceptualized as deeply political. Dislocations are crucial in processes of change, as they produce voids in differential meaning structures, structural gaps that have to be filled, that is, situations of fragmentation and indeterminacy of articulations.

By drawing extensively on the work of the late Ernesto Laclau, including his coauthored work with Chantal Mouffe, we will see that in contrast to classical structuralism, relational meaning systems are characterized by inherent instabilities; they are never total. The inside will, to different degrees, always be threatened by the outside, and even the inside will always rest on differential relations, as a group is always comprised of heterogeneous individuals. In these structures, difference is infinitely dispersed; it never ends. Beyond a relation of difference there can only be more difference—a whole cosmos of differences. This cosmos of differences creates innumerable contacts between the entities of a structure, each constituting others and at the same time being constituted and called into question by others. This infinite dispersion of structures makes them essentially open, and closure becomes logically impossible. Closure is a political, somehow artificial act that occurs at the level of a myth or imaginary, but can at most be temporary at the level of structures. The outside loses the quality of a necessary outside; its negativity is the result of a contingent, political move, which cannot be attributed to some kind of empirical, natural, or essential features resting outside discourse.

In what follows, the focus will be on a specific understanding of discourse—equivalent to what, for instance, Jacqueline Best, drawing on Clifford Geertz's depiction of culture as a "web of significance," calls "the centrality of powerful narratives of identity and difference."[75] Instead of an understanding of discourse as abstract speech, she relies on "techniques and practices," thereby addressing the underlying materiality of financial cultures. It is this understanding of discourse as meaningful social practices that comes close to the understanding of discourse developed here in that it draws attention to the two dimensions constitutive of any discourse, that is, a material and a symbolic dimension. In a nutshell, this is what discourse comes down to: structurally mediated social practices that carry with them the power to temporarily define the tension between universalism and particularism, thereby constituting *political* processes of inclusion and exclusion.

PART III

Hegemony and Social Change

CHAPTER 5

Hegemony

Discourse and the Discursive

Having delineated the crucial notions of crisis and change, reality and difference, in parts I and II of this inquiry, part III will explore the nexus of crisis and change from a genuinely discourse theoretical perspective. In doing so, I will introduce the work of the late political theorist Ernesto Laclau and his coauthored work with Chantal Mouffe. In order to do justice to their complex conceptual vocabulary, I will consecutively discuss the notions of discourse and the discursive, equivalence and difference, as well as empty and floating signifiers, before, toward the end of the chapter, summarizing a theory of crisis and change in global politics. In this context, "crisis" will be replaced by the crucial notion of "dislocation."

In their seminal work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), Laclau and Mouffe reformulated Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony in a way that considers discourse as the constitutive horizon for politics. Gramsci is of interest to discourse theory because of the Italian's concern with the role of politics in the constitution of social relations. Some observers see Laclau and Mouffe's book as the most outstanding example of the relationship between poststructuralism and political theory.[1] The two theorists are certainly at the forefront of those thinkers in the poststructuralist vein who combine a theory of power—or hegemony—with a strictly differential conception of identity. In fact, Laclau and Mouffe, in a manner comparable to Judith Butler, develop a fully poststructuralist concept of identity. In his research, Laclau in particular reconstructs Michel Foucault's work in order to eliminate all the nondiscursive elements that are constitutive for the latter's theory, within which there is simply no room for extra-discursive meaning if identities are conceptualized as differentially and thus spatiotemporally

generated and, hence, dependent on their contingent positioning within structured systems of articulation. Although both Laclau and Mouffe take their cues from post-Marxist and poststructuralist literatures, in the 1990s Mouffe continued to elaborate on the project of a radical and plural democracy, theorizing freedom as external constraint, whereas Laclau focused more on the notion of hegemony and the relationship between particularism and universalism. But Laclau also used Jacques Derrida's insights into deconstruction, combining it with discourse analysis. Eventually, hegemony becomes the precondition for deconstruction and vice versa,[2] in that even the most sedimented (and hegemonic) practices rest on contingency and can therefore be stripped of their essentialist appearance. Finally, Laclau made use of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's notion of the *objet petit a*, which he introduced into his theory of hegemony.

Although Laclau and Mouffe moved into different theoretical directions, their coauthored book is widely recognized as a contemporary *magnum opus* of political thought. The terminology developed there remains fundamental to any kind of political theorizing. Central in this regard are the interrelated concepts of discourse, hegemony, particularism, and universalism. Different discourses compete for hegemony, that is, they constantly struggle to fix particular meanings in a way that makes them look like universal ones. Universality remains a chimera, which calls into question Kant's search for universal morality as initially formulated in the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*.[3] Many philosophers today do indeed have reservations about the universality of morals, established by pure reason. So do Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.

Let us now take a closer glance at the components of their theory in order to gradually elicit a theory of crisis and change. Structure, to start with, is defined as discourse; the social and culture are constituted entirely within discourse. Discourse is necessarily about change and is defined through articulation, as Laclau and Mouffe explicate: "We will call articulation any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call *discourse*."[4] Discourse—from this perspective—cannot properly be understood without reference to instability and transformation. The central notion of articulation brings about a logical difference to the work of Michel Foucault, as any distinction between discursive and nondiscursive practices or the establishment of a thought/reality dichotomy has to be called into question. While Foucault at times assumes a dualism of discourse and "reality," social principles, norms, institutions, and techniques of production are conceptualized as discursive articulations in the theory of hegemony; the opposition between realism and

idealism becomes blurred. Whether deadly acts such as those that took place on September 11, 2001, were constructed as "evil deeds," a "crime against humanity," "God's will" or as "acts of war" depended upon the nature of the discourse that constituted such an "event," which is—given the nature of the discursive—unstructured, contingent and unanticipated, "or it is not an event."[5] Dislocation and event co-correspond in that they rest on ruptures in ostensibly stable orders, and it is only in this gap, or discursive void, that the moment of the political appears. It is clear that dislocation also involves the incompleteness of ethical orders, and that the ethical is politically instituted all the way down. As already hinted at in chapter 3, the imperative of universality is precisely what constitutes the core of the ethical, and the difference between universal fullness at the ontological level and particular deficiencies of the ontic circumscribes the scope of the political. Meanings, political orders and community are entirely constituted within this undecidable space, in which discursive practices can continuously and endlessly come to work. Obviously, it is impossible to understand the material and social world without studying meanings, as Wight implies when explaining the events of September 11:

> Yes, the meaning of the events varies among individual and collective actors, but the fact is that these varied meanings exist in a complexly structured relationship to the events themselves. In effect, the meanings have no meaning outside of some relationship to the events. It is the material events themselves that tie the differential meanings into a complex whole which becomes a political problem.[6]

In this quote, it appears as if the "material" world took ontological precedence and priority over the differentially produced meanings that endow those "events" with significance in the first place. In accordance with the understanding of the term "meaning" proposed in this book, a tentatively nuanced view will be taken in the following: If meaning arises out of the temporal and local void that is generated by the contingent "event," the political (as a synonym for the discursive), and not the brute material fact (whatever that refers to), circumscribes the ontological horizon in which particular meanings find their place. The oft-quoted notion of "material power" is also a form of power that depends on its embeddedness in discursive structures. Intransitive variance can only be conceptualized as transitive change. Human beings, the "human subject," "man" and "woman," material conditions of possibility, are constructed differently in different religious, ideological, or constitutional discourses. Any physical constraint has to be endowed with meaning by discourse for human beings to be able

to act on it, and—most crucially—the physical constraint and the material "event" might not even exist materially, while discourse might still produce constraining effects in their name.

Against the background of these preliminary methodological clarifications, Laclau and Mouffe start by defining the social as a "discursive space" and take a strict standpoint in opposition to the positivist or naturalist paradigm. According to the theory of hegemony, there is nothing societal that is determined outside the discursive, which indicates that the social per se is discourse, or discourse becomes coterminous and co-extensive with the social.[7] As a result, any distinction between a linguistic and a behavioral element of social life is rejected. Crucially, discourse consists of both linguistic and nonlinguistic elements in complexly structured differential relations of discursive moments.

Taking poststructuralist thought in the tradition of Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida as their starting point, Laclau and Mouffe argue that the social is pervaded by undecidables rather than governed by structural determination. This means that the social is inherently unstable, while discourse only selectively structures the social; it is—to use Lacan's term that Laclau draws on—never perfectly sutured together. The incompleteness of social structures makes political articulations possible in the first place; interests are entirely produced in the articulatory political process, in fact "politico-hegemonic articulations retroactively create the interests they claim to represent."[8] The impossibility of closure entails an impossibility of society, calling into question the very foundation of classical structuralism. Structural determinism or holism becomes logically impossible unless a preexisting totality is taken as given. Closure would mean oppression and the loss of freedom and would thus resemble a prison. However, preexisting structures, which cannot be changed, would dispute the nature of the political described above, and would have serious ethical consequences as well. As I have argued in chapter 3, the ethical resembles the ontological and the discursive, for it provides the horizon in which particular ontic contents, that is, specific normative orders, can be established. Therefore, the ethical is habitually expressed using signifiers like "justice," "freedom," "liberty," "autonomy," "self determination," or, simply, "human rights," which denote a universalist assertion that can never be achieved. The only limit to the primacy of the political described here is given by certain traditional beliefs in a society, depicted as "sedimented practices" by Laclau.[9] These practices are deeply rooted within the structure of social relations and are thus hard to forgo. Sedimented practices set the framework for identities that are at least temporarily stable and, concurrently, a notion of subjectivity to become thinkable. As I will later elucidate in more detail, talking about crisis in this context precisely means the dislocation of such sedimented practices, by

questioning the stability and rationality of traditions, which in themselves have never been stable, but contingent and essentially dislocated at all times. In short, the defining element of the discursive is its essentially dislocated character. We will thus see that the event of "9/11" was not a crisis in itself, but laid bare the fundamentally dislocated character of the American as well as—in many respects—global society.

In the next step, referring to Hegel, Laclau and Mouffe conceptualize "identity" as a precariously negative term, never closed in itself, ephemeral in character and relying on the constant movement of differential relationships.[10] The abovementioned undecidability of structure leads to the incompleteness of identities: "the presence of some objects in the others prevents any of their identities from being fixed."[11] Laclau and Mouffe compare the concept of identity to Saussure's linguistic signs, rejecting a referential theory of identity in favor of an exclusively relational account. It is an entirely discursive construction, or—as noted above—a discursive *articulation.* Laclau and Mouffe are seen as belonging to a group of theorists who give preference to an ontology of "lack," derived from Lacanian psychoanalytic thought, which asserts the incompleteness of any identity, as individual subjects never accomplish complete self-consciousness. The lack directly relates to the absent ground of society, and in line with the argument of the impossibility of fully closed identities, the subject cannot be the origin of social structures. This does not entail the "death of the subject" but rather the construal of subjects as "subject positions" within the social. Accordingly, from *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* onward, Laclau has contended "that the Subject is the distance between the undecidability of the structure and the decision."[12]

The conflation of the concept of "subject positions" with other essentially contested terms such as roles, norms, beliefs, attitudes, preferences, and—most significantly—identities, is widespread in the social sciences. Laclau responded to a critique by Slavoj Žižek, in the early 1990s, complementing the rather static notion of "subject positions" with an ontology of "lack" within a structure. In Lacan's psychoanalytic view, which Žižek proposes to better understand identity, every effort to resolve a lack will unavoidably fail, giving identity "the name of what we *desire* but can never *fully* attain."[13] In Hudson's words, then, "subject-position, as an objective social identity, is the crystallisation of an act of the subject."[14] Insofar, the subject position can be seen as slightly more stable than the subject. The *distance between the undecidability of the structure and the decision* is clearly established here. Identity remains partial; it can never be full or complete. It can therefore only be established by difference, by drawing a line between something and something else. All identity is relational, formed by social practices that link together a series of interrelated signifying elements. All principles and

values, therefore, receive their meaning from relationships of difference and opposition. Later, Laclau therefore disqualifies the concept of "subject positions" as "that of reinscribing the multifarious forms of undomesticated subjectivities in an objective totality." He thus concludes that the very notion of "subject positions" becomes increasingly problematic and uses the term "subject" within a discursive structure to better describe his stance.[15] The subject is thus seen as an attempt to fill structural gaps within a structure. In contrast to Marx, who treats the proletariat as the incarnation of a pure human essence that has left behind any particularistic belonging, for Laclau, it must be treated as a significant subject within modern capitalist societies; yet, it cannot automatically be treated as an "emancipatory subject." In discourse theory, the hegemonic struggle is de-linked from the necessary agency of the proletariat.

This culminates in Laclau's differentiation between *identity* and *identification*, which unveils a basic ambiguity at the heart of identity. The individual cannot completely identify with the positions the discourse supplies, "but is forced into filling the structural gaps through identification."[16] "Subject positions" seem to be a bit more stable than subjects in this understanding, for it is the subject which is produced by the structure and is left to identify with the positions the structure provides. Once identification is repeated, it creates the illusion of a seemingly objective identity. This further illuminates the fact that identities are never fully constituted, while the subject is forced to identify with particular articulatory projects. Identification can be seen as the subject's always ultimately futile effort to gain a full identity. Identity must not be misunderstood as a fixed quality but as a fluid process of identity formation. Corresponding to poststructuralist traditions, subjects cannot be the very origin of meaning in social relations, because they are situated in a discursive space and certain conditions of possibility. The subject, as Foucault had put it, is "stripped of its creative role and analyzed as a complex and variable function of discourse."[17] As to the system or structure that evolves from these multi-directional correlations between subjects, Laclau and Mouffe explicate:

> Whoever says system says arrangement or conformity of parts in a structure which transcends and explains its elements. Everything is so *necessary* in it that modifications of the whole and of the details reciprocally condition one another.[18]

This means that, from a discourse theoretical angle, system and structure are in constant movement, and differential positions are never eternally fixed. Any particular process of becoming a subject within a democratic

polity must remain necessarily incomplete, and identity is never able to achieve absolute determination. Being tied to a specific symbolic notion, such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, history, nation, or region, an identity becomes what it is by virtue of its relative position in an open structure of differential relationships. This means it is constituted by its difference from an infinite number of other identities. Yet, identities can at times attain a certain stability by the repeated performative acts of particular subjects. "Sedimented practices" constitute themselves within the framework of a particular symbolic order but are eventually able to generate institutionalized material structures, which can be rather durable. As I will illustrate in chapter 7, sedimented practices are often connected with myths of original purity and self-presence.

In a nutshell, the incompleteness of agents' identities is what lies at the heart of any hegemonic process and guarantees the continuity of politics. If the universal prevailed over the particular, democratic politics would come to an end: "If democracy is possible," Laclau contends, "it is because the universal has no necessary body and no necessary content."[19] It is only temporary that the constellation "by which a certain particularity assumes the representation of a universality entirely incommensurable with it, is what we call a *hegemonic relation*."[20] Without this possibility of temporarily fixing social relations, chaos would be a permanent feature of the social, relativism in political theory would ensue, and no meanings would be graspable at all. In short, this would come down to schizophrenia and nihilism.

This is not to say that stable foundations are in principle conceivable. The tension between universality and particularity remains unresolvable, or "undecidable," at all times. The undecidability of structure makes it highly political, never total, and always reversible. In this fundamentally political logic, neither a universally accepted God nor the proletariat would be able to represent a pure human essence. The question that directly follows from this rejection of essentialism is whether universality is possible at all, or whether particularism is the dominant feature of today's world politics. The answer is twofold: Universality is still required to make the illusion of society possible, while particularism, via hegemonic struggles, will aim at incarnating the ungraspable universality of society. In other words, universality represents a necessary but missing presence; it is only possible through hegemonic transformation. As depicted in figure 5.1, both poles—particularism and universalism—eventually influence, subvert and deform each other.[21] Neither pure particularism nor unadulterated universalism is possible on this account.

Naomi Schor has also called the universal an "inflated particular,"[22] which boils down to saying that any universal is only thinkable as a dominant
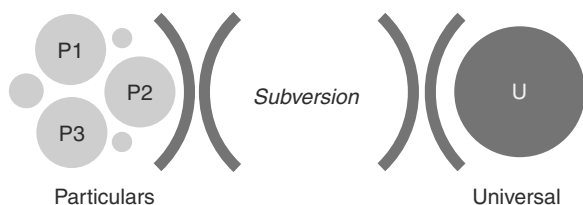
Figure 5.1 Universal and particular.

particular. In figure 5.1, one of the particular signifiers P1, P2, P3, etc., appears as if it had liberated itself from any particular content. Through subversion, it ostensibly gains universal quality. Crucially, both particular contents and universal signifier can only be established by drawing exclusionary lines between themselves and a banished Other.

If, however, the universal is unthinkable, its very instantiation can only rest on particularity. As a political category, the universal always remains in principal empty and cannot assume any positive content. This is the fundamental prerequisite of social change: Politics in a democracy is about the competition of different, particular, groups for universal representation. It is the sphere of the decision in and for a society, in that it transmits and disseminates certain particular meanings of the social as universals. Laclau calls this *hegemonization* or *hegemonic universality*. In any case, hegemony is first and foremost about the tension between universality and particularity. It has to be distinguished from *domination*, which denotes the (often juridical) command that is exercised by a state or government. Rather, (democratic) politics has to be understood as contestation and interrogation between competing social logics. While universality and totality remain unthinkable, the illusion or—in Laclau's words—the "fantasy construction"[23] of a positive ground of society still lingers as the cornerstone of all democratic politics. Contradiction is essential for identity to evolve; both poles negate each other, yet require the other at the same time. Universality and particularity are two sides of the same coin. In conclusion, Laclau and Mouffe's poststructuralist notion of discursivity means nothing less than the simultaneous possibility and impossibility of any social objectivity. The field of discursivity circumscribes a particular discourse and its universal outside; it encapsulates a particular discourse and all the other discourses that are external to it; so to speak, it is the sum of all the present and past discourses that can be related to each other at a certain point. While discursivity remains essentially open, discourse ties out those elements, which are connectable to others in a specific situation and thereby transforms them into moments, in Laclau and Mouffe's words, when "all discourse is subverted by a field of discursivity, which overflows it."[24]

Equivalence and Difference

As has been pointed out several times in the course of the present analysis, particularities must be conceptualized as essentially relational, from which it follows that subjects and identities are also purely differential. If we accept this conjecture, the whole system of differences is related to any single act of signification, which in turn requires us to think of the system as a closed one. Put differently, the very notion of particularity logically requires the existence of a totality. Otherwise the structure of the system would be infinitely dispersed with no signification possible at all. However, a totality also requires limits. This implies the question of the constituting of limits. How, if at all, are we able to demarcate the boundaries of discourses? The issue here is what is situated beyond the limit of a presumed totality, which—from the perspective developed here—can only be one more difference. Then again, the limit between internal and external structure would become impossible to identify.[25]

In contrast to Saussurean linguistics, which takes the community of language users for granted and tends to consider linguistic structures as closed, Laclau and Mouffe reject the notion of a harmonious and naturally bound collective entity and maintain that dominant articulatory frameworks result from the specific dialectic relationship between what they call the *logics of equivalence* and *difference*.[26] The logic of equivalence constitutes the fullness of a community by linking together a plurality of unfulfilled demands, while difference contradicts this logic. Different identities are grouped together in opposition to another camp to form a chain of equivalence, yet identities appear to be fixed by articulating a subject into a sequence of signifiers. Following such logic, it was possible to construct a signifier such as "German" in the Nazi era as *"worker"—"Aryan"—non-Jew, etc.* Equivalence thus highlights the community effect of a perceived common "negative" or "enemy" *(Jew)*; in this way the demands of different social groups are articulated into a larger common movement, as depicted in figure 5.2. Another example can be seen to be the German Islamophobic movement PEGIDA (*Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*, [Engl. Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West]), founded in 2014, in which one typically finds a specification of the "West" under equivalential terms such as "German," "European," "Christian," "civilization," and "law," habitually set in contrast to "Islam," "refugees," "immigrants," "asylum seekers," "crime," "radicalism," "Sharia," etc. Given the ideal of universality, such chains can be expanded indefinitely, certainly at the risk of erasing all positive content and the eventual obliteration of all meaning.

In contrast to the logic of equivalence, the community is constructed in purely relational terms within the logic of difference. Language as a system
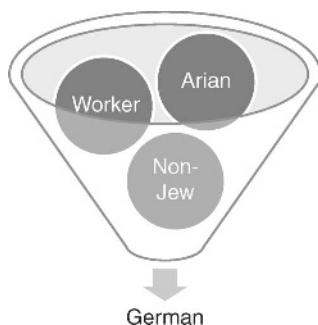
Figure 5.2   Difference and equivalence in Nazi-Germany.

of differences is the exemplary case in point for the latter. In a society, homogeneity is what constitutes the symbolic framework of the community. Equivalence subverts all positive difference by reducing it to a fundamental sameness.[27] Yet, this sameness is illusionary; while role or type identities in Wendt's understanding are definitely undermined by becoming part of a chain of equivalence, the heterogeneity of the chain will not dissolve. Particularities will continue to exist within the universality the chain of equivalence attempts to represent. Moreover, every identity constructed on the basis of nonessential chains of equivalences is overdetermined both from within a discourse and from outside of it—from an exterior that threatens to dislocate the allegedly stable frontiers that the chain of equivalences claims to establish. *Overdetermination* is the result of multiple links of interdetermination: a professor is constituted in her relationship with a student but also in her relations with her family, friends, colleagues, as well as in initial encounters with up to that point complete strangers. Overdetermination can be both positive and negative, the latter at times resting on processes of radical antagonism. Laclau and Mouffe hence see a way out of the logical dilemma of opposing logics by claiming that the nature of the relationship beyond the limit of the system is one of exclusion: it is not just one more element in a structure of differences, but one in an antagonistic relationship to the inside. As Laclau summarizes in one of his later works: "[T]he only possibility of having a true outside would be that the outside is not simply one more, neutral element but an *excluded* one, something that the totality expels from itself in order to constitute itself."[28]

This has two instantly conspicuous implications: First, if the outside is heterogeneous and produces relations of overdetermination, then the classic one-dimensional class-determination fails to cover the range of social possibilities of modern societies. Second, and perhaps more crucially, antagonism

implies the contamination of an inside by the outside in a Derridean sense, making the full constitution of the inside as a sutured totality impossible. In taking the continuous movement of differential relations for granted, identity cannot gain objective, positive content, in the empirical sense of the term. Nor can it be understood as real opposition, where two poles clash according to the laws of physics; nor indeed can it be seen as a contradiction of two mutually excluding concepts. Instead it circumscribes a limit to every possible objectivity, which can—in accordance with the notion of subjectification—only be grasped as a temporal and ephemeral process of objectification. This argument points toward the potentially traumatic implications of antagonism, embodied in the dislocated nature of the subject: The subject is caught up in an undecidable structure, deprived of any essential identity, and left to identify with the positions the structure provides. Antagonism implies the openness of one identity to be infected by another, a situation that indicates that the entirely autonomous subject is an illusion—a universal subject, so to speak.

In his studies following *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, and corresponding to the dominant work on difference in the field of IR as delineated in chapter 4 of this study, Laclau refers to the exclusion of a radical Other rather than antagonism. The eventuality of a hegemonic discourse thus depends on the construction of a threatening, excluded outside: "a radical exclusion is the ground and condition of all differences";[29] it is the unifying ground of any system. What follows from this is that there are relations of equivalence between in-group actors, which create antagonisms to other social groups. These social groups might not be real in the sense that they exist as an objectively identifiable social collectivity; they can be entirely constructed by discourse, or they can be temporal "Others" who have existed at some point in the past.

In that understanding, as Fred Dallmayr explains, hegemony entails social change. It gains the character of an innovative articulation, based on "the 'political construction' of a social formation out of dissimilar elements."[30] Hegemony, in a nutshell, is about the construction of new collective identities out of distinct concrete demands; the particular is subsumed in the universal: individuals regard themselves to be part of something larger. To make an appeal to this larger societal group turns individuals into social beings in the first place. In opposition to the excluded element, all other elements are equivalent to each other in that they negate the excluded identity. The emergence of a community entails the passage from disconnected social demands to a universal one via the construction of a chain of equivalences and the creation of an external, antagonistic force. The universal in this sense is an open series of unfulfilled demands, while a certain solidarity is

established between them. It does not follow that equivalence eliminates all differences; the established equivalential chain does not melt into a singular homogeneous mass. In fact quite the opposite is true: difference continues to exist within the equivalential chain. Both equivalence and difference are thus essential to construct the social. In effect, the social evolves from the irreducible tension between equivalence and difference. Only if the equivalential chain is emptied of all differential relations can the totality of the system logically be achieved.[31]

The simplicity of this conjecture is exemplified by the verdict that if an equivalential chain is assembled out of dissimilar elements, some are included, others excluded. As in all social formations, some are inside the group, some outside, from which two consequences follow: First, exclusion has a moral dimension; it is never neutral, but often takes the form of subordination. Relations between in-group and out-group—in other words—are power relations. Second, equivalence is not synonymous with identity: equivalence presupposes difference but can eventually lead to the formation of tentative collective identities. It is only because a particular demand is unfulfilled that it establishes an equivalential link with other unfulfilled demands. This means that the logic of equivalence does not dissolve differences but takes them as constitutive for the equivalential chain. Moreover, the excluded other keeps threatening the identity of the equivalential chain: the latter cannot evolve into a positive identity as it relies on a negative outside for its constitution. Therefore, Laclau concludes "that in a relation of equivalence, each of the equivalent elements functions as a symbol of negativity as such, of a certain universal impossibility which penetrates the identity in question."[32] Identity needs an external force for its very existence; without this "Other," identity would be different. Hence, annihilation or destruction of this excluded other would lead to a radical identity change, and a negative assertion of the excluded becomes the prevalent mode of representation. It is clear that the Other continuously feeds back on the identity of the Self.

In conclusion, social change can be seen as taking place through the interplay of particularity and universality and the logics of equivalence and difference, while it also requires the identification of an expelled "Other." Identity, however, is oriented to the status quo in that asserting one's own identity in a differential relationship means asserting the identity of a particular Other at the same time. Change can only occur "by rejecting both what denies its own identity and identity itself."[33] Thus, in Laclau's and Mouffe's view, contradictory forces form society. These forces construct social reality in different ways. Whereas the logic of antagonism accentuates difference, the logic of equivalence subverts it. Antagonisms are external to society; they

mark the limits of objective society, thereby preventing a fully closed cultural structure. Any form of consensus among the members of an institution is, in other words, the result of a temporary hegemonic constellation relying on these two logics.

Empty and Floating Signifiers

It is crucial to repeatedly emphasize that discourse is defined as a structure, but that the structure never achieves a full closure. Politics exists because structures are never complete; if a structure were fully closed, politics would have found its final designation. Every object, every subject is constituted by discourse and depends on specific discursive conditions of possibility. In this way, discourse constitutes culture, which consists of the meanings its subjects produce and reproduce. Talking about "Europe," "Latin America," "Africa," or "Asia," for example, presupposes a relation of equivalence, which is not instituted outside some discursive social space, but as "a real force which contributes to the moulding and constitution of social relations."[34] Any identity remains purely relational, is not self-defined, and by relying on an external antagonist it can never be closed or fully constituted in itself. In arguing that neither a fully constituted self, nor a complete other is impossible, Laclau and Mouffe implicitly reiterate the common poststructuralist argument that ultimate meanings are unattainable, while at the same time acknowledging the possibility of partial fixations. Without these, the very meaning of difference, antagonism and equivalence would become futile.

Hegemony rests on the assumption that any discourse tries to dominate the field of discursivity. Particularity is transformed into the illusion of universality. Referring to Lacan's notion of the *objet petit a*, Laclau and Mouffe call the temporary fixation of meanings, the construction of a discursive center, *nodal points*.[35] As such, nodal points are partial fixations, never conclusively arresting the flow of differences. The nodal point is thus nothing more than the objectification of a void, a gap within the system of signification, and a discursive point around which particular signifiers get articulated into a chain of equivalence. To this extent, it follows a universalist logic, whereby the hegemonic project requires that the structural void will be temporarily filled through *naming*. Both hegemony and naming are immensely authoritative in depicting processes that are entirely taken for granted. Laclau and Mouffe use Lacan's insights into naming and articulation when they maintain the following:

> The practice of articulation, therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of

this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity.[36]

Once again, this quote illustrates well the nexus between crisis and change: The dislocated character of the discursive field makes possible the transformation of elements into moments of a discourse. Structuring and transformation take place around a nodal point. The trauma of antagonism and the lack that identity embodies are linked here, for the subject *has to* identify with a privileged signifier in order to temporarily establish itself. It is possible to relate this back to the discussion of trauma that was briefly introduced in part I. As John Schostak explains:

In the case of a trauma, it is not that something that is said has to be listened to. Rather it is that something as yet is unsaid. Its expression is most likely to be a cry or a soundless utterance. Here, no accommodation to what exists can be made. No meaning can be addressed that founds itself on the prevailing patterns of social and discursive order. It is here that some neologism arises by which to recognise and affirm, providing an aye for that which cannot be fully said.[37]

However, the "neologism" referred to in this quote may not be a neologism at all. It may just be a particular signifier gaining universal significance through inflation. Schostak maintains that experience, fact, value, representation, and action are convoluted and any realist effort of disentangling this complexity to produce some kind of the "real" must be seen as an act of violence. In contrast, in political discourse theory, the privileged signifier fulfills the role of integrating the subject into the social sphere. To perform this task of integration, a signifier has to assume the role of an *empty* or a *floating signifier.* Empty signifiers are characterized by an indistinct or nonexistent signified, that is, terms that can have different meanings and can thereby serve to unite disparate social movements. They have no fixed content and can embrace an open series of demands. As pure empty signifiers—I will return to the question of whether such purity is possible at all—they resist signification and can be compared to what the early Heidegger called "formally indicating concepts" (*formal anzeigende Begriffe*). In Heidegger's understanding, philosophical concepts cannot offer their meaning exhaustively, but can only aspire to "indicate" formally what cannot be pronounced specifically. A similar understanding can be ascribed to Simmel's "formal moment" (*formales Moment*).[38]

Empty signifiers have three interrelated purposes: First, they signify the universal; second, they provide a name for the chain of equivalences; and third, by embodying the ideal of universality, they keep the equivalential sequence indefinitely open. To assume the role of an empty signifier, any particularity must void itself of its very particularity. However, an empty signifier is never completely empty; the notion of universality is never completely universal—in fact, quite the contrary is true: universality, as materialized in the form of an empty signifier, "is the symbol of a missing fullness."[39] Examples for empty signifiers are "order" or "democracy," but also purportedly universal terms that political action is oriented around, such as "human rights" or "justice"; in these cases, the empty signifier signifies a logically unattainable universality.

However, floating signifiers can assume different meanings for different social groups depending on the nature or topic of the discourse; examples are expressions like "freedom" and "equality."[40] In the time of German Nazi fascism, for example, left-wing signifiers like "the people" or even "socialism" were hegemonized by a radical right-wing discourse. Floating signifiers may stand for various or even *any* signified, and they may represent whatever their authors want them to represent. As Laclau, who is mostly focused on the domestic political sphere, explains, the Polish *Solidarność* in the 1980s was able to leave its particular meaning as a group of workers in Gdansk behind and take over the role of popular opposition against an oppressive camp.[41] The floating signifier is picked from a whole field of differences and comes to assume a totalizing function, thereby making community-building possible. In both cases—of the empty and the floating signifier—the signifier is not clearly attached to a signified. While the empty signifier takes a stable frontier for granted, the floating signifier allows for the possibility of displacements of that frontier. Yet, in processes of social transformation, the difference between the two is only marginal. If a floating signifier were not tendentially empty, floating would not occur.

Against this background, we are now able to offer a preliminary summary of the whole course of social transformation depicted in the previous two sections: The process by which signifiers of this kind assume universal meanings in a discourse ideally develops as follows: At the beginning, hegemonic projects are characterized by articulatory practices (*elements*) that have not become differential positions (*moments*) in a discourse, a good example being the previously mentioned "worker" in Nazi Germany.[42] Elements, in contrast to moments, are not yet discursively structured; they are meaningless as long as they are not connected with other, connotative signifiers, as in our example "German"—"worker"—"Aryan"—"Non-Jew." This chain of

equivalences is purely contingent; each single element lacks an immanent meaning and is only transformed into a moment in a discourse through articulation.

It is at this point of our discussion where the notion of crisis can be reintroduced. Within the field of discursivity, transformation of elements into moments occurs as a response to the previously mentioned (see chapter 1) *organic crisis* (a term borrowed from Gramsci), "[a] conjuncture where there is a generalized weakening of the relational system defining the identities of a given social or political space, and where, as a result there is a proliferation of floating elements."[43] In such a situation, the symbolic system that constitutes a society has to be fundamentally recast. In its most simple terms, crisis is experienced as a *lack*, a void, or gap within the social fabric—that is, within the system of articulatory differences—which signifies social disharmony. Something is crucially missing in the structure of society, and the answer must be to find a name for the absent. Without this "absent," without an initial crisis, however small it may be, there is no antagonism, no conflict in society, and, consequently, no politics. In politics, this means that one particular demand acquires a popular centrality, detached from its original concept and its original material particularity.

In the case of a radically articulated crisis, when people are confronted with a situation of fundamental *anomie*, the urge for some kind of answer becomes more acute than the actual ontic content of that order: "The Hobbesian universe is the extreme version of this gap: because society is faced with a situation of total disorder (the state of nature), whatever the Leviathan does is legitimate—irrespective of its content—as long as order is the result."[44] This is where the so-called empty or floating signifier comes into play. The empty signifier no longer represents various demands as equivalent, but the equivalential chain as such. The terms "freedom," "justice," "equality," and "order" feature prominently in the discourses after September 11, 2001; the March 11, 2004, Madrid commuter train assaults; the July 7, 2005, London bombings; or the January 7, 2015, Paris shooting. *Charlie Hebdo*, the French satirical weekly newspaper and the target of the latter attack, immediately after the brutal killing of 12 people proclaimed on its website: *"Je suis Charlie, parce que la liberté est un droit universel…"*[45] Sentences like these are obviously able to speak to a heterogeneous ensemble of individuals. They do not express any positive content but symbolize a fullness that is evidently absent. Hegemony, the construction of collective identities, or the "people," can thus only occur by emptying a particular demand of its content.

The notions of "empty" and "floating signifiers" are crucial to a poststructuralist understanding of meaning. If language as a system of articulatory

relations is seen as incomplete, this would entail that signifiers and the signified would not conclusively be attached to each other. Instead, Andersen shows, referring to Lacan, "how the sliding of the signifier across the signified forces the signifier to step into, or down onto, the level of the signifed."[46] In other words: By influencing that which they signify, signifiers exercise enormous power. This happens when, for example, North Korea announces it has tested a nuclear device. The signifier steps down into the signified by giving the event a much broader meaning: North Korea's nuclear bomb comes to signify the enslavement of the international community by so-called rogue states, the defects of the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), and the collective security system of the United Nations in general.

What is true for the domestic sphere must be equally true for the international, since the same social and political mechanisms are at work here. Again, a good example for this process is the language of the "War on Terror," which I will analyze in more detail in part IV and where empty signifiers structure the discursive field and make political decisions thinkable. Empty signifiers aim to universalize particular meanings, thereby designating an *"empty place, a void which can be filled only by the particular, but which, through its very emptiness, produces a series of crucial effects in the structuration/ destructuration of social relations."*[47] Discursive hegemony therefore resembles a battle over which signifiers are tied to which signified, and floating or empty signifiers play a crucial role in this game as they are the only signifiers capable of closing the gaps in an articulatory structure. The more specific the content of a signifier becomes, the more it will be contested, which leads to the failure of a hegemonic project. The failure to fill the empty space, the breakdown of the hegemonic constellation, provides the basis for the fullness of a community as a future promise: identity-building, in consequence, resembles an open-ended hegemonic struggle. Power and the ability to rule will thus depend on an actor's skill to present his own particular worldview as compatible with the communal aims. "Pure" empty signifiers as well as society per se are impossible, since total coincidence of the universal with the particular is unattainable. This, however, is the nucleus of the democratic project: Although no agent can logically claim to speak for a whole society, doing so lies at the heart of all politics and can be seen as the essence of the hegemonico-discursive operation: "the social only exists, however, as an effort to construct that impossible object."[48] Again, it is important to note that the empty signifier has serious ethical implications: It is only if terms like "freedom," "justice," and "democracy" function as radically contingent, temporary, and precarious signifiers of a particular political order that the democratic promise can live on and political change can become possible. A fixed understanding of such terms would only be conceivable within a fully

sutured, totalitarian polity. The next section will elucidate how the opposite is true: The essential dislocation of social structures, as well as the inescapably open and flexible character of empty signifiers, provides the precondition for social change.

Dislocation and Institutionalization

Social change occurs as a result of the nature of discourse, which rests on three essential assumptions: First, it is internally deficient and therefore the—inevitably futile but still indispensable—prospect of a development toward homogeneity and closure is a logical consequence. Second, discourses are in constant contact with other discourses. They are intimidated by alternative, at times contradictory, meaning systems; texts are interwoven with other, preexisting texts, and their internal coherence remains an illusion. Third, the continuous struggle for discursive closure is a political process, which subverts the moment of dislocation: dislocation as disrupted by politics, aiming at the reinstitution of societal fullness.

These three assumptions make discursive change, and with it social or cultural change, possible. The theoretical discussion for making sense of the internal incompleteness of discourse has already introduced the notion of *dislocation*, a situation of fragmentation and indeterminacy of articulations of different identities within the field of discursivity.[49] The notion of dislocation, understood as a structural failure in the sense of numerous signs or identities being present in other and therefore posing a subversive threat, has taken on an increasingly crucial role in Laclau's work after *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. Crisis is a constant political actuality, and so is structural dislocation. Although dislocation engenders social transformation, this also remains a structural endeavor, since no single individual—by that solitariness ceasing to be a social being—can logically claim to alter a social structure single-handedly.

In linguistic terms, a discourse is dislocated when it cannot integrate or explain certain "events." Those "events" remain incomprehensible; they are characterized by uncertainty over what they signify and imply. They cannot be incorporated within existing frameworks of intelligibility. While Laclau differentiates between antagonism and dislocation in his work since *New Reflections on the Revolution of our Time*, this difference is still disregarded in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.* In this earlier work, the starting point is the supposed crisis of the traditional conception of socialism, which essentializes the working class as the ontological referent and "Revolution" as the trigger of political change. Laclau and Mouffe contend that this, however, is only possible because discourses are never total, never fixed. This is a crucial

argument, since one can only gain an understanding of processes of subjec-
tification within the wider course of social change if these occur in nonde-
terminate social structures. As Aletta Norval maintains, "[I]f the structure
is dislocated und thus incomplete, an intervention by a subject is needed
to re-suture it."[50] In this move, the subject is never predetermined by some
prestructural conditions. Furthermore, the relation between the structure in
which it is located and its identifications is not essential but contingent.

Antagonism can thus be seen as a source and a possible reaction to dislo-
cation at the same time, as the cause of the dislocation is seen in the existence
of an antagonistic force: "[A]ntagonism is not only the experience of a limit
to objectivity but also a first discursive attempt at mastering and reinscribing
it. It is, if you want, a hinge between social objectivity and its disruption.
To categorize a social force as an "enemy" is already to represent it within a
discursive structure."[51] This is the logical basis of all politics. Previous politi-
cal logics are put into question by social dislocation, while more and more
actors have to open themselves up for innovative discourses, and hegemonic
strategies can be successful. Increasingly the network of existing social struc-
tures is considered to be an obstacle on the path to one's "true self," which
leads to the attempt to break with the status quo. The evolving hegemonic
discourse, however, reinforces a specific actor's identity crisis by offering
alternative identity concepts. The ultimate goal of this process is to establish
order where there was anomie and dislocation. The establishment of equiv-
alential relations through empty signifiers is crucial in this process.

The dislocated structure itself does not determine the political path to
be taken in an "undecidable terrain." A crucial question is how a political
project has to look to be successful. Why does one empty signifier and not
another step into this role? Why does one social group carry more weight
than others? To answer this question, let us scrutinize the hegemonic pro-
cess more closely. The transition from one dominant discourse to another
is a highly complex venture, encompassing a fundamental reconstruction of
existing subjects. With regards to crisis and change in global politics, it can
be summed up as follows:[52]

(1) *Sedimented discourses:* The theoretical starting point is a dislocated
social structure, more specifically: a dislocation of sedimented dis-
courses within the wider field of discursivity. Discourse is always
constituted around a constitutive lack, an unfulfilled identity of
a particular social group. In global politics, this is often a state or
nation, but it could also be a regional tribe or a suppressed minor-
ity group. Nations generally originate in the myth of a fully recon-
ciled society, which is articulated as threatened. Such sedimented

discourses are based on mythical purity, they conceal their worldly origins and often rely on transcendental or divine legitimacy. In order to elucidate the concept of "sedimented practices," many post-structuralist theorists devoted much time to the discussion of mythical purity and presence. In Derrida's work, for instance, this led to the deconstruction of origins. Defined as the original moment in a historical succession of moments, nothing precedes it, and it serves as a foundation for an understanding of today. The initial moment is constructed as trouble- and crisis-free, characterized by purity and unadulterated self-presence. In that way, myths represent the absolute source of meaning and serve as a frame in which political change becomes possible. As Laclau explains with reference to Husserl, "the social is equivalent to a sedimented order, while the political would involve the moment of reactivation" of the founding moment of that order.[53] This elucidates the close link between sedimented practices and myth.

(2) *Dislocation:* Due to the appeal to myths, nations represent their moment of creation as unadulterated and pure. It is only by reference to this pure moment of institution that the articulation of corruption and distortion can become possible. In this understanding, dislocation becomes constitutive for any notion of society. In the event of dislocation, competing political forces will endeavor to hegemonize the gap between purity and distortion. Alternative discourses start to compete in their articulation of the crisis and their attempt to resolve the "lack" triggered by the crisis. The ongoing contact with different discourses takes on the appearance of a discursive struggle. Discursive change becomes possible through the combination of different incomplete discourses and the substitution of particular elements by others. Empty signifiers like "freedom," "liberty," and "order" function as horizons, as a "surface of inscription" for a number of specific political articulations. Particularisms gain universal character in their endeavor to represent the lost essence of the nation.

(3) *Antagonism* plays a crucial role in this process. It is necessary for the construction of a mythical, pure Self, but also threatens the very essence of that Self. Opposed elements are articulated as conflicting, while the identity of a group or nation requires the complementarity between its internal elements, articulated into a homogeneous chain of equivalences.[54] Social struggles unite particular elements (e.g., peace, feminist, gay, ecological, anti-nuclear, religious, national, and worker movements) that are in principle unrelated and heterogeneous,

set them into opposition to a radically excluded camp and transform them into moments in an equivalential chain. The antagonist is excluded from the alleged fullness of the community, from the symbolic totality of the mythical inside. In doing so, however, the impossibility of social objectivity becomes apparent, for any act of exclusion can only be political, and the construction of exteriority remains highly contingent. The social is in principle infinitely dispersed, which places any articulation of antagonism into the wider sphere of global politics.

(4) *Institutionalization:* In the disruption of sedimented practices, the genuinely material character of discourse becomes all too visible, as institutions are no longer able to represent the demands of the political sphere. Understanding this process brings forward an ethical moment, since it is only in times of structural dislocation that subjects are capable of changing the established social order. In due course, these identifications will become more and more routinized, the discourse becomes what Laclau calls an imaginary, "not one among other objects but an absolute limit which structures a field of intelligibility and is thus the condition of possibility for the emergence of any object."[55] As it becomes an imaginary, the discourse will generate new kinds of political action along the lines of the dominant articulatory framework. Alternative, competing, and at times mutually exclusive discourses lead to alternative forms of political action. The ascription of meaning to the "world" by discourse excludes diverse other meanings, thereby constituting identities in only one particular way. Eventually, specific cultural forms like norms, rules, (political) institutions, conventions, ideologies, customs, and laws are all influenced by this process. This is an exercise of power in its purest form, as it categorically excludes alternative institutional frameworks. Antagonism gains a temporal character in this context: The initial negativity of the discourse, characterized by the construction of antagonistic frontiers with enemies—increasingly recedes in this process and is gradually replaced by a positive identification with the newly established identities. The "lack" that was triggered by the crisis is resolved and the process is then experienced as the recovery of something that has been there all along.[56]

The ontology of the social depicted in figure 5.3, which emphasizes the incompleteness and dislocation of the social, the antagonistic character of the subject and the differential quality of any identity, makes social change possible. Three crucial aspects of this *discourse theory of crisis and change*
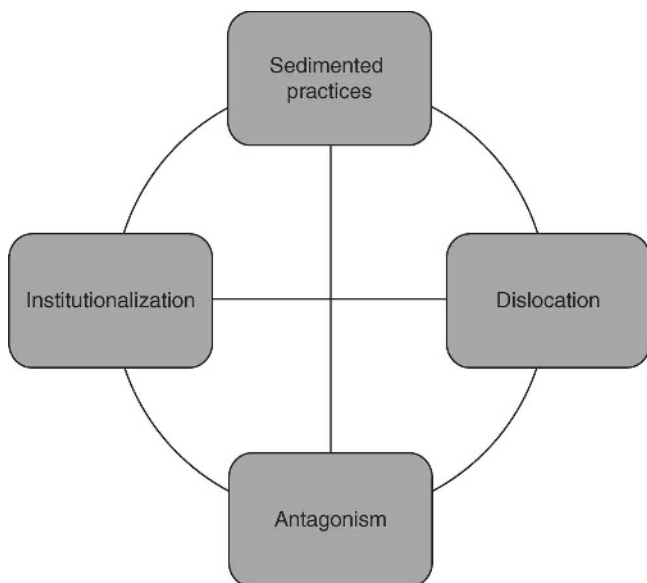
Figure 5.3 Crisis and change.

have to be emphasized here: First, each element of the social constitutes and permeates all the others: Sedimented practices never represent the social in its entirety; they are always internally incomplete and dislocated. Similarly, hegemony never gains a total or finished character in that it leads to an eternal closure of society. Second, although cross-connections between sedimented practices and hegemony, as well as institutionalization and dislocation, are depicted in the theoretical model, in principle it can be understood as a never-ending circle of the political, characterized by the elements of difference and contingency. Third, the model depicts the ethical danger of closure. The primacy of the political is always threatened by the quasi-naturalness of established social institutions, which in many cases involve bureaucratization and technologization. The prime example of this danger is the undoubted nature of the modern nation state, despite its only rather recent evolution, that is, after the Westphalian peace in 1648. However, the most brutal forms of war have since been fought in its name, and its almost natural legitimacy is institutionalized in international law. What is forgotten is its principal quality as politically constituted and historically contingent.

In summary, one can say that social change implies new sedimented practices in the form of institutions, the establishment of new power relations,

forms of inclusion and exclusion, and rights of access. The subject becomes a subject only *qua* identification with particular structural positions. Moreover, the process implies a temporal dimension. The establishment of an illusionary new identity requires a radically different past that has to be overcome. Figure 5.3 suggests that dislocation eventually leads to new institutionalized practices, which retroact on the dislocated social structure. It looks like the process has gained a self-perpetuating character. This, however, is not so. The dislocated social structure will never be fully sutured, hegemony remains a contingent intervention, and institutionalization must be characterized as an ongoing endeavor that continuously takes on new forms. Were signification and institutionalization eternal, dislocation would be replaced by stability. The fragility of the social and the impossibility of signification become the precondition of sociality, on the one hand, and the attempt to erect stable meaning systems, on the other. Yet, nothing is essential, nothing predetermined in this process, any infinite kind of historical form is possible.

It has to be emphasized that this is an ideal type version of the hegemonic process. Ideal types in Max Weber's understanding provide simplified representations of complex, contingent processes. In what is proposed here, they are neither monist, as in Jackson's "analyticist" account of "singular causal analysis," nor are they dualist, as one might expect when the analysis is directed at "actual events." In Jackson's account, these events never look like the mentally generated ideal type, but facilitate an explanation "of what actually did happen, and why."[57] In the approach followed here, ideal types are "limiting concepts," which emphasize traditions in the form of sedimented practices, highlight radical contingency, and allow for the openness of the analysis.

It should be clear by now that the mind is not an independently functioning, generating mechanism. At the same time, it seems impossible to refer to the world in a direct manner, without the mediating function that discourse provides. Finally, the ideal-type circle has constituting rather than causal effects, and one aspect occurs in unison with another. Dislocation and institutionalization transpire simultaneously, and the hegemonic struggle continuously penetrates sedimented practices. All four elements are constitutively interrelated and temporally coinciding. The evolving societal structure is never fully constituted and hegemonic interventions are possible at any time. The adoption of a particular signifier as an empty one and the construction of a unifying chain of equivalences is contingent and is never to be understood as a once-and-for-all decision. The battle between discourses to become the leading social structure brutally reveals the configuration of power relations in a given historical moment. Hegemonization makes power

discernible in the first place. In any case, the form of power described here is uneven,[58] not stable or static, but is continuously rearticulated, and new conceptual perspectives are opened up by subversive practices.[59] Logically, it is impossible to say which particular will become universalized in the end. Thus it cannot be overemphasized that the political is structured in terms of the logic of contingency, which rejects the assumption that the social is structured according to general laws that hold true in any case. In this context, Neta Crawford, by analyzing the end of colonialism as one of the major changes in world politics over the last 500 years, advocates the view that arguments can impact on politics at least as much as military or economic capabilities.[60] It was certainly not in the interest of the leading colonial empires to end this era. It is in the Foucaultian ethos of permanent critique that social change is entailed. Aletta Norval elucidates this argument by showing how South African forces of resistance were successful in transforming the hegemonic discourse and the terrain of the imaginary.[61] A distinction between an infinite set of logical possibilities and a limited set of historical opportunities seems appropriate for circumventing a voluntaristic view of society. As Laclau explicates,

> [T]he undecidability between the various movements that are possible [...] does not mean that at any time everything that is logically possible becomes automatically an actual political possibility. There are inchoate possibilities which are going to be blocked, not because of any logical restriction, but as a result of the historical contexts in which the representative institutions operate.[62]

At this point we are leaving the familiar terrain of regularity-determinism and are highlighting a large degree of unpredictability. This, however, does not amount to relativism or even nihilism. To expound this argument further we have to introduce Laclau's notion of *credibility*. The ideal type cycle presented above emphasized that one predominant interpretation will evolve due to its linkages with residual institutions. Put differently, if the new political project clashes with the "ensemble of sedimented practices constituting the normative framework of a certain society,"[63] it will likely be rejected. Credibility implies *availability*, in that a political project has to be connected with certain political traditions that subjects identify with. This argument will certainly lose weight with the extent of the articulation of crisis. The more far-reaching the dislocation of a discourse is, the fewer principles will still be in place after the crisis. However, it is hard to imagine that a society is dislocated to such a degree that it requires complete reinstitution. Even in the most severe crisis, vast areas of societal sedimented practices remain

intact. Yet, while colonialism worked on a historical ground that has been already set up for it and draws on established interpretative frameworks of a "leading race," "subhuman beings," xenophobia, and imperialistic nationalism, it was still possible for it to come to an end. As Smith argues, by following the logic of contingency, Laclau and Mouffe evade "positivist prediction and theoretical meta-narratives."[64] By detecting the historical circumstances of political change, they are also sensitive to the actual limits for political practice at a given time.

Once a particular social force becomes hegemonic, however, it might be able to prevail for some time. Ernesto Laclau argues that when a discourse reaches the stage of establishing a dominant representation of reality for all those participating in the communicative process, it reveals a lot about the course of action in collective identity formation. If the same "reality" is reflected in the articulations of all interacting subjects, one can speak of hegemony. Different subjects compete for hegemony by offering their specific "systems of narration" as a compensatory framework for an articulated crisis, thereby attempting to fix the meaning of social relations. Hegemony therefore reproduces our daily life; it starts to be hegemonic when our everyday understanding of social relations and the world as a whole starts to alter according to the framework that is set by the hegemonic discourse. It is an act of power because it makes the world intelligible: "The power of discourse to materialize its effects is thus consonant with the power of discourse to circumscribe the domain of intelligibility."[65] In a final step, the discourse produces specific practices and institutions. It acquires material objectivity by becoming institutionally fixed. Reflecting Gramsci's understanding of hegemony, institutions are supportive in providing stability in unstable social situations and therefore help to circumvent or minimize the use of force.

It is to Laclau's and Mouffe's merit that they have reintroduced the term "hegemony" in contemporary debates concerning problems of political power, authority, and culture. Hegemony means nothing more than the *discursive struggle* between political actors over the assertion of their particular representations of the world as having a universal significance. It must not be conflated with domination, and often only a dwindling hegemony leads to coercion, intimidation and—sometimes—the use of force against indomitable others. The hegemonic struggle—and with it the interplay between crisis and change—never ends; it continuously and necessarily meets other articulatory practices.

CHAPTER 6

Discourse Analysis

Discourse and Language

This book purports to present a theory of crisis and change, and both terms have been shown to be co-constitutive, as change is engrained in crisis, and crisis essentially involves change. The nexus between the two terms led to the introduction of a postfoundational, nonessentialist, discourse theoretical approach that rests on the notions of identity or sedimented practices, dislocation, antagonism, and institutionalization. The notion of discourse in this context epitomizes a new ontological horizon, which at the same time represents the ethical and political, as the constitutive dimensions of a society. In a further analytical step, it is important to distinguish between discourse *theory* and discourse *analysis*. Whereas the former is interested in the ontological horizon against which societies, with their dominant practices and processes of subjectification, are formed, the latter—very much in Foucault's tradition—draws attention to techniques of problematization and ways of questioning normative orders.

Method, in this context, must be interested in how particular discursive forms of power naturalize certain processes of institutionalization and dismiss others. How are issues like "9/11" constructed as events in the first place? Of course, language is significant in such processes of construction, yet this by no means boils down to saying that everything is language. However, any social institution can be conceptualized as a result of historically sedimented discursive structures, in which text plays a major role. Although it is ontologically difficult to reduce discourse to language patterns, postfoundational and contextualist authors of difficult *couleur* have contended that a theory of social change must take language in its various forms (speech, writing, visual images, sounds, etc.) as a point of departure.[1]

In contrast to all positivist and neopositivist accounts of science, discourse analysis adopts neither a monist nor a dualist stance and treats its object of inquiry as self-referential. In this vein, James Farr has claimed that "the concepts in language partly constitute political beliefs, actions, and practices. Consequently, political change and conceptual change must be understood as one complex and interrelated process."[2]

Reference, in this context, means reference to previous, contrastive and subsequent meanings, and not to a reality outside of discourse. As discourse includes words *and* actions, any kind of practice is embedded in the structured totality of these words and actions. The standard view of method—if it refers to the identification of unambiguous independent variables, their correlation with equally unequivocal dependent variables, permanent and intangible rules—is abandoned in this perspective. Method does not guarantee discourse-independent truth. Instead, intertextuality assumes a prominent role. For example, the meaning of the word "man" refers to everything that has been said about it in a discourse, and to heteronormative behavior that is seen as constitutive for what "man" entails, but also to its many exclusions and suppressions. In accordance with the complexity of these tasks, the analysis of discourses requires a method that is both rigorous and flexible. Rigorous in that it addresses as many of the deconstructive questions as possible to produce a comprehensive understanding of the issue in question; flexible in that it does not distort our understanding of that political issue from the outset.

But how exactly is a discourse to be analyzed? The literature on discourse theory offers no easy answers and certainly no simple consensus about how to conduct a discourse analysis. Discourse can be understood from a formal and a more practical perspective. The (post-) structuralist concept of difference, on the one hand, requires a rather abstract and formal inquiry, relying more on the arrangement than the contents of the structure. In this instance, the conflation of form and content as well as an understanding of form as being "merely a content-based abstraction" only emerges on second glance.[3] In a more practical sense, by defining discourse as the sum of articulatory practices, discourse refers to no more or less than the practices that are common to a particular society. Examples of such a discourse are the "anti-terror" discourse in the United States and other countries, which will be illustrated in part IV of this study or the apartheid discourse in South Africa, analyzed by Aletta Norval.[4] This part of the book deals with the practical question of how a complex conceptual toolkit like the one provided by Laclau, Laclau and Mouffe respectively, and others, can be translated into a consequential and workable method, as their work is elusive on this point.

A first significant problem that arises on the path to be taken is that we have to analyze all kinds of social practices, rituals, and symbols, be they verbal or nonverbal in character. It is through the diverse available sources that we will be able to understand a particular discourse and—concomitantly— the nature and constitution of society. In the example picked to illustrate the argument of the political constitution of society in part IV of this study, the political *grammar* that circumscribes and informs the "reality" of the "War on Terror" will be analyzed. "Grammar" can be understood both literally and allegorically—as the structural rules determining the composition of texts, as well as the principles that constitute a society.

Of course, approaching nonverbal symbols will always and by necessity involve some reference to verbal communication. For instance, the widely known United States Homeland Security terror-alert chart, which uses different colors to depict the level of risk of terrorist attacks against public authorities or against US citizens, can hardly speak for itself. Within the wider discourse on the "War on Terror", one needs to understand that red refers to a "severe" level of risk, while orange ("high"), yellow ("elevated"), blue ("guarded"), and green ("low") indicate decreased levels of threat. After many years of an omnipresent anti-terror discourse in the United States, citizens are perhaps instantly able to contextualize the terror-alert status, but this is only possible within the wider frame of the ongoing terror-related articulations in the United States. The interplay between words and actions, in Wittgenstein's sense, as well as linguistic categories such as the signifier and signified, no longer exclusively belong to the field of linguistics; rather, they belong to the sphere of a general social ontology.

This method is in line with the discourse theoretical framework developed in chapter 5. Laclau and Mouffe view extradiscursive matter as formless and ungraspable, hence they do not restrict discourse to its linguistic dimension. Still, they would agree that by drawing on linguistic insights, it is possible to generate broader meanings of a discourse by referring to methods such as intertextual and contextual analysis. The reference to structural linguistics and Derridean deconstruction in part I showed that the meaning of a text is reliant on the exclusions it implements on others, and that the sovereignty of a text, as well as the notion of a single or general history, is an illusion. On the contrary, emancipatory discourses never coalesce into one homogeneous stance. They are infinitely dispersed and define the field of the *Political*, in which *politics* takes place. This also explains Laclau and Mouffe's distinction between *discourse* and the *discursive*: the latter is seen as the totality of discourses taken as a whole, and this means that the context of a particular discourse can be constructed by reference to frameworks,

which are provided by other discourses. Importantly, "context" has to be pinpointed within the discursive, not outside of it.

All that said, theorists employing radical discourse theoretical vocabulary for empirical analyzes make a strong case for the study of language.[5] For example, Seyla Benhabib maintains that "a subjectivity that would not be structured by language, by narrative and by the symbolic codes of narrative available in a culture is unthinkable."[6] Most of these theorists also agree on two related aspects of discourse analysis: First, any kind of discursive information, be it linguistic or nonlinguistic data, must be translated into a textual part of a broader discourse to be analyzable. There is perhaps a world "out there" that exists independently of both the observers' "mind" and of language (which is not the question in this book), but we do not have immediate access to its manifold meanings without referring to discourse formed in large part by linguistic codes. Ultimately, it is through language in a wider meaning of the term that the objects that are meaningful for us are socially constructed. Second, discourse is open to everyone; it stays "totally clear of any relationship to what people really think. [The analysis is] not interested in inner motives, in interests or beliefs; it studies something public, that is, how meaning is generated and structured [...]."[7] The speaker is no more than what he says at a particular moment, or, in semiologist Roland Barthes's words: "The author reacts either to the discourse which surrounds him, or to his own discourse."[8] Mind-sets and feelings need to be extrapolated from words or discourses.

Now, if we accept the importance of language in the analysis of discourse, how are specific discourses to be dissected? What tools are available that do not contradict the ontological assumptions made so far. First of all, it needs to be reiterated here that the study of open systems, unfinished identities and structures of differential relations has to take precedence in the analysis of the political. As Jonathan Culler emphasizes:

> Study of the system leads to the construction of models that represent forms, their relations to one another, and their possibilities of combination, whereas study of actual behavior or events would lead to the construction of statistical models that represent the probabilities of particular combinations under various circumstances.[9]

This view is stressed by Michael Dummett, who postulates that semantic theories operate through the analysis of "negation, conjunction, disjunction, and conditionalization," followed by quantification through which generalization becomes possible.[10] To grasp the meaning of a word, for example, we always need to situate it within the context of a sentence, and,

furthermore, situate it within the intricate system of differences in a language. Words do not obtain their meanings out of themselves or through their composition. The same is true for sentences: For the proposition in question to acquire meaning its parts must be of significance within the wider system of differences.[11] Components of a discourse acquire their meaning by paraphrase. As Wolfgang Teubert suggests, "When we talk about an expression, we talk about what it stands for, namely the discourse object, and this object is represented, identified, explained, and defined solely by the potpourri of paraphrases that others have used before us."[12] Once the decision to rely on textual data has been made, the scientist is thrust into the analysis of textual networks to identify how meanings are negotiated, called into question, transformed, or replaced. Texts are, according to one of the most significant protagonists of critical discourse analysis (CDA), Norman Fairclough, "sensitive barometers of social processes, movement and diversity, and textual analysis can provide particularly good indicators of social change."[13] Emphasizing the social character of texts, methodically the dimension of their external relations will be of primary concern, that is, the question of how elements of other texts are "intertextually" incorporated and interpreted, how other texts are alluded to, assumed, and dialogued with.

It is predominantly in linguistic theories of intertextuality that such textual networks have been examined.[14] Discourse theory can justifiably be combined with the theory of intertextuality when it comes to a substantiation of the former. In both poststructuralism and intertextuality, the inherent notion of difference derives from structural linguistics in the name of Ferdinand de Saussure, while the most prominent figures in twentieth-century literary thinking on intertextuality—theorists Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva—have also taken the turn from structuralism to poststructuralism, which was then perhaps most famously delineated by French philosopher Roland Barthes. Both linguistic theories of intertextuality and poststructuralist political theories take us back to the notion of difference developed by de Saussure. While Laclau offers a political theory of unstable identities and contingent hegemony, literary theory draws attention to the instability of meanings and objective meanings in literary texts. The differential potential of societal meaning in Laclau that is mirrored in the ephemeral character of subject positions and identities is similarly reflected in the intertextual nature and, implicitly, the volatility of textual relations. It is because every text is always interwoven with other, preexisting texts, that its internal homogeneity and stability is threatened. As every text acquires its meaning only in relation to other texts, and texts are devoid of essential meanings, meanings can always change. In the tradition of the concept of

difference, "the literary work is viewed not as the container of meaning but as a space in which a potentially vast number of relations coalesce."[15]

In many respects, Bakhtin comes close to Laclau's thinking in that he accentuates the social specificity of language, thereby implying a reference to a definition of discourse that transcends the linguistic sphere. Language is the mere reflection of constantly changing social identities. Discourse, in Bakhtin and Medvedev's words, is in a dialogical manner associated with "the more immediate and brief phenomena of social life and, finally, with the news of the day, hour, and minute."[16] The system of differences stretches from text to text, utterance to utterance: all statements, speeches, expressions, and remarks react to previous utterances and create further relations of difference. In the previous chapter, we have heard that identity, if it is thinkable at all, is only thinkable within differential relations. Whereas Saussure is blamed for ignoring the dialogical and deeply social character of language, it is Bakhtin who first gave emphasis to the differential nature of language and its collective foundation. The purpose of this section is not to go into further details of Bakhtin's *dialogism*, Kristeva's *production,* or Barthes's *Death of the Author*, for this would indeed clash with some of the theoretical assumptions outlined in the previous chapters. It is instead an attempt to translate the notion of intertextuality into a fruitful but still open and flexible scrutiny of discourse. Intertextuality—by referring to, incorporating, recontextualizing and dialoguing with other texts—effaces the scientific realist critique that discourse-based accounts of social relations fail to take into account through the possibility of second-order discourse, that is, theory, which situates the speaking agents' stories into a wider context. In the poststructuralist tradition, we will, for example, be concerned with understanding what is present by asking what is not present in texts. Intertextual analysis sheds light on the interrelation of texts with present and past discourses, but at the same time draws attention to how discourse may transform society.

Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Relations

To develop the tools required for an open and flexible discourse analysis, let us again remember the work of Saussure, introduced in chapter 4, who set off the initial argument that has been modified and extended in the course of this book: If the arbitrary quality of the sign and the opposition between *langue* and *parole* is a logical consequence of the differential nature of the language system, then any sign gains its meaning only as a result of variegated relationships, and any identity is only graspable within a system of relations. Therefore, this system of relations or system of articulatory differences must be the focus of the analysis. Meaning production in a system of

differences occurs at two levels, a level of combination, which works through differentiation from each other—called *syntagmatic* in linguistics—and a level of substitution, in which different terms (red, orange, yellow, blue, green) can replace each other—called *paradigmatic.* Syntagmatic relations indicate chains of equivalence, paradigmatic relations allude to the logic of difference and specify elements that can replace one another, implying hierarchies and exclusions. In the practical analysis of paradigmatic relations, a number of terms that delimit the meaning of a chosen term are identified.[17] These properties of the linguistic system can be analyzed as social facts, as they endow social relations of, for instance, friendship and enmity with meaning. Language no longer remains a neutral linguistic system but acquires the status of a scheme of socially regulated values of good and bad, strong and weak. The signifier "worker" acquires no meaning as long as it is linked to another signifier, for example, "wage," "woman," "children," "German," or "British." It is only via the relationship between different signifiers that mutual integration, and the establishment of a chain of equivalences, becomes possible.

Paradigmatic possibilities are infinite, and it is practical to limit an analysis to what is called "significant others," denoting "words in relation to which the present word most directly derives its identity."[18] A good example is the word "Islam," which played a major role either explicitly or implicitly in the American anti-terror discourse after September 11, 2001. The meaning of the term is primarily regulated by its relation to words like Christianity, Buddhism, and Judaism, not to terms like house, table, or love—although many followers of Islam would argue that the latter must be seen as closely related. In any case, paradigmatic relations express concealed and often oblivious structural conditions.

In the field of semiology as it has developed after Saussure, syntagmatic, and paradigmatic relations are habitually identified at the levels of phonemes, morphology, and syntax. At each of these levels, it is possible to conduct analyses along the lines of combinatorial and contrastive elements. Higher-level properties are generated by the former, manifold binaries, and oppositions are the result of the latter. Linguistic elements are social facts, and—comparable to any science that is interested in the disposition of the facts it is focusing on—these social facts are produced by combinations and distinctions that are in need of disentanglement. Crucially and perhaps paradoxically, these "facts" are transfactual in the sense that their structure is virtually unobservable apart from the many individual activities, but still engender real, observable outcomes. One must therefore grant the status of "reality" to social facts. The analysis of observable social behavior must always be related to its underlying system of meanings. Consequently, the

analysis of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations at different levels might be extended into the analysis of larger discourses.

If it is true that difference can be understood by reference to its antonym "sameness," then another way of understanding it lies in correlating it to synonyms like variance, dissimilarity, alteration, distinction, variation, and contrast. This takes us back to Saussure's famous assertion that the meaning of concepts does not rest on positive grounds, but can only be derived from relating it to other concepts. In structural linguistics, this has often led to the analysis of binary oppositions.[19] In contrast, poststructuralist analysis extends the simple analysis of binaries toward the exploration of more complex relationships: it deconstructs binary oppositions and unveils the hierarchy inherent in any relationship. Power relations are exposed by revealing how one term is privileged over the other (west over east, man over woman, human over animal, etc.). Nouns are of particular importance in the analysis of difference by fulfilling two functions, one being the establishment of difference, one the creation of a generalization and, simultaneously, a collective identity or possibly a stereotype.[20] Once nouns are used routinely and consistently, the hegemonic project as a dominant articulatory framework becomes visible and analyzable.

The empty signifier, which symbolizes the hegemonic operation, has a deeply catachrestical character; in fact, it often takes the form of a *synecdoche*, as a part comes to represent the whole. In this context, Laclau concurs with deconstructionist Paul de Man that synecdoche represents a "borderline figure that creates an ambivalent zone between metaphor and metonymy."[21] According to Jacques Lacan, metaphor and metonymy are the two central "figures of style" in the production of meaning. While metaphor creatively replaces one signifier with another and is based on the principle of comparison, which is co-extensive with the substitutive or paradigmatic dimension of language, metonymy stands for the combination of signifiers, denotes contiguity, and represents the syntagmatic facet of language.[22] The creation of a longer chain of equivalential relations would depend on the substitution of, for instance, man with football and woman with fashion, based on the prejudice of all men loving football and woman fashion. In an important sense, the poststructuralist analysis is not restricted to mere content analysis or "internal analysis" of structures, for paradigmatic relations not only point to what there is, but also to what is absent yet could be present.

All in all, a unified discourse would be ungraspable without the conjoint movements of both metaphor and metonymy. Chains of equivalence, in their horizontal social association, are established by the metonymical operation, but the social also requires the vertical link of the metaphorical construction, for one signifier (e.g., the United States) can be substituted by

Figure 6.1 Synecdoche and hegemonic process.

an infinite number of others (civilization, democracy, freedom, etc.). For Laclau, the process he calls hegemony is threefold, moving from an initial moment of metonymy over metaphoric substitution to synecdochal universalization. Synecdoche necessitates metaphorical support for its constitution, which in turn requires metonymical sustenance.

In essence, it is never the mind that positions us as subjects within the social, but the hegemonic process that begins with metonymy and evolves over metaphor to synecdoche, eventually generating social associations, rankings, inclusions, and exclusions and is linguistically analyzable (figure 6.1). It is important to repeat that metonymy and metaphor are not exclusive categories. In fact, contiguity and analogy represent two points on a continuum; contiguity—so to speak—slides into analogy.

In accordance with his views on universalism, Laclau maintains that hegemony can only establish "impure synecdoche."[23] In any sense, Laclau's views seem to contradict those of Chantal Mouffe, who maintains that the categorical exclusion of synecdoche is the essential prerequisite of radical plural democracy. For Laclau, there needs to be one sector of society representing the ends of society at one particular moment. This one sector needs to have synecdochal potential to unite disparate emancipatory struggles for social integration. As Laclau puts it:

> the more extended the chain of equivalences, the more the need for a general equivalent representing the chain as a whole. The means of representing are, however, only the existing particularities. So one of them has to assume the representation of the chain as a whole. This is the strictly hegemonic move: the body of one particularity assumes a function of universal representation [the final moment of synecdoche: the part standing in for the whole].[24]

This means that the logics of difference and equivalence can be illustrated by identifying the rhetorical figures of metonymy, metaphor, and synecdoche. All three are part of our understanding and thinking; they often get lexicalized, which means that they are treated as common sense. This is problematic, since rhetorical figures such as these are never reducible to

truth; their "truth" is produced by the structure of the discourse, and it is this structure that is in need of deconstruction. Gayatri Spivak, in her preface to Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, explains a possible procedure:

> If in the process of deciphering a text in the traditional way we come across a word that seems to harbor an unresolvable contradiction, and by virtue of being one word is made sometimes to work in one way and sometimes in another and thus is made to point away from the absence of a unified meaning, we shall catch at that word. If a metaphor seems to suppress its implications, we shall catch at that metaphor. We shall follow its adventures through the text and see the text coming undone as a structure of concealment, revealing its self-transgression, its undecidability.[25]

Critical linguists call the process of describing paradigmatic relationships "overlexicalization," meaning that antagonists are lexicalized in various common sense ways. Any vocalization may include attributes or refer to circumstances that are implied but are not made explicit.[26] It is therefore possible to differentiate between a claimed statement (*conclusion*) and a presupposed statement (*argument*). Both statements are linked through a *closing rule*. The logical relationship between argument and conclusion is often generated by means of binary constructions. It is only by reference to an outside *Other*, that identity constructions of the *Self* become achievable. David Domke quite intriguingly exemplifies the power of such binary articulations in the American anti-terror discourse, referring to the president's use of the terms *freedom versus fear*, *good versus evil,* and *security versus peril*. Implicit connotations, for example, headscarf as a symbol for Islam, serve the same task. On that basis it becomes possible to construct a *rope-ladder of differences and predications*, with binary constructions located on the horizontal axis.[27] At the top, we will usually find an empty signifier, such as freedom or liberty, which arises from the need to signify something that is both impossible but necessary at the same time. In such a rope-ladder, the initial terms freedom versus fear/restriction are denoted by a chain of further predications, such as peace versus war or civilization versus barbarism. Relations of difference in a discourse resemble a rope-ladder, which makes it possible to capture broader meanings of discourses. Each demand in an emerging hegemonic discourse in Laclau and Mouffe's sense is organically associated with a chain of other demands; each signifier invokes a series of other signifiers. It becomes the overarching aim of a poststructuralist analysis to deconstruct the routinized complexities of differential meaning systems. I will illustrate in the next section that corpus linguistics offers helpful tools for dissecting larger discourses along the methodical lines described so far.

Corpus Linguistics

If we understand the hegemonic project as built on chains of equivalence by means of empty signifiers, then the identification of those signifiers becomes a first, crucial step in the analysis of broader systems of meanings. Empty signifiers are essential and central to all political processes, and hence must be identified and situated within the discourse. The first analytical step to be taken will therefore be statistical in nature. In principle, the practical analysis of paradigmatic relations implies the identification of the terms that delimit the meaning of a chosen term. However, the overall aim of such an endeavor must be the deconstruction of the internal structure of a discourse.

The underlying rationale of this method is simple:[28] Signifiers such as "freedom," "democracy," "justice," and "order," but also ostensibly plainer ones like "cup" or "book" can have multiple meanings. How does the discourse analyst know which meaning is suitable in a particular situation? The answer is rather straightforward: Just like in social relationships, the surrounding units—other people in the social sphere, other signifiers in the discursive—help to establish the meaning of a particular unit. In fact, people can in principle be treated as signifiers: While a person as a social being is inseparable from the various social settings she or he is situated in, a word's meaning is linked to a phrase or sentence. The same is true for a nation-state, which gains its identity through multiple relations with other nation-states. Similar to social relationships, there can be a lot of variation in language, and combinatory possibilities are unlimited. It is the infinitude of the discursive, as well as the boundlessness of the social, which make variation conspicuous and regularity literally inaccessible. However, in recent decades, different computer programs have been developed that allow for a statistical scrutiny of variation, repetition, and regularity in enormous text corpora.

As a first practical step, lexicometric or corpus linguistic approaches will be employed to analyze frequency as well as typical connotations of dominant signifiers in a specified text corpus. The creation of a corpus is considered to be the default resource in contemporary linguistics.[29] It offers a method open to innovative and surprising results, as it is not testing preformulated hypotheses. Instead, as alluded to several times above, it is interested in ideal-type analyses, that is, it represents an oversimplified theoretical formulation aiming at their illustration and plausibilization. It studies the structure and generation of meaning within discourses, and it is not interested in psychological structures hidden behind public discourses. It relies on written text data, and formal structure goes hand in hand with meanings, which are

not to be found anywhere outside discourse. The speaker of a particular text segment recedes into the background, for it is the structure of the discourse that generates meanings. Significantly, one might add that such an approach is indeed "empirical," as Wolfgang Teubert suggests, as it relies on "real language data."[30] At the same time, however, it cannot be treated as an ontological object, but must be seen as a social construct fabricated and demarcated by the researcher. This implies that the discourse cannot speak for itself, but the researcher lets the discourse speak against the foil of the ideal type.[31] It cannot be a standalone method but must continuously be linked back to theoretical analysis. Corpus linguistics therefore offers contingent results on the structure of a discourse, allowing statements about different lexical items such as the location and connotation of single words, compounds, phrases, and idioms. Repetitive occurrence and varying frequency of lexical items in a discourse enable statistical analysis. One may either deduce meaning from the embeddedness of a lexical item in a particular discourse, which would lead to general claims, or one can trace specific meanings by intertextually connecting an item to other texts in a discourse. While the former would imply a focus on the synchronic dimension of signs, the latter would stress its diachronic dimension, as texts are connected with previous and succeeding ones. In this latter sense, frequency becomes a pointless function. Yet, synchronicity also remains an illusion, since any chosen signifier is linked to an infinite number of others in a nonsynchronous way.

The goal of the analysis is to define which potential empty signifiers occur with a high frequency in the whole corpus. The corpus used for the following analysis draws on *The Public Papers of the Presidents*, compiled and published by the *Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration* (2014). Compilation started in 1957 with the aim of resolving the inconsistencies in the corpora of messages and papers of the presidents before this time.[32] The corpus covers a period of 16 years, including President Bill Clinton's second term in office, George W. Bush's full presidency, and Barack Obama's first term as president. This will make it possible to analyze apparent continuities and breaks in the discourse, of sedimented practices, as well as the study of dislocated differential structures. The initial goal is to define which potential empty signifiers occur with a high frequency in the whole corpus. For this purpose, AntConc 3.2.4w, a multiplatform freeware concordance program will be used. AntConc provides seven helpful tools for lexicometric analyses, the most important being *concordance,* which allows for the analysis of how words and phrases are regularly used in a corpus of texts; *clusters,* which shows word constellations based on the specification of the search; *collocates,* which provides the researcher with a tool to scrutinize nonsequential patterns in language; and,

finally, *word list*, which counts all the words in the corpus and produces an ordered list to facilitate the search.[33] In addition to the work with AntConc, *Wordle*, a tool for generating "word clouds" from larger text corpora, can be used to visualize crucial parts of the discourse.[34] Once central signifiers, their frequency and co-occurences have been classified, the lexicometric analysis will be followed by theoretical plausibilization. Working with text or writings leads to the deployment of those linguistic devices that correspond to the ontological assumptions outlined in the theory of crisis and change presented in chapter 5, for it is these assumptions that guide the analysis and are applied, modified, and extended in a particular case.

A few words on the chosen text corpus are in order in this context: Hegemonic politics usually starts at the level of civil society. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* refers to the principal actors of hegemonic politics recurrently, but does not offer a clear conception of the subject as an agent of change. Although the transformation of elements into moments is seen as constitutive of social change, the subject position remains static and possesses no power of its own to alter the dynamics of the structure of differences. The question to be solved for such a theory to be employed in discourse analysis refers to the location of performativity in a society. A particular subject is required that acts as "agent of articulation" or "meaning *giver*"[35] in a system of articulatory differences. As has been postulated above, such a creative role of an agent within a structure of differences is only possible when the structure is at least minimally dislocated. Only then can the transformation of elements into moments via the role of an agent as the position of a decision be properly grasped. As argued in Georgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, the state's role is to step in where necessary in a crisis-ridden society and suture together their dislocated parts. In its most radical form, such as the institutionalization of "concentration camps" by the German Nazis, a nation's biological life is regulated and the illusion of a fully constituted identity can be achieved.[36] There is a strong moment of contingency in this argument, which Agamben calls "dislocating localization," and into which virtually any human being can be denied access to secure the identity of the nation. In the perverse "final solution" of the Nazis, Jewish people represented distortion, decay, and a fundamental dislocation of a possible *Deutschtum*. In a different example, the emergence of the "hyper-liberal state" is seen by some observers as a direct consequence of the oil and currency crises of the 1970s.[37]

Against this background, the question remains whether the most suitable agent for our task is in fact the state, and whether states, as Wendt[38] has argued, are indeed *real* agents. Is it also true that without attributing corporate agency to the state, analyses of global politics seem be *per definitionem*

impossible? It is definitely correct, as Wight has maintained from a critical realist perspective, that we cannot observe the state, "though we can experience its power through the activities of its officials."[39] In fact, it is not the state that exercises power, but the exercise of power by human agents is made possible by the state and the hegemonic structures in which it operates. Some theorists claim that the concept of the state lies at the heart of modern European political thought and Michel Foucault has even argued that "political theory has never ceased to be obsessed with the person of the sovereign,"[40] while he goes on to postulate a reorientation:

> What we need, however, is a political philosophy that isn't erected around the problem of sovereignty, nor therefore around the problems of law and prohibition. We need to cut off the King's head: in political theory that has still to be done.[41]

The focus on centrality and hierarchy may blind us from the reality of power outlined above: the way it is diffused by discourse and the way it changes dominant representations of reality. It also hinders us from accepting the argument that the state has no ontological status apart from the practices it performs within the confines of dominant discourses. Foucault's claim is thus adopted by many poststructuralists, as well as the present inquiry, for several reasons:[42]

- the state is not a sovereign unitary actor; it is an ensemble of institutions and agencies;
- it is not a static architecture, but a fluid social organization;
- it is socially constructed and politically instituted.

Poststructuralist conceptualizations of the state call into question the very idea of monopolized power. Power is permanently contested by other centers of power, and hegemony occurs through the production of subjectivity by certain articulatory practices. The problem is centered on the concept of sovereignty, which has for so long dominated legal and theoretical questions about the state. The assumption of sovereignty implies that no other source of legitimate authority exists inside the borders of the state, and no external actor has the right to interfere in its domestic sphere. In contrast, poststructuralist approaches of various sorts instead emphasize that the state is not an essential condition but constructed through hegemonic struggles both within and between states. Deconstruction, in particular, makes important contributions in this regard. Deconstructing the state does not lead to the denial of its actuality, "but to try to examine the way in which

such acts are staged and so take place."[43] Again, the goal is neither to defend the centrality of the state for international politics; nor is it to treat the state as a subject that preexists foreign policy practices. As dislocation is a constant and necessary attribute of society, an analysis of dislocation can start anywhere and at any time. The dislocation that seemingly took place on September 11, 2001, in the United States and globally, must in principle be visible prior to this day. It is through the state and its many representatives as well as principally through all kinds of subjects that the dislocation of society is historically locatable. In the history of the international system since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the state has always stepped in to fulfill the promise of national identity. Yet, it must be stressed here that the state has no subjectivity apart from the practices it performs, and these practices involve the interaction with many—domestic, trans-, and international— actors. Importantly, Hansen argues, identities are continuously restated and renegotiated by foreign policy, but they in turn frame what is possible in foreign policies.[44]

The infinitude of the social implies that foreign policy is necessarily global in character, which explains the title chosen for this book: *A Poststructuralist Discourse Theory of Global Politics*. In this flow of differences, hegemony remains a contingent intervention and institutionalization must be characterized as an on-going endeavor that continuously takes on new forms. Were signification and institutionalization eternal, dislocation would be replaced by stability. To this extent, the book touches on the very essence of politics: Societal principles and the ontic contents of a society are politically produced by society for itself. These principles are contingent and any pretension of final closure must be witnessed with caution, for it is ideology that is veiled by the mantle of purported objectivity.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The chosen methodical path highlights discursive differences. In essence, we only make things into things by providing them with meaning within differentially constituted structures. Even materializations like "street," "house," "car," but also "president," "prime minister," and "member of parliament" are consequences of past speech and/or preceding discourses and are as such discursive materializations. Whenever a discourse changes, these materializations not only lose their prior meanings, but their whole volatile identity changes. Differences and alterations in power are themselves encoded and determined by discourse. When particular meanings are adopted by huge groups or societies, this is what we have called a *hegemonic process*. The basic idea behind this approach lies in the poststructuralist claim that arguments

do not originate in the thoughts of individual people. Speakers do not create their thoughts in the first instance, but are embedded in a complex sociolinguistic history. Texts, in a nutshell, are always part of a bigger picture, or, in a Laclau and Mouffe inspired discourse theorist's words: "Discourse analysis cannot stop short at the interpretation of the subject positions that a discursive formation openly avows; it must always perform genealogies of erasure and archaeologies of silence as well."[45]

CDA, a method that follows a critical realist orientation, provides a fruitful ground for a methodical extension of Laclau and Mouffe's thinking. Both discourse theory and CDA start from the premise that speech and language do not objectively reflect the "world out there," but actively produce and change our world in the first instance. In that sense, a combination of the two might represent a rewarding means of analysis in the humanities and social sciences if one keeps in mind ontological differences of the two approaches. Moreover, both CDA and the theory of hegemony aim at unveiling and contesting power relations. Finally, CDA has adopted the discourse theoretical concepts of equivalence and difference and applied them to the analysis of text.[46] Paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations visible in texts are conceptualized here as representative of social processes of division and combination.

The differences between discourse theory and CDA stem from different methodological origins and pertain in particular to their understanding of discourse: Whereas there is nothing outside discourse in the theory of hegemony and the social is completely constituted by discourse, CDA differentiates between a discursive and other social dimensions and defines discourse as *text in context*. In discourse theory, discourses are often scrutinized in a more abstract manner and at the general societal level, while CDA analyzes social interaction in everyday situations, and generates broader assumptions from the scrutiny of smaller text samples, such as newspaper articles or job advertisements. Empirically, the approach of CDA is concerned with structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, social inequality, and control as conveyed by language. It accepts the claim of an ultimate impossibility of fixing meanings by speech and recognizes the role of hegemony as a process of temporal fixation. However, it is also interested in unveiling the function of discourses which are used to generate and sustain unequal social power relations and can be identified as ideologies.[47]

Without violating the discourse theoretical program developed above, it would be possible to make use of some of the tools developed by CDA. The aim lies in textual analysis, and the theoretical primacy of the theory of hegemony must not be called into question. While CDA understands discourse as "an element of social life which is closely interconnected with

other elements,"[48] this stance can only be accepted if context is itself situated within the discursive. It is in this differing understanding of discourse where CDA owes a debt to a Marxist tradition and where it departs from the theory of hegemony. Taking a closer look at CDA, though, unveils the commonality of some basic premises, that is, that within the framework of certain dominant discursive frameworks, some forms of action become objectified, others delegitimized. Different hegemonic discourses lead to different social configurations in certain historical periods. Although various strands of CDA exist, Fairclough and Wodak[49] summarize eight important features that all of them have in common: the focus lies on social problems; power relations are discursive; society and culture are constituted by discourse; discourse transports actors' ideologies; discourse is historical; the link between text and society is mediated; discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory; discourse is a form of social action. Overall, language is seen as social practice, and a particular interest is shown in the relationship between language and power.

Although the ontological differences between the theory of hegemony and CDA also include divergent views on ethics and agency, one can derive some questions from CDA that help structure the discourse analysis conducted in part IV of this book, helping to clarify the nexus between crisis and change. Significant initial questions to be answered when analyzing crisis and social change refer to the texts and voices included in the texts to be scrutinized and to notable absences. Furthermore, the most apparent *assumptions* of the textual body will be identified. Assumptions comprise forms of implicitness such as presuppositions, logical implications or entailments, and implicatures.[50] They are an important issue with respect to identifying the logics of equivalence and difference. All these notions depend upon meanings which are shared, and the progress of hegemonic relationships include the capacity of certain actors to shape their nature and content. In detail, three main types of assumptions will be differentiated:[51] *existential assumptions*, referring to assumptions about what exists, *propositional assumptions*, designating assumptions about what is or can be or will be the case, and finally *value assumptions*, denoting what is good or desirable.

In addition, CDA helps identify semantic relations of contrast as well as relations of addition and elaboration. For example, Norman Fairclough describes processes of "meaning inclusion" in Laclau's understanding,[52] in which *hyponyms* such as freedom, liberty, and universal human rights are incorporated in the *hypernym* USA or "the West." These processes again show how more specific terms are included in more general ones, which move toward becoming empty signifiers the more they are filled with substance. A hypernym always consists of multiple hyponyms, which can be

clearly illustrated by drawing on statistical tools to dissect larger discourses. The statistical analysis can then be complemented by the analysis of representations of social actors and by representations of space and time,[53] which are of particular importance with regards to hegemonic processes of inclusion and exclusion as well as antagonism. In detail, one can identify textual processes of suppression (meanings that are excluded from texts), backgrounding (marginally mentioned in a text), the usage of pronouns like "us" and "them," the question of whether social actors are treated as active or passive ("affected") within a particular social process, whether they are depicted in personal (Al Qaeda) or impersonal (Islamic terrorism) terms, by names (Osama bin Laden) or classified (Al Qaeda leader), specific (Taleban terrorist) or generic (all terrorists). Space and time become important aspects of hegemonic discourses in expressions like "global" or "local," which are able to produce particular meanings of places as symbols for equivalential chains (e.g., "the West"), or the site of some terrorist attacks as representing the victimization of a civilized hemisphere vis-à-vis a barbaric and backward part of the world.

In summary, there are several ways in which texts potentially deal with difference in Laclau's and Mouffe's sense, referring to the discovery of difference in terms of dialogue with others, the emphasis on difference through conflict and an open struggle over meanings, norms and power, the effort to resolve or surmount difference, a bracketing of difference by focusing on commonality, solidarity and identity, and finally the normalization and recognition of difference through consensus. In concurrence with Laclau and Mouffe, Fairclough is interested in the question of how particulars in a discourse come to signify universals, especially how divergent identities come to be claimed as collective.[54]

Conclusion

The theory of hegemony is an attempt to develop a nonessentialist concept of collective social identities. Hegemony is understood as an articulatory practice evolving out of the interplay of the logics of equivalence and difference and based on the temporal filling of a dislocated social structure by means of empty signifiers. The dialectics of universalism and particularism is central to this process, with the former being understood as the always fruitless effort to gain a full identity. Universalism, in that sense, becomes the *pars pro toto* for this elusive fullness.

Any hegemonic process can then be traced along the lines of the political ontology delineated in chapter 5: Starting with the articulation of a particular political crisis (of lesser or greater extent), which must in some way
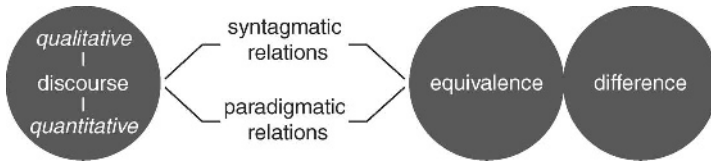
Figure 6.2 Focus of analysis.

be connected to sedimented practices to be credible, and moving to the competition between different political forces to hegemonize the political field, resulting in the acceptance of a certain interpretative framework of identification (actual *hegemony*) and its eventual routinization and political institutionalization. As illustrated in figure 5.3, this final act of institutionalization causes feedback effects on the discursive articulation of the crisis, new interpretative frames start to compete, and politics continues. Theoretically, this circle never ends; if it did, politics would have reached its final purpose.

Analytically, the focus is directed toward the textual analysis of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations through corpus linguistics, complemented with some qualitative tools provided by CDA. While relations of equivalence are likely to be semantic relations of addition, elaboration, synonymy and subordination (hyponymy), relations of difference are set up as semantic relations of contrast. In summary, the analysis will be conducted along the two lines illustrated in figure 6.2.

As shown in figure 6.2, the discourse analysis will concentrate on the analysis of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations to illustrate the logics of equivalence and difference in identity-building processes. An initial lexicometric analysis helps to draw a statistical portrait of the discourse, followed by theoretical scrutiny.

Against this background, part IV has two purposes: First, the centrality of the notion of difference for any kind of inquiry into social and identity change will be substantiated. Second, the analysis will put the events of September 11, 2001, and the ensuing American war against terrorism into a historical perspective. The analysis will be conducted with the aim of illustrating the theoretical framework depicted in figure 5.3 and by drawing on the methodical tools portrayed in figure 6.2. This is what the scrutiny amounts to at the end of the day: *illustration*. This implies that one can never step outside of the discursive structure of the theoretical vocabulary: The empirical and the theoretical fall into one and the same sphere. By conceptualizing the discourse that ensued around the events of September 11, 2001, as a *crisis*—visible through the weakening of dominant discourses

about international security in the days and weeks after that day—a process that entails identity construction though the articulation of foreign policy will be delineated in part IV. It is no surprise that the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have been widely described as constituting a "focusing event" for American and world politics that has "changed everything," at least in the United States.[55] Others, like Stephen Walt, have called it "the most rapid and dramatic change in the history of US foreign policy."[56] While the extent of the crisis, which was articulated after September 11, 2001, is hard to measure, it would be even more problematical to maintain that nothing has changed at all.[57] Since change is a constant occurrence, it can be suggested that something must have changed. However, I argue here that to take September 11, 2001, as an unproblematized starting point is misleading, as such a perspective would suggest that the history of US foreign policy and international security somehow begins with the attacks of that day. Hence, "9/11" will be historicized by tracing the development of US foreign policy from Clinton through Bush to Obama.

The main argument of the following analysis is that it is not the terrorist attacks as such that shaped world politics in the years that followed, as some observers would have it. If we watch the twin towers' fall from the perspective of a poststructuralist, we are not interested in the material process of two skyscrapers and a government building being hit by airplanes, but in the articulatory process that is mobilized by this "event." 9/11 is a symbol of a complex hegemonic struggle, in which multiple actors not only participate to achieve their individual or collective goals but—more importantly—try to determine who they are, what their position is vis-à-vis each other is, and what their place in the global structure of articulatory differences should be.

Crisis and Change in the "War on Terror"

CHAPTER 7

Dislocation

Sedimented Practices

This part of the book is not designed to tell the story of "9/11" once again from a different angle. There are countless "empirically oriented" studies of the American "War on Terror," offering rigorous analyses of the lead-up to 9/11 and the institutionalization of the anti-terror campaign. In fact, this book problematizes the very concept of a boundary between the empirical and the nonempirical. If the empirical is coterminous with "empirical evidence" or "empirical reality," then it opens up the classical avenues of verification and falsification and precludes discursive constitutional and transcendental references.[1] The mutually constituted notions of "sedimented practices," dislocation, antagonism, and institutionalization will instead be scrutinized through the theoretical vocabulary introduced in part III. On the grounds of a particular discourse—the discourse of the "War on Terror"—I will be able to provide more answers to the leading question of this book, namely, how it is possible to conceptualize the "crisis of the social," and how we can best understand the relationship between crisis and social change.

Identifying crisis requires the analysis of dislocated social structures, which generate ephemeral identities and the need for subjects to identify with particular political projects promising to resuture the dislocated structure. Change, in turn, rests in the incompleteness of social structures. Change entails a spatial dimension, but it also hinges on temporality: Every society is in constant need of reproducing itself, of procreating its founding myths and of stabilizing the norms and institutions it is founded on. This has got nothing to do with linear temporality; social change must instead be understood as the contingent redefinition of the relationship between universalism (equivalence, difference, empty signifier) and particularism (heterogeneity, hegemonic struggle). The norms and institutions that sedimented practices

produce epitomize the temporary materialization of a society. Sedimented practices have severe ethical implications, for they provide the discursive frame in which moral judgements and new political decisions are taken. This argument reminds us of our starting point in part I of this book: To understand agency and processes of subjectification, it always makes sense to commence with an analysis of dominant social structures that have been established previously.

The unfinished structure of a society is subject to instabilities and risks. Social change implies the desedimentation of hegemonic discourses and the establishment of new frames of intelligibility that subjects may identify with, while intelligibility in this context does not infer mental processes but historically contingent discourses, which produce these mental processes in the first place. The "War on Terror" represents a well-researched discourse that offers two qualities that are advantageous for conceptualizing the nexus between crisis and change: First, it has been widely described as a "crisis," and second, it has been depicted as epitomizing "the most sweeping shift in U.S. grand strategy since the beginning of the Cold War."[2]

Important, in this regard, is the filling of the ideal type introduced in chapter 5 (figure 5.3) with more theoretical substance (figure 7.1). In doing
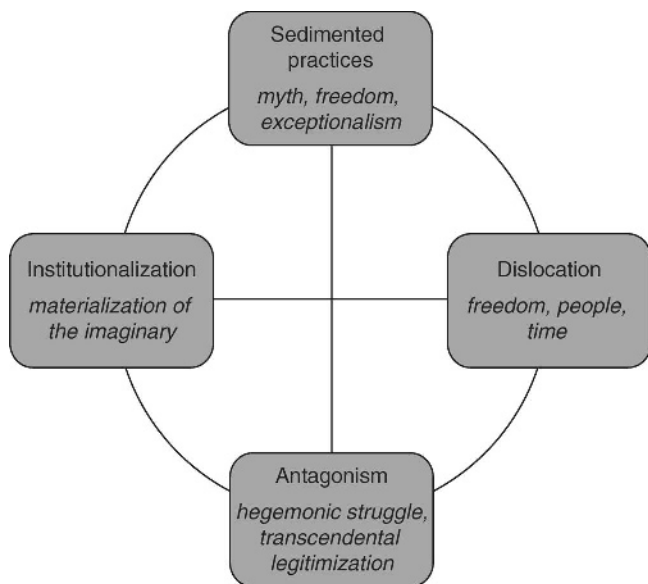

Figure 7.1   Crisis and change in the "War on Terror."

so, I will start with a discussion of myth, exceptionalism, and the notion of "freedom." Myth is important as it functions as a radical foundation for a society, while at the same time it engenders processes of radical exclusion. Subsequently, I will take issue with the elusive form of freedom that served as the underlying structure of American (and "Western") society post-September 11. Building on the insights gained in chapter 7, I will trace the hegemonic struggle that occurred both domestically and globally in the first half of chapter 8, while the institutionalization of the "War on Terror" as an imaginary will be substantiated and illustrated in the latter half of the chapter.

Myth is a crucial notion for any historian interested in the genealogy of sovereignty, for it symbolizes the untainted equivalential chain around which the original instituting action of the community was taken. In George Sorel's work on violence, the notion of myth is illustrated with reference to the general strike, which must be organized around an infinite chain of images or signifiers to be truly *general*.[3] However, the truly general strike comes down to illusion, and so does absolute unity and self-present identity. Identity and subjectification are only possible in the encounter with the Other; the location of the subject is to be found at least partly outside of itself, which creates a natural tension and the potential for change. Identity suggests stability, while difference—due to the relationship between different subjects and their mutual infiltration—signifies crisis and change.

The significance of myth for the articulation of subjectivity parallels Laclau's suggestion that in order to construct a community out of dissimilar elements, the infinitude of the task must go hand in hand with the literal emptiness of its content. It also corresponds to the notion of *apartheid* in South Africa, which—in Norval's understanding—"changed from being a myth associated with the experiences of a particular group, to an imaginary horizon acting as a surface of inscription for the ordering of all social relations."[4] Understanding an empty signifier implies searching for the initial moment when signifier and signified were united and were not yet plagued by ambiguity. Of course such a view is always a delusion, but founding myths and narratives of uniqueness are significant in any nation. Aiming at the fabrication of pure presence, those myths are typical objects of poststructuralist deconstruction, for myths do not represent reality. As the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre explains:

> Questions of rationality and irrationality cannot be appropriately posed until in a given culture the relevant utterances are given a decisive interpretation in terms of genres. Myths would then be seen as perhaps potentially science *and* literature *and* theology; but to understand them as

myths would be to understand them as actually yet none of these. Hence the absurdity involved in speaking of myths as misrepresenting reality; the myth is at most a possible misrepresentation of reality; for it does not aspire, while still only a myth, to be a representation.[5]

Myths are forceful formulations of identity and difference, and sedimented practices mature around such myths. Moreover, myths essentially depict an absence, but that absence is necessary for social transformation to become an ongoing possibility. It can only be constructed around emptiness, as any precise details or a concrete scheme for the future development path would move the myth into the realm of everyday politics, and it would lose its quality as a myth. Myths are no more than a foil that represents the missing fullness of a nation. The desire for fullness—in turn—is constitutive for any nation's development path. With respect to the United States, Deborah Madsen therefore claims that:

> American exceptionalism permeates every period of American history and is the single most powerful agent in a series of arguments that have been fought down the centuries concerning the identity of America and Americans.[6]

Here, myths establish a relation to the pure but lost origin, in the United States articulated through the discourse of "exceptionalism." This discourse must be seen as deeply ideological, resting on the three tenets that the United States is (1) the richest, (2) most powerful, and (3) morally most outstanding country in the world.[7] Taken together, these three principles bring with them a responsibility for the global rule of law and the evolution of democracy. To be able to live up to these responsibilities, wealth and power need to be expanded, global political and economic institutions need to be established and controlled, and capitalism has to be spread by guaranteeing free markets and peaceful relations among nations. The ideological power of such a discourse bears the severe danger of legitimating exclusionary foreign policy practices in order to defend the self-proclaimed norm.

Hence, as a "myth," "exceptionalism" represents a discourse that denotes an informal framework that constitutes American identity and America's place in the world. "America"—in this context—is the empty signifier par excellence, denoting an equivalential chain that is essentially heterogeneous and consists of originally foreign elements. The nation originates in the first Puritans' rearticulation of God's country as the United States and a transition from colonial to national identity.[8] Myths are part of a structural theory of rituals, which considers crisis to be a "pollution" of the pure essence of

a nation. According to Jeffrey Alexander, pollution means deviance from the norm, which entails that the very center of a society is under threat, and institutional social controls guarantee the reinstatement of society. This process resembles a hegemonic struggle insofar as it must not remain limited to the institutional core of a society—the government—but must be complemented by struggles within all parts of society. This will eventually only work if a horizon of symbolic representation is provided in a discourse. We will thus never be able to experience a "crisis" directly; what we are able to grasp is the "sacralizing process"[9] that can be seen as the material supplement of the crisis. If that process did not gain a more general character, one would not be able to legitimately speak of a social crisis. For instance, the "Watergate crisis" during Richard Nixon's presidency could only gain the quality of a crisis by being articulated as "above politics and involving fundamental moral concerns."[10]

On the basis of this brief introductory discussion of the relationship between myth, exceptionalism, and sedimented practices, at least three arguments follow, which shall be further advanced in what follows: First, if identity is established by difference, as claimed in parts 2 and 3 of this study, then exceptionalism is in constant need of implicitly or explicitly formulating its contents around the core of a nodal point or empty signifier. As will be put forward subsequently, the concept of "freedom" serves as such a discursive center. As postfoundational philosophers like Jean-Luc Nancy have maintained, the choice of freedom as the very name for the (unattained) fullness of a community is no surprise. Freedom—occurring within the political horizon of undecidability and thus without a place—erects foundations where foundations are lacking. Instead, it represents the space of dislocation; it names the void that is in need of filling, providing a name to an unattainable identity. Freedom, in the words of Nancy, "*is* the withdrawal of being, but the withdrawal of being is the nothingness of being, which is the being of freedom. This is why freedom *is not, but it frees being and frees from being*, all of which can be rewritten here as: *freedom withdraws being and gives relation*."[11] In other words, it represents groundlessness but at the same time constitutes the very prerequisite of community. In the United States, from the very origins of the concept of exceptionalism, it has been coupled with the imperative to export freedom and liberty around the world. As the fourth President of the United States, James Madison, famously pronounced in 1829, it amounts to "the hope of Liberty throughout the world."[12] Its long history in United States identity discourses explains well why "freedom" and not, for instance, "solidarity" was able to organize the anti-terror discourse after September 11, 2001.

Second, identity can only be established by drawing a line between the mythical Inside and a negative Outside, which is excluded from the myth. Crisis must essentially be understood as articulations of threatened identities. I argue here that a foreign policy discourse that represents a particular Other as "alien, subversive, dirty or sick," as described by David Campbell in *Writing Security*,[13] has been rampant in the United States for a long time. The nexus of crisis and change is thus evident when it comes to the discussion of myth and antagonism. For instance, in the Cuban Missile Crisis, the deployment of missiles not far from the American mainland was articulated as a threat to the very identity of the United States, to the freedom of the American people, and the freedom of the whole Western world. At the same time, the articulation of crisis engendered a change in the structure of global security relations. As Jutta Weldes put it, "it provided an opportunity—realized through the successful U.S. quarantine—for the United States to reassert its leadership role."[14] Furthermore, the global reach of the articulation of crisis in one country becomes all too manifest in this instance, since in Cuba and the Soviet Union, the issue was articulated in completely different terms—as US imperialism and aggressive capitalism, and as a threat to the global socialist project as well as to Cuban sovereignty. This underscores one fundamental claim of this study: No articulation of crisis can ever be local; it is potentially global and a theory of crisis and change must be theorized as a theory of global politics. Due to the centrality of discursive articulation and hegemonic struggles in this process, it must be conceptualized as a *discourse theory of global politics*.

Third, myths, such as the myth of American exceptionalism, result from what Laclau calls "the absence of God as fullness of Being."[15] Either a universally accepted God or—as in classical Marxism—the proletariat would be able to represent a pure human essence. This explains why US foreign policy discourses have customarily been substantiated by a conservative religious stance, characterized by absolutism and a sense of American manifest destiny. Especially in situations of severe articulations of crisis, such as, for example, the above mentioned "Watergate" scandal, the "deepest ritualization of political life"[16] along religious practices seems to be one dominant feature of the crisis discourse. Apparently, pervasive generalizations of public opinion are easier to achieve when articulated on religious grounds.

All three aspects are based on relations of equivalence and difference, illustrating that the central notion of exceptionalism must be seen as an offspring of differentially constituted articulatory practices. A deeper inquiry into the three dimensions of exceptionalism reveals that in the United States, the political discourse constructing the nation's identity has traditionally been organized around the notion of "freedom." In the days of the

American Revolution, freedom was primarily articulated as freedom from the English king and a feudal landlord, the demand for suffrage, as well as equal economic and educational chances progressed before the Civil War.[17] During these turbulent years, the notion of freedom was frequently linked with religious terminology, in which President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address of 1863 offers perhaps the prime instance of this nexus. Ending with a promise to the American people, Lincoln declared, "that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."[18] Establishing the notion of "freedom" as the axiomatic metaphor for the United States, Lincoln regularly used the term in his speeches, thus paving the way for future US presidents. A universal notion of freedom, involving the export of the American, God-given model, had not yet surfaced, but Lincoln's speeches contained the seeds of such a program by representing the United States as "the last, best hope of earth."[19]

Godfrey Hodgson thus maintained that "[it] was not until the twentieth century that this combination of exceptionalism with at least a theoretical universalism [...] began to take on the characteristics of a program."[20] Building on Lincoln's example, America's twenty-eighth President Woodrow Wilson's famous speech before a joint session of Congress in January 1918 contained 10 references to freedom within his 14 points, among them the "freedom of navigation upon the seas," "[a] free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims," the assurance to Russia "of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing," and "the freest opportunity of autonomous development" for Austria-Hungary.[21]

The examples illuminate that the emphasis on "freedom" necessarily implies a distinction between the free and the unfree and cannot remain neutral in the process of defining the identity of a nation. What follows from this is that there are relations of equivalence between in-group actors, which create antagonisms to other social groups. In US foreign policy discourses after World War II, this process is striking. Most crucially, National Security Council document number 68 of April 7, 1950 (NSC 68), which is considered to be one of the founding documents of post–World War II US foreign policy,[22] establishes a direct connection by drawing a clear line between the free world and the world of slavery. It is stated here that "[t]he idea of freedom, moreover, is peculiarly and intolerably subversive of the idea of slavery." The document includes 59 references to "freedom" or the adjective "free," at least one in almost every single paragraph. By drawing on the concept of "freedom," borders are established and hierarchies ascertained: "The implacable purpose of the slave state to eliminate the challenge

of freedom has placed the two great powers at opposite poles. It is this fact which gives the present polarization of power the quality of crisis."[23] Crisis or—better: the instance of *structural dislocation*—is due to become a permanent underlying characteristic of US foreign policy, defining the frame of what is legitimate and illegitimate for the coming decades. Although NSC 68 claims that "[c]ompulsion is the negation of freedom," it is possible that the "resort to force, to compulsion" can be necessary to defend freedom:

> For us the role of military power is to serve the national purpose by deterring an attack upon us while we seek by other means to create an environment in which our free society can flourish, and by fighting, if necessary, to defend the integrity and vitality of our free society and to defeat any aggressor.[24]

This quote offers at least two routes for interpretation: First, NSC 68 articulates a masculine identity, which resembles the right to protect your family by all possible means if necessary, and which is also visible today in many instances in the United States, one prominent example being the gun discourse, primarily fabricated by the National Rifle Association of America (NRA). In this discourse, allusions to manliness, comradeship, and freedom prevail and constitute a hegemonic imaginary that has in the past prevented the abolition of the fundamental right to bear arms.[25] In the two instances of domestic and foreign security discourses, a gendered articulation of state identity seems to be prevalent.

Second, it seems as if the malevolent outside had already contaminated the inside. This suggests that "America" as a privileged signifier is not present prior to its infiltration by a trace. Eventually, the outside becomes constitutive to its being, as Bennington explains: "it [the inside; DN] is [...] always (already) becoming but never quite become."[26] Presence never rests in itself, but follows upon the infiltration by the trace-relation, and is therefore influenced by absence and otherness. Due to the subversion by the radically excluded, the equivalential chain that names the inside will never be pure and self-contained; otherwise, exclusion would be superfluous. The basis of Derridean deconstruction is to be found in the questioning of such binaries on the grounds of their mutual infiltration and subversion. It must be clear that traces of multiple identities rest in the "American," both within and outside of US borders.

Yet, throughout the twentieth century, the notion of freedom as the underlying principle of exceptionalism has been sustained by difference and has generated—in a rope-ladder of differences and predications—the Manichean image of Americans versus Soviets, free versus unfree, liberal

versus totalitarian, good versus evil and—crucially—the United States as leader versus their followers in the Western hemisphere. Leadership is naturally coupled with morality and freedom; it is based on difference and superiority, as John F. Kennedy memorably proclaimed in 1961:

> We will face challenge after challenge, as the Communists armed with all the resources and advantage of the police state attempt to shift the balance of power in their direction. [...] For we bring to the battle our own resources, the particular advantages of a free society—advantages which our adversaries cannot match. [...] And it is in this fact that is man's best hope. For our nation is on the side of man's desire to be free, and the desire of nations to be independent.[27]

Freedom as the constitutive signifier of the American struggle for a full identity needed to be coupled with the annihilation of the antagonist force, accompanied by a manifest sense of mission incorporated in this signifier and the equivalential chain of Western countries that it represented. The logic of equivalence, once established under a signifier such as "freedom," is essentially open. Various presidents of the United States have thus opted for the protection of chains of equivalence during the Cold War, with Harry S. Truman asserting that: "We cannot hope to maintain our own freedom if freedom elsewhere is wiped out"[28] and Dwight D. Eisenhower predicting that "[...] history does not long entrust the care of freedom to the weak or the timid. [...] For this truth must be clear before us: whatever America hopes to bring to pass in the world must first come to pass in the heart of America."[29] These quotes demonstrate that exceptionalism is always related to multiple Others—threatening ones, but also partners—as well as to volatile Selves, from which all features of heterogeneity must, however, be expelled: Weakness and femininity, as well as timidity and dilatoriness. Equivalence seems to melt into a homogeneous mass, in which difference dissolves completely and harmony is guaranteed by divine benevolence. Accordingly, in almost all speeches of American presidents before Barack Obama, the call for freedom is related to basic principles of Christian faith and an adherence to the concept of the "chosen people."

Especially in America's fortieth President, Ronald Reagan, religious conservatives saw a president who advocated the nation's Judeo-Christian heritage, frequently drew on Bible verses and put the notion of "freedom" at the center of his policies, for instance contending in a speech to the *National Association of Evangelicals* in 1983 that, "freedom prospers when religion is vibrant and the rule of law under God is acknowledged."[30] Some of Reagan's statements on foreign policy, which include references to "freedom" seem to

reappear later in President Bush's speeches after September 11, 2001 (though with a different ideological target), examples being Reagan's prediction in 1982 that "[the] march of freedom and democracy [...] will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash heap of history as it has left other tyrannies which stifle the freedom and muzzle the self-expression of the people,"[31] and Reagan's 1983 representation of the Soviet Union as "the focus of evil in the modern world."[32]

Apart from this theologically inspired terminology, which relies on value assumptions to divide up the world into "good" and "evil," Reagan was one of the American presidents who saw the exercise of military power as a legitimate American right when it comes to the defense of "freedom." Declaring that "there is no security, no safety, in the appeasement of evil" in his Address to the Nation on the United States Air Strike Against Libya on April 14, 1986, he maintained that "[i]t must be the core of Western policy that there be no sanctuary for terror. And to sustain such a policy, free men and free nations must unite and work together. [...] Self-defense is not only our right, it is our duty." Significantly, in the same speech, Reagan hints at the importance of "preemptive action" and repeats the often-stated conviction that: "We will persevere." Reagan then closes his speech with a warning to Libyan leader Colonel Qadhafi that is later copied by George W. Bush almost literally:

> He counted on America to be passive. He counted wrong. I warned that there should be no place on Earth where terrorists can rest and train and practice their deadly skills. I meant it. I said that we would act with others, if possible, and alone if necessary to ensure that terrorists have no sanctuary anywhere. Tonight, we have. Thank you, and God bless you.[33]

The rhetoric of freedom, the articulation of an evil Other and frequent references to Christian vocabulary do not remain restricted to Republican presidents. "Freedom" and a sense of mission are also obvious in President Jimmy Carter's inaugural address, here coupled with an emphasis on human rights,[34] and Presidential candidate Bill Clinton in 1992 envisioned "[a]n America that champions the cause of freedom and democracy from Eastern Europe to Southern Africa—and in our own hemispheres, in Haiti and Cuba."[35] Religious vocabulary is used in a more guarded manner by both Carter and Clinton, but it is (irritatingly for many Europeans who favor a secular democracy) conspicuous and omnipresent.[36]

Crucially, the military solution to global problems corresponds to long-held principles in American foreign policy; it caused a retreat and reification of existing security discourses in that a military solution was declared

and quickly endorsed in the ensuing discourse. For example, newly elected President Ronald Reagan's tough words and threat to "take whatever action is appropriate" led to the release of 52 American hostages by the jihadists running the Islamic Republic in 1981.[37] The "new War on Terror" was only possible because it did not clash with sedimented practices. Thus, it was successful in reinscribing past discourses of national security and exceptionalism into the present. Insofar, as Derrida would perhaps maintain, the global anti-terror campaign did not come as a surprise. Had it been extraordinary in the history of the United States, it would have failed from the outset. As Derrida puts it:

> But our old memory tells us that it is also necessary to anticipate and to keep the heading [*garder le cap*], for under the banner—which can also become a slogan—of the unanticipatable or the absolutely new, we can fear seeing return the phantom of the worst, the one we have already identified. We know the "new" only too well, or in any case the old rhetoric, the demagogy, the psychagogy of the "new"—and sometimes of the "new order"—of the surprising, the virginal, and the unanticipatable.[38]

Derrida cautions us to be suspicious of the radically new, for we can only understand the "new" through the lens of the "old," which means—on the one hand—that the "old" necessarily pervades the "new," and on the other, that the "new" cannot be without the "old." The "new" is never entirely new, and the "old" never completely old. For George W. Bush, it was already clear before September 11 that the "challenge is to build a military that will deter and win the wars of the future."[39] This statement corresponds to the power of what was termed the "military-industrial complex" by President Dwight Eisenhower, and which was later extended to include the media and entertainment industries by IR theorist James Der Derian.[40] Military precepts had always infiltrated US foreign policy and were employed in the interests of the nation. In that sense, the "War on Terror" was not new at all, and Clinton's bombing of the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Sudan in 1998 (for alleged ties to Al Qaeda, the suspected production of VX nerve gas and as retaliation for the various bombings against US embassies) or his attacks (with about 75 cruise missile strikes) on four of Osama bin Laden's training camps in Afghanistan in the 1990s illustrate this argument. Speaking on August 20, 1998, President Clinton legitimized the strikes as follows, using well-known vocabulary and matching long-held foreign policy practices:

> Our target was terror. Our mission was clear—to strike at the network of radical groups affiliated with and funded by Osama bin Laden. [...] They have made the United States their adversary precisely because of

what we stand for and what we stand against. [...] This will be a long, ongoing struggle between freedom and fanaticism; between the rule of law and terrorism. [...] America is and will remain a target of terrorists precisely because we are leaders; because we act to advance peace, democracy and basic human values; because we're the most open society on Earth; and because, as we have shown yet again, we take an uncompromising stand against terrorism. [...] We will persist and we will prevail. Thank you. God bless you, and may God bless our country.[41]

The target was identified and the relationship between a "pure" Self and an "evil" Other was well articulated around the empty signifier "freedom." Although the articulation of threat is as prevalent as in most of the historical examples cited here, equally Clinton constructs a confident vision of a future in which the leadership role, the superiority, special responsibility, and moral integrity of the nation are guaranteed by divine promise.

Against this background, a number of authors have contended that September 11 presented the Bush Administration with the opportunity to accomplish a previously formulated foreign policy agenda, with war and coercive regime change in Iraq as its key objectives. Retrospectively, these authors maintain, the absence of a straightforward vision of the Clinton Administration on how to counter potential terrorist attacks in the future seems part of the void that needed to be filled after September 11.[42] Given the far-reaching global anti-terror measures taken by Clinton, it is difficult to maintain that the void was actually produced by 9/11. Matching long-held American policy principles, Clinton also sketched and implemented a number of legislative measures during the 1990s, which forestalled the processes of institutionalization in the "War on Terror," for instance the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 and the Counterterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996. Other Democrat presidents enacted comparable measures, with Carter's Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 representing just one prominent example.[43] It is a logical conclusion that if the empty signifier "freedom" symbolizes dislocation and articulates the void that is in need of filling, the void must have been there prior to September 11.

This also implies that the critical realist claim of a complexly structured relationship between the "events" of September 11 and the ensuing discourse must be approached with caution. Jack Holland's straightforward suggestion that "the void was an organic *cultural* condition that logically followed from events which existing discourses failed to regulate,"[44] can only partly be accepted as such when taking the contingency of political decisions as well as their connection with sedimented practices seriously. It is not only

difficult to apprehend the end of the void; its beginning is equally unidentifiable. A clear realist stance is hidden in Holland's statement, which—for reasons outlined in parts I to III of this book, cannot be accepted as it stands. As Laclau has pointed out, a discourse can only generate a dominant interpretative framework if its "system of narration" operates as a surface of inscription for a wide variety of demands. Its success is due to its abstract form, which in turn makes it possible for more identifications to become possible. Sedimentation also means depoliticization. Proclaiming war meant rendering an unfamiliar discourse in familiar terms, that is, by declaring it a breach of international law.

According to sedimented US security discourses, among a number of foreign policy goals, priority had to be given to the objective of making the world not only safer, but "better."[45] The hegemonic discourse, corresponding to the ideal-type process delineated above, aimed to position itself not just as *one* option among many, but as *the* only alternative to absolute chaos and insecurity. Other political systems, ideologies and different definitions of tolerance seemed unacceptable at this point, as the president made very clear in his defining speech at West Point on June 1, 2002: "The twentieth century ended with a single surviving model of human progress, based on non-negotiable demands of human dignity, the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for woman and private property and free speech and equal justice and religious tolerance."[46] US defined "freedom" and "liberty" were proclaimed as God-decreed norms for all nations, thereby creating a national mood of superiority and concord.[47] The suggestion that "God is on America's side"[48] served to compensate and comfort the public and helped, in Laclau and Mouffe's sense, to suture over the dislocation in the social structure. The very political nature of "freedom," "liberty," and "justice" remained oblique in this discourse, but the force of undecidability lingered on, for "[the] undecidable is not surmounted; it remains caught in every decision and makes it impossible to call any decision fully just."[49]

It is thus evident that the syntagmatic relation between freedom, antagonism, and the usage of religious vocabulary in the legitimization of a particular foreign policy after September 11, 2001, have built on the sedimented discourse of exceptionalism. Stuart Croft maintains that such a connection with preexisting narratives was necessary for the successful institutionalization of the "War on Terror."[50] In this vein, it will be shown in the following that discourses like the one on US exceptionalism are generating, anchoring, and dissolving institutions, and they can be highly material. In other words, they are the material expression of a society's (always futile) search for a stable identity. It is this quality of an insecure identity that was articulated as further threatened by the events of September 11, 2001.

The "good (new) war on terror"[51] that was proclaimed was only possible because it did not clash with sedimented practices, reinscribing past discourses of national security and exceptionalism into the present. Yet, in fact, the "War on Terror" was not "new," and its accompanying vocabulary of uniqueness, novelty, and omnipresence had already gained ground in the 1990s. In some instances, Bush Jr. just seemed to replicate the vocabulary his father employed in 1991, when in an open letter to Saddam Hussein he had warned that the Iraqi president would "be held directly responsible for terrorist actions against any member of the coalition." In anticipation of the post-September 11 terminology, he added that "[t]he American people would demand the strongest possible response. You and your country will pay a terrible price."[52] Most of the elements which appeared later in the "War on Terror" discourse had already been employed by Bush senior ten years earlier: Reference to the empty signifier "freedom," the antagonistic force, and the sense of mission and responsibility that had been characteristic of American foreign policy in previous decades. As Bush affirmed only a few days prior to his letter to Saddam: "A year after the joyous dawn of freedom's light in eastern Europe, a dark evil has descended in another part of the world. But we have the chance—and we have the obligation—to stop ruthless aggression."[53] The terrorist threat did not appear to be all that new. In a speech to the UN General Assembly on September 21, 1998, President Clinton famously pronounced that

> terrorism has a new face in the 1990s. Today, terrorists take advantage of greater openness and the explosion of information and weapons technology. The new technologies of terror and their increasing availability, along with the increasing mobility of terrorists, raise chilling prospects of vulnerability to chemical, biological, and other kinds of attacks, bringing each of us into the category of possible victim. This is a threat to all humankind.[54]

It seems as if the "War on Terror" was predetermined long before it actually gained ground. Counterterrorism as an area of often unpredictable political risks had fared high on the agenda under Presidents Reagan and Clinton and continued to be prevalent under Obama.[55] Clinton in particular emphasized "an evolving awareness" of the "al Qaeda threat" in his second term.[56] It is not surprising that some of the main tenets of the sedimented practices that constituted American frames of intelligibility over centuries were instantly employed in George W. Bush's first speech on the evening of September 11. These included the reference to freedom ("our very freedom came under attack"), the allusion to a malevolent Other

("evil, despicable acts of terror"), the invincibility of the United States ("But they have failed; our country is strong"), its superiority ("we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world"), the blaming of individual wrongdoing, not global political structures ("the very worst of human nature"), the immediate consideration of military options ("Our military is powerful, and it's prepared"), the prominence of justice in US foreign affairs ("to find those responsible and to bring them to justice"), absolute determination ("we stand together to win the war against terrorism"), Christian faith ("spoken through the ages in Psalm 23") and, finally, the notorious sense of mission ("we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world").[57] With all these references to standard American discourses, the speech could not have been more carefully crafted. At a closer look, one can no longer accept the argument that Bush was struggling for words in the evening of September 11. The void cannot be related to speechlessness,[58] but must be conceptualized as a discursively generated void that was filled with consciously planned institutionalized practices in the years to come. From the very beginning, language did not fail. On the contrary, as I have argued in part III, the ultimate operation of synecdoche is symbolized in its capacity to achieve universal representation, which means that the United States must stand up to defend freedom in all parts of the world.

All in all, the link with sedimented discourses can be seen as a precondition for successful hegemonic politics—both domestically and globally. Sedimented practices are intertextually entwined with the discourses of the present. It is important to draw attention to the "contingent foundations" they provide when it comes to hegemonic struggles and processes of subjectification. The United States has traditionally been articulated as strong, responsible, peace-loving, willing to lead—with military means if necessary—modern, and free/liberal, exhibiting syntagmatic characteristics of masculinity, religiosity, and dependability. Negative terms that are set in contrastive relations and delimit the meaning of the United States are criminal, socialist/communist, war-prone, and totalitarian. These binaries continued to characterize the "War on Terror" discourse after September 11, 2001. In this regard, continuity actually prevailed over change, and a direct relationship between the "events" of 9/11 and the ensuing anti-terror campaign can be ruled out. There is a strong logic of contingency in the subsequent development. No strict line can be traced from crisis to change. While structural dislocation embodies social change, this change does not necessarily follow from the "pure event" of 9/11.[59] Against this background, let us now take a closer look at the nexus of crisis and change after September 11, 2001, starting with an analysis of the crucial notion of dislocation.

Dislocated Structures

The notion of dislocation is constitutive of critical and poststructuralist work stressing the differential quality of the social. It highlights societal fissures, antagonisms, the impossibility of essentialist subjectivities and the weakening of dominant imaginaries. Dislocations are crucial in the understanding of processes of social change, as they produce structural gaps that have to be filled, situations of fragmentation and indeterminacy of articulations, and in doing so substantiate a progressive notion of politics. Dislocations are intradiscursive, and they can be seen as windows of opportunity in the Laclauian sense, as situations characterized by conversions of articulatory practices and accompanying shifts in public discourses, which can then be used as a platform for a hegemonic intervention. This is the moment where signifiers, which had previously been rooted in the determinate terrain of a hegemonic discourse, become deracinated and therefore floating signifiers. Yet, to repeat, this does not amount to a failure of language; yet, language must be rearranged with the transformation of society.

Crucial for the investigation of discursive dislocations is Laclau and Mouffe's argument that the notion of the political is the instituting moment of society, which brings with it the incompletion of all acts of political institutionalization. If structures were complete, no change could possibly ensue. There always needs to be some sort of void in a meaning structure to be sealed, some sort of anomie to be overcome. Hegemony represents the never-ending effort to generate fixations of a discourse. A likely result of this process is community-building and the construction of a collective identity. Slavoj Žižek therefore describes the discursive field "as structured around a certain traumatic impossibility, around a certain fissure which *cannot* be symbolized."[60] Crucially, trauma is directly related to political community and political power. It often triggers a sense of collective identity. Yet, again, trauma cannot be related to an external "event" that produces the trauma. It can only be comprehended as a dislocated meaning structure which in turn generates incomplete subjects.

In the following, I contend that the articulation of foreign policy by the American government served the task of reconstructing a dislocated American identity after September 11, 2001, was striving to fill the void that was consciously constructed by the Bush Administration on the grounds of sedimented and therefore highly credible foreign policy practices and provided the primary point of orientation for the American public in the ensuing discourse. Unity—that is, identity—can only be achieved through the complete elimination of all internal and external dislocation. The literal contents of particular social demands recede into the background and are

analytically graspable in the movement from metonymy over metaphorization to synecdoche. In other words, the founding myth is translated into an imaginary horizon which initially provides the surface for the inscription of all American demands in the "War on Terror."

Importantly, the notion of dislocation has three central features: First, no nation is ever homogeneous, but is constantly struggling with internal deficiencies and external antagonisms. The resulting incompleteness of societies emanates from dislocations and at the same time produces new ones in that internal irregularities are constantly articulated in a political discourse. Political articulations are contingent through and through. Furthermore, continuing processes of subjectification entail shifting subjects, which leads to the conclusion that a subject will never reach its final destination or fully sutured identity. In this understanding, dislocation is reminiscent of the medical terms "luxation" or "abarticulation." Additionally, the dislocation is characterized by the presence of an antagonistic force that directly impacts on the properties of the "Self." To continue the medical analogy, external dislocation might resemble a "sprain," in which a joint is taken beyond its normal range of motion by an outside force.

Second, as shown in the theoretical arguments of this study, a discourse is dislocated when it cannot integrate or explain certain "events." These "events" can only be grasped if inscribed in sedimented discourses. Moreover, these "events" are never situated outside of a discourse. They neither have a temporal nor a spatial location outside of the discursive frame that translates it from a "pure event" —with all its ambiguities, displacements, and disruptions—into a "historical event," which turns subjects into well-defined and sovereign beings, and establishes a homogeneous timeline, which does not exist in the "pure event."[61] Dislocation is thus immanent in the "pure event," which has no real beginning and no end. Any effort of resuturing a dislocated structure will eventually remain unsuccessful; yet, this effort is essential for a society to exist in the illusion of being a society. The movement from "pure event" to "historical event" can thus be compared to the translation of elements into moments within the field of the discursive.

Third, dislocation is not necessarily incidental; certain subjects have to step in to suture the dislocated structure. Significantly, in the "War on Terror" discourse, the "crisis" that came with the terrorist attacks was premediated and consciously planned. In that sense, dislocation is the moment of the subject. At the same time, however, the role of the subject remains restricted, as it is immanent in the hegemonic structure and can only identify with particular political projects the structure provides. In the "War on Terror," from a conventional perspective, there is perhaps more continuity than change. Change is only visible in the attempt to establish a seamless

chain of equivalences, and the exertion to recuperate an identity that an evil external force had damaged. For change to become possible at all, the suggestion of stability is indispensable. Elements of the established identity need to be salvaged and reinstituted in an ostensibly new discourse. For this to become possible, the structure must essentially be open. Some observers therefore speak of a "void" in a meaning structure in Laclau and Mouffe's sense,[62] which is equivalent to a dislocation of dominant discourses. The void renders the events almost meaningless, as words had first to be found within the wider field of the discursive. Again, it is difficult to argue that the "nature of the void" had a direct impact on the course of action taken by the Bush Administration and its partners,[63] for the "nature of the void" depended on contingent political interventions and had no essential quality. It was nothing but a *discursive void*.

Let us now take a closer look at the example of President Bush's speeches, as the president represents one prominent position within the web of articulatory differences. Judging from a quick glimpse at figure 7.2, it seems as if no reference to "freedom" was made by Bush in the week before September 11, 2011. In an ordinary working week, the concept just seemed to play no conspicuous role in his speeches. However, this is only partly true. It was shown above that "freedom" is an omnipresent feature of American foreign policy discourses, and the president referred to the concept a number of times in his conversation with Mexico's President Vicente Fox on September 5 and 6, stating, for instance, that "[o]ur nations have an historic opportunity to build an authentic partnership grounded in trust and in freedom."

Figure 7.2   Word use in President Bush's speeches, September 4 to September 10, 2001.

Source: Author's creation; http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/7634254/Bush_9-4_to_9-10 (March 10, 2014).

The day after, he added: "Each of our countries is proud of our independence, our freedom, and our democracy."[64]

Yet, it was only after the attacks that the concept instantly occupied an exceptional position in Bush's speeches, as visualized in figure 7.3. It is easy to identify in these early days after the terrorist attacks all the elements that have dominated the first few years of the United States' war against terrorism: win, war, bin Laden, Pakistan, love, loss, nation, *freedom*, accountable, Pentagon, military, great, God, good, evil, hide. Just by a quick preview of the random list of key words of Bush's speeches, the path for the following years seemed preprogrammed.

Nouns are of particular significance in any discourse, as every noun represents a generalization and is only possible to gain its meaning within a web of differences. Of all nouns, adjectives, and verbs employed by Bush, the term "people" showed the highest rate of recurrence in President Bush's speeches after September 11, 2001; between September 2001 and December 2008, Bush's last full month in office, it occurred with a total frequency of 51,886. Expressions like "people" allow diverse groups in a society to affiliate and identify with each other. Interestingly, the term "freedom" fares among the top ten of the most frequently employed nouns after September 11, immediately followed by "war" (with an absolute frequency of 9,538), but outdistancing "money" (9,188), job (8,521), economy (7,797), and health (7,701). At this point, Laclau contends that constructing a "people" is the main task of politics.[65] The endeavor requires the externalization and annihilation of alien elements to secure the uncorrupted identity of the "Self" and to suture together the dislocated society. In other words: Unity—and thus a full identity—can only be achieved through the complete elimination of internal and external dislocation.

Figure 7.3 Word use in President Bush's speeches, September 11 to September 17, 2001.

Source: Own creation; http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/7634329/Bush_9-11_to_9-17 (March 10, 2014).

Articulating the crisis, and corresponding to the long-held discourse on exceptionalism, the United States government represented itself as the archetype of freedom and justice. Both "people" and "freedom" are characterized by an indistinct signified, thus representing signifiers that can have different meanings and can thereby serve to unite the country. Both "people" and "freedom" denote the unachievable: The pursuit of freedom exists because freedom can never be achieved, and "people" represents no more than an illusion, a heterogeneous ensemble of in principle unconnected subjects. Both terms symbolize contingency and groundlessness, while other habitually used expressions like "America," "country," "world," "Iraq," "Administration," and "time" are to a lesser extent indifferent to the content of their filling and carry with them a certain conflict-proneness. Empty signifiers like "freedom" or "people" are, however, also never completely empty. Empty signifiers are often connected with, connoted or modified by other terms. Whereas "freedom" as an empty signifier works on the ontological level and remains empty, the ontic can be conceptualized as the contingent attempt to fill that emptiness with content. As argued in chapter 6, this works though *syntagmatic* and *paradigmatic* relations. Higher-level properties are generated by the former, manifold binaries and oppositions are the result of the latter.

The analysis must look at how empty signifiers like the central term "freedom" are connected with, connoted or modified by other terms. The most recurrently utilized verb/noun cluster is "love freedom" (total frequency: 333), followed by "spread freedom" (184), "defend freedom" (124), and "hate freedom" (70). Positively connoted verbs like "love" occur in high regularity within clusters such as "love a neighbor" (211) and "their loved ones" (173), whereas "hate" occurs as the unspecified "they hate" (153) and "hate us" (108).

The discourse of the "War on Terror" can be characterized as a continuous process of deliberately rearticulating "America" and international security by Bush and his speechwriting team. "9/11" is constructed as a "global tragedy,"[66] not as a local or national disaster; it is represented as a day that bears no comparison, as James Der Derian appositely put it: "9/11 quickly took on an *exceptional ahistoricity*."[67] Yet, as demonstrated in the previous section, the articulation of the "event" was not ahistorical at all. In fact, historical analogies are conspicuous in the discourse. For example, Bülent Diken and Carsten Lausten elucidate that September 11 is articulated as an absolute evil, comparable to the Holocaust.[68] The discourse just appears to be ahistorical at times, since universalism in Laclau's sense attempts to erase all traces of the past. The day *must* be constructed without a history,

Table 7.1 Frequency of nouns, verbs, and adjectives in Bush's speeches, 2001–2008

	Nouns			Adjectives			Verbs	
1	people	51,866	good	18,778		want	26,341
2	America	27,757	American	14,532		make	21,090
3	country	22,057	important	12,843		know	20,061
4	world	17,934	great	11,757		work	(17,816)
5	Iraq	15,808	sure	11,572		help	(16,524)
6	Administration	15,623	new	11,078		like	(14,083)
7	time	15,098	free	8,588		believe	11,349
8	Congress	12,323	better	8,017		need	(12,811)
9	government	11,968	right	8,010		think	11,950
10	freedom	10,427	strong	7,407		say	10,165

Source: Own calculation. Note that some verbs (e.g., want, work, help, need) may also occur as nouns.

and the future has to be without comparison, which explains the recurrent usage of the word "time" (see table 7.1).[69] Unsurprisingly, Bush describes a break with everything that occurred before in world history: "All of this was brought upon us in a single day—and night fell on a different world"[70], and Vice-President Cheney speaks of "a new era of international security."[71] There is an inherent tension between ahistoricity and historical continuity in the discourse, which describes a tension that is characteristic for the nexus between crisis and change.

In its initial usage on September 11, "freedom" is not further specified. It appears as if the very principle of bringing back order into a situation of dislocation is more important than the ontic character of the proposed new order. In his speech on September 11, the president declares: "Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts."[72] Though rather unspecified, it becomes omnipresent as a reference point of the discourse in the days after September 11, 2001. "9/11" in that sense represents a quantitative break, which implied a shift in American identity discourses. Figure 7.4 describes the strong and inflationary use of freedom-related vocabulary after September 11, 2001. The customary reference to the term reaches its peak in 2002, when the transformation of the "pure" event into a "historical" event required extensive argumentative effort. Another peak is noticeable in Bush's final year in office, before the freedom metaphor loses much of its significance with the inauguration of President Barack Obama. In Bush's
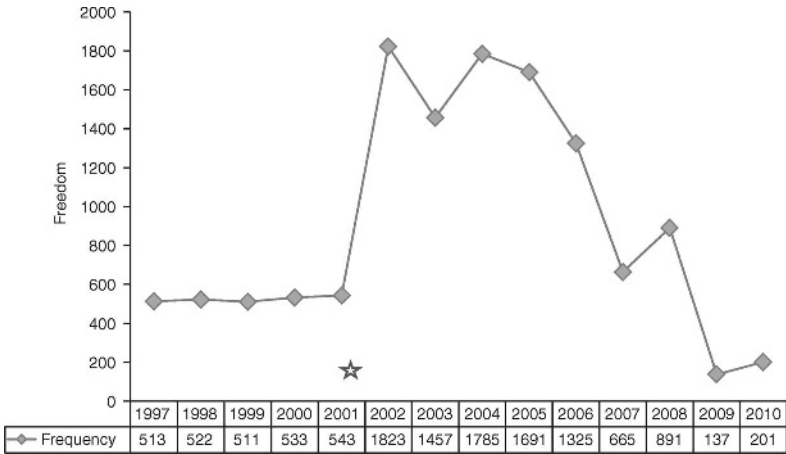
Figure 7.4   "Freedom" in presidents' speeches (1997 to 2010).

Source: Own calculation; the star (☆) symbolizes September 11, 2001.

usage, "freedom" is described as a universal imperative, and syntagmatic relations are established with the notion of justice and universal morality. At the same time, universalism in Laclau's sense attempts to erase all traces of the past.

As days go by, the empty signifier "freedom" is increasingly filled with substance. In the Bush Administration's perspective, the concept entails democracy and a liberal market economy, the protection of human rights and tolerance, as the President asserts on September 20:

> Americans are asking, why do they hate us? They hate what we see right here in this chamber—a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms—our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.[73]

This quote illuminates the argument that hegemonic discourses are contaminated by the "outside", which leaves the "inside" to struggle with instability and the prospect of transformation. The discourse not only belongs to the United States; others seem to have a say in it. The line between the inside and the outside is drawn by the empty signifier— "freedom" in this case. Yet, other concepts regularly used by the Bush

administration—in particular "peace" and "security"—serve the same function. This is not particularly surprising, as a society usually engenders a whole array of empty signifiers, and through their quality as floating signifiers, they are frequently interlinked. As Condoleezza Rice once explained, peace and security refer to the prevention of violence by terrorists, and to the extension of the benefits of freedom across the globe.[74]

The establishment of equivalential chains through syntagmatic relations works through the modification of nouns, which is most often adjectival. As shown in table 7.2, adjectives that occur frequently in the corpus after September 11 are "good," "American," "important," "great," "sure," "free," "new," "better," "right," and "strong," with clusters such "free society" (631), "great country" (406), "great Nation" (340), "our great" (262), "great job" (247), "spirit is strong" (166), "great land" (127), and "great victory" (127) denoting the attributes of the United States, while the ascription of traits to other countries works through clusters like "free Iraq" (562) and "want to be free" (154). Cooperation with allies is visible in attributions like "strong support" (172) but also "strong leadership" (103). These are coupled with an integration of the empty signifier "freedom" with divine legitimization, clearly formulated by Bush in February 2003, when he declared that:

> Liberty is God's gift to every human being in the world. [. . .] We're called to extend the promise of this country into the lives of every citizen who lives here. We're called to defend our nation and to lead the world to peace, and we will meet both challenges with courage and with confidence.[75]

A syntagmatic relationship is established between the United States as it is now and a future, better world that can only be achieved under US leadership. The successful augmentation of freedom in other countries has been declared a cornerstone of Bush's fight against terrorism, and the "Bush Doctrine" can in this important respect be seen as continuing past foreign policy doctrines, in particular the famous "Truman Doctrine."[76] In his second Inaugural Address in January 2005, George W. Bush again raised the principle of freedom to the status of the country's most precious asset to pacify the world. Bush declared that:

> There is only one force of history that can break the reign of hatred and resentment, and expose the pretensions of tyrants, and reward the hopes of the decent and tolerant, and that is the force of human freedom.[77]

Corresponding to sedimented practices of US foreign policy, the president continues to declare freedom the basis of the nation's security:

> The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world.[78]

In this quote, difference—here visible in an antagonistic relationships with the rest of the world—is constructed in order to guarantee the stability of a particular American identity. The hegemonic discourse, corresponding to the ideal-type process delineated in part III of this study, aims to position itself not just as *one* option among many, but as *the* only alternative to absolute chaos and insecurity. Constructing difference in its most radical form, other political systems, ideologies and different definitions of tolerance seemed unacceptable at this point. Significantly with regards to the nexus of crisis and change, Bush and his closest aides demonstrate a future-oriented, optimistic approach around September 11. Optimism is typically used as a bridge between crisis and change. It sparks confidence and hope that a change for the better can be achieved. Bush was highly successful in this regard, thereby alleging to suture together the dislocated nature of the American people. I will show in chapter 8 how divine or transcendental legitimization produces optimism but is at the same time coupled with exclusionary and antagonistic practices to establish a hegemonic discourse in the "War on Terror."

CHAPTER 8

Hegemony: Toward a Discourse Theory of Crisis and Change

Antagonism

To identify a hegemonic process and the accompanying nexus of crisis and change in a discourse, I maintain in this chapter that one central feature is of utmost importance: If an empty signifier like "freedom," or "people," depends—as shown in chapter 7—on the failure to establish any positive content, then the necessarily futile articulation of any identity must depend on radical exclusionary practices: a "pure" negativity that is eliminated from the alleged fullness of the community. A logic of uncontaminated difference or antagonism must become prevalent in order to reconstitute a dislocated society on ostensibly positive grounds. Again, a contingent temporality is evident in this argument, for the blocking of a full identity by an antagonist requires a politics that entails the promise to leave that state behind. We are reminded here of the notion of *différance*, in which a sign bears the traces of the past and of a possible future within itself. Crisis and change are thus necessarily inherent in the very being of a nation.

Campbell had already given a large amount of examples in *Writing Security* of the crucial ability of American foreign policy during the Cold War to represent the Other as bad, subversive, dirty, and threatening.[1] From the perspective developed here, empty signifiers are set in direct contrast to the "threat" of terrorism. As Laclau argues, every identity is constituted differentially and through recourse to an antagonistic Other, which sets the limits of the pure self. Threat creation plays a significant role in this process: "Only if the beyond becomes the signifier of pure threat, of pure negativity, of the simply excluded, can there be limits and system (that is an objective

order).”[2] The empty signifier assumes the role of a remedy, cancelling out all differences within a society. The fuzzy limits of a state's identity can only acquire ontological status through the exclusion of the threat; internal homogeneity becomes possible through the expulsion of the alien element.

In the poststructuralist IR literature discussed in chapter 4, it has been argued that antagonism is the very condition of politics. Correspondingly, life as "normal" was articulated as being interrupted by a new form of insecurity after "9/11," and from now on, in a far-reaching spatial extension of the anti-terror discourse, it was not only the United States but the whole "civilized world" that was vulnerable and that might be attacked by terrorists. The "normal" was constructed through the insinuation of the "abnormal"; the pure "inside" had already been adulterated by the "outside." As Maja Zehfuss puts it with reference to Derrida, "the opposite is always already inscribed within each term, thus making a clear demarcation between both terms impossible."[3] Constructing fear apparently served the function of maintaining quiescence and delegitimizing dissent both within the United States and the international community. This underlines the argument that the very concept of the political is based on the identification of the enemy. The argument is related to a central dimension of the "War on Terror": The "new kind of terrorism" that is now also threatening American allies and draws a line between the Western, peace-loving world and some radical Islamic societies. Although Bush deliberately avoids negative connotations of Islam, the open declaration of the Self as Christian might suggest at least implicit valuations of a significant Other: "A notion of what 'we' are is intrinsic to an understanding of what 'we' fear."[4]

Accordingly, President Bush declared terrorism as the "mother of all threats," asserting that modern terrorists are "the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the twentieth century,"[5] omnipresent in the world and always prepared to attack "our civilization." Threat creation eventually comes down to a fundamentalist discourse based on the principle of "all or nothing." The threat is henceforth not only directed at the United States, but at the "West" as a whole; it is constructed as "[a] threat to the very essence of what you do,"[6] "[a] threat to our way of life" [and a] "threat to the peace of the world."[7] Terrorism in that sense embodies the heir of all murderous ideologies of the twentieth century, omnipresent and always prepared to attack the "West." It is this Western civilization that needs to be protected, while its positive spirit must be passed on to every corner of the world: "[T]he United States will use this moment of opportunity to extend the benefits of freedom across the globe. We will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets, and free trade to every corner of the world."[8]

Starting with the President's two addresses on September 11 and before a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001, binary constructions, rooted in a Christian fundamentalist worldview, start to assemble a seamless web of relations of difference and equivalence, insiders and outsiders. The US government, with President George W. Bush at the top, constructs America according to the logic of equivalence, as part of an all-out war between "good" and "evil." It is never constructed as a heterogeneous society, but is portrayed instead as a rather homogeneous, peace-loving nation, which must be singularized in its superiority and homogeneity. As Bush emphasizes, "[We] must stop the evil ones, so our children and grandchildren can know peace and security and freedom in the greatest nation on the face of the Earth."[9] In this example, American concepts of the "Self" are purposely shaped by the nation's differential relationship to the rest of the world, especially those countries that are characterized by a lack of freedom. As an empty signifier, the concept of freedom structured the discourse and represented the only alternative to absolute chaos in world politics, at the same time serving as a framework for a dominant, hegemonic, and antagonistic discourse in the United States.

It is the "evil" character of the Islamist terrorists that led to the attacks of September 11. The enemy, as a "constitutive outside," enables the formation of a chain of equivalences both within the United States and with other freedom-loving nations in an "alliance against terror." Again, a definition of the positive Self is only possible via a negative definition of the Other. As argued above, antagonism implies the contamination of an inside by the outside, making the full constitution of the inside impossible. It is thus hardly astonishing that the expression "the evil" occurs 431 times in Bush's speeches as a president, accompanied by qualifications like "the evil done" (235), "evil done to America" (164), "fight evil" (156), "evil people" (52), "evil will" (47), "the evil ones" (47), and "face of evil" (43). By paradigmatically contrasting an inside and an outside and by describing "some radical parts" of Islam as "evil," religion can play a unique role in constructing a "good war on terror," making hegemonic politics more likely to succeed. Paradigmatic relations engender veiled and oblivious structural conditions. The evil enemy is articulated as a positive ontological entity that exists completely external to the Self; its annihilation or destruction is seen as a fundamental prerequisite for the restoration the preexisting order, democracy, justice, and freedom.

In this discourse, the terms "freedom/liberty" and "evil" are textured as two opposite ends of an axis.[10] In the evening of September 11, Bush declares that "[t]housands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror."[11] While the President quotes the Bible on the evening of September

11 ("Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me"),[12] he announces a "crusade" against evil on September 16.[13] Corresponding to the theoretical framework outlined in this study, Bush's demands do not constitute just one option within a series of alternatives but a radical alternative to past structures of world security. At the same time, however, he has to refer to the past to articulate the future. In fact, past, present, and future are articulated as one integral complex in the discourse.

The juxtaposition of "good" and "evil" symbolizes a continuum in Bush's addresses to the nation in the first year after the terrorist attacks, over his speech to Congress on September 20, 2001 ("Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them"),[14] and to his State of the Union address in January 2002 ("I know we can overcome evil with a greater good")[15] to his speech at West Point in June 2002 ("We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name").[16] Bush launched various attempts to construct national unity on religious grounds and was successful in bringing liberal and conservative Americans into a thoroughly articulated equivalential chain. A single political discourse, the discourse of the "War on Terror," effectively operated as a hegemonic horizon of intelligibility for different political camps. Eventually, together with the "evil" initiators of the September 11 attacks, Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda, Saddam Hussein's regime was represented as a logical further element in a group of signifiers that were employed to construct the necessary (or "constitutive") "Other" in the "War on Terror."[17]

At first sight, equivalence seems to subvert all positive difference by reducing signifiers to a fundamental sameness. Yet, this sameness is illusionary; every identity constructed on the basis of nonessential chains of equivalences is *overdetermined* both from within a discourse and from outside of it—from an exterior that threatens to dislocate the allegedly stable frontiers the chain of equivalences claims to establish. Difference in the form of antagonism can thus be seen as a source and a possible reaction to dislocation at the same time, as the cause of the dislocation is seen in the existence of an antagonistic force: "[A]ntagonism is not only the experience of a limit to objectivity but also a first discursive attempt at mastering and reinscribing it. It is, if you want, a hinge between social objectivity and its disruption. To categorize a social force as an 'enemy' is already to represent it within a discursive structure."[18] The articulation of binaries, the depiction of an "evil" Other and antagonism are thus significant for the establishment of hegemonic relations in times of crisis.

In radical diction, the Other is eventually portrayed as the "*curse* of terrorism that is upon the face of the earth"[19] and "terrorist parasites who threaten their countries and our own"[20] by President Bush, depicted as "the *scourge* of terrorism" by Colin Powell,[21] and as "a *cancer* on the human condition" by Donald Rumsfeld.[22] These quotes remind us of Campbell's discussion of Foucault and the "body politic," in which the Self is understood as a genuinely healthy and hygienic body, whereas the sick and dirty Other represents a danger to the social system, equivalent to viruses and bacteria that threaten the human physiological constitution. The metaphor of the "disease" symbolizes the dislocation of an otherwise vigorous structure. It is at no point taken into account that modern medical research has shown that the perfectly healthy and hygienic body (whatever that might refer to) does not exist.[23] This shows the contingency and ethical dilemma of a normalization of bodily features, as well as the deeply political character of this process. The worse an illness is articulated as being, the more drastic the required medication has to be. Globally lingering terrorist viruses need to be wiped out at their roots; the "normal" has to prevail over the deviant and pathological. Ostensible stability needs to be reestablished and externally induced social change must be inhibited from the outset. Impeccable beauty and perfect health represent the paradisiac promise of an absolute identity and, at the same time, symbolize the moment in which a pure metaphor eradicates all traces of its metonymical basis. In contrast, as Judith Butler has shown in *Frames of War*, life that is equated with dirt and is articulated as exhibiting nonhuman features does not qualify as life and can therefore be destroyed.[24] Thus the definition of life becomes a function of discursively regulated power relations. Equivalential relations are established by a metonymical operation, but the social also necessitates metaphorical construction, in which the meaning of the United States can be substituted by an infinite number of others (freedom, endless possibilities, peace, order, etc.).

This has two grave political consequences, which elucidate furthermore the nexus between crisis and change: First, the Bush Administration articulates the "War on Terror" as a preventive war, increasingly employing the notion of "preemption"—a notion that must be judged highly problematic from the perspective of international law (and a question to which I will return below). The fullness of a menaced identity is to be restored by prophylactic measures. It is self-evident that the ongoing development toward completion can only be manipulated from the outside, and anticipatory measures are in order to defend this natural path. This shows once more how the very notion of "identity" embodies the nexus between crisis and

change: Crisis as dislocation, disorder, and incompleteness; change as the continuous effort to gain a full identity.

Second, other political systems, alternative definitions of tolerance to the one offered by the Bush Administration have been rendered unacceptable, the totality of Bush's representations of good and bad has been overpowering in the anti-terror discourse: "The twentieth century ended with a single surviving model of human progress, based on non-negotiable demands of human dignity, the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for woman and private property and free speech and equal justice and religious tolerance,"[25] claimed the president in his speech at West Point on June 1, 2002. Textual analysis unveils a branching of the world into protagonists and antagonists in Bush's speeches, representing the latter as malign and evil. As has been pointed out, critical linguists call this mechanism "overlexicalization," meaning that antagonists are lexicalized in various ways. The language thereby tries to naturalize a binary opposition.[26] Overlexicalization relies on semantic relations of addition, elaboration, synonymy, and subordination and relations of contrast at the same time. Within the logic of equivalence, each demand in an emerging hegemonic discourse in Laclau and Mouffe's sense is physically linked with a chain of other demands; each one of them invokes a series of other signifiers. Relations of equivalence are textured between the American people, freedom, and civilization, on the one hand, and tyranny and barbarism, on the other. As the quantitative analysis has shown, it is the American people that "loves freedom" and "defends freedom." In contrast, President Bush undyingly uses Manichean discourse to construct the "evil Other," at the same time stressing the goodness of the United States. The identity of the United States as a community of the good is contingent on reference to a constitutive Other, or outside. In that context, the term "terror" or "terrorist" represents fear and is increasingly exploited as a an antonym of American identity. Hegemonic politics to a great extent consists of the management of political representation, while any single signifier represents both the logic of equivalence and the logic of difference. What these binaries aim at is the establishment of pure presence, identity, and unity. In the tradition of what Derrida termed *logocentrism*, "the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as presence" is a primary goal of this process.[27]

This elucidates once more the claim that the notion of "crisis" encompasses a twofold concept of dislocation: Pure presence logically seeks to eradicate all traces of heterogeneity, which—in the American anti-terror discourse—leads to the inflationary usage of the empty signifier "freedom." However, radical exclusion symbolizes the impossibility of pure presence, for the excluded Other keeps threatening and contaminating the

allegedly homogeneous Self. This twofold concept of dislocation embodies the nucleus for social change; it is in this concept where crisis and change conjoin. Crucially, it is also at this juncture where the hegemonic discourse displays its tremendous power and can no longer be controlled by prominent agents. Although President Bush seeks to assuage the global impact of torture by American soldiers in the Iraqi prison Abu Ghraib,[28] the hegemonic discourse had long reached the core of American society. "From the spirits that I called Sir, deliver me!"—one could cite Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, but that would put too much weight on George W. Bush, for Bush himself must be seen as a subject generated by a highly credible discourse with which he largely identified and in which he positioned himself according to the positions that were available, thereby confirming the hegemonic discourse and pushing it forward where possible.

Furthermore, the twofold concept of dislocation embodies change because it produces dual and mutually infiltrating processes of subjectification: It produces anew an American subject that corresponds to the fundamental doctrine of exceptionalism; and in humiliating the prisoners of Abu Ghraib, as Judith Butler puts it, "[t]he torture was also a way to coercively produce the Arab subject and the Arab mind."[29] By repeatedly referring to the "strength" of the American military, processes of subjectification insinuate binaries of the "strong" versus the "weak," the "superior" versus the "inferior," the "good" versus the "evil," and the "free" versus the "unfree." A cynical form of freedom is at play here, the freedom of coercion and the freedom to break any law—except the law of God—in securing the identity of the Self.

The concept of "universal freedom" is thus related to an important prerequisite for successful hegemonic politics, that is, *transcendental legitimization*. By promising to "rid the world of evil,"[30] it seems as if Bush accepted exceptional, almost divine, duties. The statement implies, first, that "pure goodness" and the universality of freedom belong to America, while all evil is articulated as being part of the Outside. Second, internal solidity is contrasted with the need for external transformation; the sources of the dislocated society rest outside of it. As Bush claims in the same speech: "America is a nation full of good fortune, with so much to be grateful for. But we are not spared from suffering. In every generation, the world has produced enemies of human freedom. They have attacked America because we are freedom's home and defender. And the commitment of our fathers is now the calling of our time."[31] Almost mantra-like, freedom, justice, goodness, and universal truth are juxtaposed here with the "absolute evil" that is responsible for the crisis that overwhelms the American people. The external dimension of dislocation is articulated here in all its potent simplicity.

As the promise of universality has not yet come true, the "new kind of terrorism" was in need of a drastic, antagonistically defined line to be drawn between the Western, mainly Christian, and peace-loving world and some radical *Islamic* societies. References to "Islam" occur 258 times in Bush's speeches between 2001 and 2009, as often as, for example, "Jewish" (258) and "Asian" (258). Taken together with "Muslim," which is employed both as an adjective and a noun, reference to Islam as a religion becomes a striking peculiarity of Bush's speeches.[32] Generalizations such as "Muslim world" (50) and "Muslim faith" (35) show the highest rate of recurrence, with Bush maintaining habitually that "[the] terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism," at the same time emphasizing that their targets are people with different faith: "The terrorists" directive commands them to kill Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans, and make no distinctions among military and civilians, including women and children. This group and its leader, a person named Osama bin Laden, are linked to many other organizations in different countries, including the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan."[33]

Christian references are ubiquitous in Bush's speeches, habitually mingled with the concept of "freedom/liberty" and a missionary attitude. United States defined "freedom" and "liberty" were proclaimed as God-decreed norms for all nations, thereby creating a national mood of superiority and concord. The suggestion that "God is on America's side" served to compensate and comfort the public and helped to suture over the dislocation in the social structure. Furthermore, against the theoretical background developed in part III of this book, one may contend that by reference to nature and God, politics tries to render its operations of power invisible. While one may legitimately contend that, after the Westphalian peace, the state took over from the church the task of guaranteeing collective identity,[34] the Bush Administration merged the functions of state and church by securing the unique status of the American people on religious grounds.

What continues to be obscured in this discourse is the argument that universality (here in the form of universal "freedom") remains a chimera. It is a genuinely theological concept that finds its origins in the Christian notion of *deliverance*: getting delivered promises human beings a life in satisfaction, with all needs being met by God. By moving its practices into such a posthuman sphere, the politics of the "War on Terror" gains an impersonal character and is able to move its meanings into the background by alleging natural, God-decreed, and self-evident solutions. All reference to the "real" is lost in these arguments, and a philosophy of science that concentrates on mind-world monism and dualism would not be able to grasp all dimensions of the discourse. Retrospectively, it is also interesting to see that there need not be

an immediate, or "real," danger to set off a far-reaching threat construction. As Campbell has maintained, "[the] mere existence of an alternative mode of being, the presence of which exemplifies that different identities are possible and thus denaturalizes the claim of a particular identity to be the true identity, is sometimes enough to produce the understanding of a threat."[35] I would add here in an even more radical manner that it is not the "existence" or "presence" of that "alternative mode of being" that generates notions of danger, but the very *articulation* of the Other, which stands in no relationship to a "real" object, as posited by critical realists. Therefore, on the basis of a deliberately constructed discourse post-September 11, certain political choices, like the invasion of Iraq, became not just possible, but unavoidable and absolutely legitimate.

Only by integrating the triangle of sedimented practices, that is, by constructing the "War on Terror" around the core concepts of "freedom," "antagonism" and "God," can a temporary hegemonic constellation be achieved and the myth of a stable, untouchable, and homogeneous American identity can again be established. Bush was able to seal this conceptual triangle firmly, at the height of his rhetorical campaign maintaining that "by being true to our love of freedom and understanding that freedom isn't America's gift to the world, it is a God gift, and that freedom is universal, it is applied to everybody—if we remain true and strong and diligent, we can achieve peace. We can achieve peace."[36] A strong notion of agency is introduced here, linked to equally strong notions of universality, truth, and morality. Propositional assumptions thus play a prominent role in Bush's speeches. The inflation of certain particulars into universal meanings moves into the stage of an imaginary, and the hegemonic discourse seems to reach full closure.

In sum, the American "War on Terror" discourse employs a language full of despising for an antagonist that is textured as weak yet threatening, heterogeneous yet identifiable, dispersed yet locatable. The discourse increasingly uses religious metaphors to make its case. In that way, the antagonist is radically excluded, for Islam is always implied when the "evil" character of the Other is articulated. This radical exclusion facilitated practices of naked violence, as seen in Afghanistan, Iraq, the prison of Abu Ghraib, and the detention camp at Guantánamo Bay, to name just a few instances where the brutality of the hegemonic discourse surfaced in all its inhumanity.

As I have attempted to illustrate in the previous two sections, the ability of one hegemonic strategy to succeed against others is first and foremost based on its linkages with institutions that retain some degree of authority throughout a crisis and its iterations of previously normalized traditions. This is certainly the case with the growing influence of religion in American

society. Although the incompleteness of agents' identities is what lies at the heart of any hegemonic process, and it guarantees the continuity of politics in search of a stable identity, without the possibility of temporarily fixing social relations, chaos would be a permanent feature of the social. As Laclau and Mouffe put it, "a discourse incapable of generating any fixity of meaning is the discourse of the psychotic."[37]

As to the nexus of crisis and change, one may well argue at this point that change is logically related to the assertion of stability. If the assurance of identity in times of the articulation of crisis works through the construction of a negative Other, and if this is the only way of asserting the identity of the Self, the identity of the Other is affirmed simultaneously. The logic of identity entails a logic of pure difference, of radical exclusion and the amalgamation of infinite particularisms into a chain of equivalences with a universal character. Complete annihilation or even destruction of the Other—although this might sometimes be the declared aim of politics—would bring politics to an end. Without the Other, the articulation of the Self would no longer be possible. The only alternative to the destruction of the Other lies within its continuous and contingent rearticulation. The tension between universality and particularity remains unresolvable, or "undecidable," at all times; it is highly political, never total, and always reversible, even if it is widely institutionalized. This argument must be seen as central for a theory of crisis and change. Against this background, I will now turn to the institutionalization of difference.

Institutionalization

It should have become clear by now that crisis and change are fundamental, underlying features of any society. However, the two concepts cannot always be seen in a linear temporality, for one concept is always implicated in the other. Sedimented practices, dislocation, antagonism, and institutionalization are all necessary constituents of a theory of crisis and change, but each element is constituted by all the others. To round up my theoretical discussion, I will contend that the indescribability, nonsignifiability, and traumatic agony of a fundamentally dislocated society, sometimes—not always—requires fundamentally innovative processes of signification to be credible. The appeal to sedimented practices can in principle go hand in hand with noticeable breaks in a system of signification. At this juncture, crisis and change overlap; "the overcoming of fear requires the institutionalization of fear," as David Campbell puts it.[38] It has to be reiterated that this all happens within discourse; the construction of anxiety, the articulation of "war," the very physicality of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, and finally

the institutionalization of the war through the implementation of new legal structures both within the United States and at a global level are progenies of a discourse connected with sedimented discourses. Voids can only be filled and a lack can only be sutured if they do not clash with these traditional discourses; yet, the practice of filling and suturing remains contingent, and novel, unprecedented political decisions, and processes of institutionalization can be the result.

Comparable to the concept of "dislocation," institutionalization works on two levels: internally and externally, while both levels exist in a mutually contingent relationship. Eventually, specific cultural forms like norms, rules, (political) institutions, conventions, ideologies, customs, and laws are all influenced by the hegemonic process. This is an exercise of power in its purest form, as it categorically excludes alternative articulatory frameworks. Figure 5.3 suggests that the dislocated differential structure eventually generates new institutionalized practices, which then retroact on the dislocated structure. Using optimistic religious vocabulary also serves the task to "guarantee the continuity of the community."[39] Furthermore, to ensure stability and regain a lost identity, the appeal to the founding myth of a nation can be regarded as a promising measure. In the United States, this is symbolized in the evocation of exceptionalism, responsibility, and uniqueness, which President Bush puts in plain words in his legitimization of the Iraq invasion in March 2003: "The United Nations Security Council has not lived up to its responsibilities—so we will rise to ours."[40] Exceptionalism apparently dictates the law; in fact, the doctrine permits the administration to break all laws—the Charter of the United Nations in this instance.

This argument also applies to the institutionalization of the "War on Terror." As shown above, the preemptive defense of the nation had already played a role in US foreign policy prior to September 11, 2001. On these grounds, it was hardly astounding to observe the reinvigoration of the doctrine of preemption under Bush.[41] In fact, it was straightforward to link the doctrine of preemption to the defense of freedom in the American homeland. "We are now acting because the risks of inaction would be far greater," Bush declared with regards to the alleged Iraqi threat. "In one year or five years the power of Iraq to inflict harm on all free nations would be multiplied many times over," the President claimed.[42] In the connection between preemption and the defense of the homeland, however, Bush gives the discourse an innovative impulse. The articulation of a "threat to the American mainland" had not featured prominently before September 11, 2001. While the notion of "homeland" had been statistically insignificant in Bill Clinton's speeches,[43] it showed a high frequency in Bush's statements. Whereas Bush referred to "Homeland" or "homeland" 1,445 times in 2002, Obama used

the term 182 times in his first year in office. In Bush's speeches, the term is often syntagmatically linked to "justice" and juxtaposed with "evil," as Bush explains in 2002: "[T]he best way to secure the homeland of America is to find the evil ones wherever they try to hide and bring them to justice."[44] Again, the "evil ones" are a necessary element to verbalize the identity of the United States after September 11, which leads to a mutual constitution of the two. The discursive shift toward the strengthening of homeland security is, however, only possible because it does not clash with sedimented practices. In that regard, this new political move gained high credibility.

Other instances of far-reaching processes of institutionalization illustrate that the linkage with sedimented discourses, sometimes in the form of previously established and widely accepted norms, is always indispensable when political change is at stake. Although the detention camp at Guantánamo Bay was widely seen as having extralegal status, the Bush Administration has from the very beginning painstakingly worked on its legal classification. In explaining the detention process, the administration repeatedly referred to their comprehensive, multistage screening and evaluation procedure. In an attempt to legalize the process of detention, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld created a new Office of Detainee Affairs within the Department of Defense in 2004. The Pentagon explained that "[t]he reorganization is also part of a greater, ongoing effort to keep up with demands from members of Congress to be kept informed about all investigations relating to detainee abuse in Iraq and Afghanistan."[45] Sustaining a hegemonic discourse requires subjects willing and capable of filling voids in the discursive architecture. The Bush Administration was greatly successful in this respect for many years and provided a powerful basis for the hegemonic discourse to continue in subsequent years. Although, for instance, newly elected President Barack Obama in 2009 signed an order to close down the detention camp on his first full day in office, he was not able to live up to the standards he had set in his campaign.[46] On the contrary, the "War on Terror" has been alive and vigorous throughout his presidency, and Obama took new, so far unmatched, measures. The hegemonic discourse exhibited all its power, and the presidential campaign slogan "change we can believe in," which outlines a vision for far-reaching social change in the United States, turned out to be a chimera in many respects. It has to be understood that structural change is only possible within the frame of the hegemonic discourse, which endows political practices with credibility.

On the powerful discursive basis articulated by the Bush government, new identifications became increasingly routinized in the United States and led to the institutionalization of the "War on Terror," visible, for instance, in the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and the increase

in defense spending. With regards to the new government agency, the president maintained:

> The changing nature of the threats facing America requires a new government structure to protect against invisible enemies that can strike with a wide variety of weapons. [...] The President proposes to create a new Department of Homeland Security, the most significant transformation of the U.S. government in over a half-century by largely transforming and realigning the current confusing patchwork of government activities into a single department whose primary mission is to protect our homeland.[47]

Dislocation concurs with threat creation, and threat creation coincides with processes of institutionalization. Institutionalization means nothing less but the temporary suturing of the dislocated society. Other well-known examples of a far-reaching institutionalization of the post-September 11 American identity are the USA Patriot Act (2001), its extension and renewal as the Domestic Security Enhancement Act (2003), the reform of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, the so-called FISA compromise bill, the huge increase in defense spending and a reorganization of US military forces overseas, but also the transformation of law, as well as the electronic surveillance program of the National Security Agency (NSA) at home and abroad as symbols for the authority of the hegemonic discourse—all of them centering around the notion of "freedom" and the exclusion of an "evil" Other. Commenting on the Patriot Act, President Bush stated in 2003 that: "Almost 2 years ago, I signed the USA Patriot Act. [...] It enabled our team to talk to each other, to better prepare against an enemy which hates us because of what we love—freedom."[48] We see this hegemonic strategy, based on difference in the form of antagonism, at many points in Bush's speeches. As a prime instance, one might quote parts of the President's speech to the troops at Osan Air Base in Seoul, Korea, in February 2002. Referring to Guantánamo Bay, Bush states that:

> A few months ago, Al Qaida and the terrorists occupied Afghanistan. Now some of them are in cells in Guantanamo Bay. [...] And they're now beginning to realize that we're resolved to find the terrorists, wherever they hide, and rout them out. And as my fellow Americans, you need to know that we won't stop until the threat of global terrorism has been destroyed. We have been called to history. We must not stop. After all, we defend civilization itself. We didn't ask for this war; we're a peaceful nation. But we will do everything in our power to defend freedom and

the universal values that are so important to our Nation and so important to a peaceful world.[49]

In this quote, Bush establishes syntagmatic (Americans, civilization, peaceful, freedom, universal values, peaceful world) as well as paradigmatic relations (Al Qaida, terrorists, Afghanistan, Guantánamo Bay, war), thereby generating equivalence within difference. In that way, those who dissent can be easily delegitimized by the power of the hegemonic discourse. The differential structure of society acquires material objectivity by becoming institutionally fixed. Reflecting Gramsci's understanding of hegemony, institutions are supportive in providing stability in unstable social situations. As before, it must be emphasized that this process is highly contingent. Difference and identity are to be conceptualized as open for processes of counterhegemony and desedimentation. The battle between discourses to become the leading interpretative structure brutally reveals the configuration of power relations in a given historical moment. Hegemonization makes power discernible in the first place. In any case, the form of power described here is uneven, not stable or static, but is rearticulated continuously, and new discursive perspectives are opened up by subversive practices. This is the final stage of the hegemonic process and the point where social change becomes most apparent: As it becomes an imaginary, the discourse generates new kinds of political action along the lines of the dominant interpretative framework. Power gains a Foucaultian quality in this regard, in that it constitutes the normalcy of the norms of the "War on Terror" and "render[s] the subject's own destructiveness *righteous* and its own destructibility *unthinkable*."[50] The unimaginable leads President Obama in 2013, 12 years after the official start of the "War on Terror," to repeat the claim that this war will eventually be won by the United States. In his speech on the future of the "War on Terror," Obama declared:

Our victory against terrorism won't be measured in a surrender ceremony on a battleship, or a statue being pulled to the ground. Victory will be measured in parents taking their kids to school; immigrants coming to our shores; fans taking in a ballgame; a veteran starting a business; a bustling city street. The quiet determination; that strength of character and bond of fellowship; that refutation of fear—that is both our sword and our shield. And long after the current messengers of hate have faded from the world's memory, alongside the brutal despots, deranged madmen, and ruthless demagogues who litter history—the flag of the United States will still wave from small-town cemeteries, to national monuments, to distant outposts abroad. And that flag will still stand for freedom.[51]

In retrospect, Obama has not managed to liberate the American people from a hegemonic discourse that was established after September 11, 2001, but reaches back into the history of the United States. The "War on Terror" was ingrained in sedimented practices that had their roots in the founding myths of the United States. In spite of the rhetoric of change that characterized Obama's election, the new president soon adopted the vocabulary of the hegemonic discourse that was predominant in the years before, including the proclamation that the United States is at war and that the war can and will be won. While renewing "the *God-given* promise that all are equal, all are *free"* in his first inaugural address in 2009, the president also repeated common jargon by underlining that "[o]ur nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred."[52] One year after his inauguration, Obama repeated that: "We are at war. We are at war against al Qaeda, a far-reaching network of violence and hatred that attacked us on 9/11, that killed nearly 3,000 innocent people, and that is plotting to strike us again. And we will do whatever it takes to defeat them."[53] After only a year in office, Obama was taken hostage by a powerful structure that seemed all-pervasive.

To be fair, one must admit that Obama had never openly denounced the underlying rationale of the "War on Terror" before taking office. Instead, his criticism was more directed toward the distraction that accompanied the war against Iraq, arguing in his *Foreign Affairs* article in 2007 that "Iraq was a diversion from the fight against the terrorists who struck us on 9/11."[54] Moreover, in compliance with the sedimented practices constituting American identity in the past, Obama never dismissed the military as the major tool to solve global problems. On the contrary, in the 2007 article, he accentuated its continued significance, insisting that: "To renew American leadership in the world, we must immediately begin working to revitalize our military. A strong military is, more than anything, necessary to sustain peace."[55] A year later, at the height of his presidential campaign, Obama proved he was trapped in a hegemonic discourse that would turn the "War on Terror" into a long-term endeavor by promising to "make the fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban the top priority that it should be," at the same time vowing that "[this] is a war that we have to win."[56]

It is therefore pure speculation to insinuate that Obama's approach to the "War on Terror" was more balanced and more inclusive, as in many respects his practices have not departed from those of his predecessor. Change always rests in the dislocation of the subject and the dislocation of the structure of society. One should not expect too much from the notion of "change." The transformation of hegemonic discourses, which are always connected with powerful sedimented practices, is at most an incremental process. Two prominent policy choices taken by the Obama Administration may

substantiate the argument: First, the detention facilities at Guantánamo Bay were not closed as Obama had promised. In January 2015, 127 detainees were still imprisoned. Although this was the lowest number since the camp was opened in January 2002, it is but one example of the power of the hegemonic discourse. However, Guantánamo also illustrates well that no hegemonic discourse is ever fully deterministic. New dislocations become prominent within the discourse. The coherence of the hegemonic constellation is threatened by new questions as well as inconsistencies in the discourse, which makes new dislocations possible and social change potentially graspable.

Second, drones were continuously and extensively utilized in the new "kill-not-capture" imperative. Obama understood well that "[f]rom our use of drones to the detention of terrorist suspects, the decisions that we are making now will define the type of nation—and world—that we leave to our children."[57] This argument has been hinted at frequently on the pages of this book: There is no ontological status of the state apart from the political practices it performs. Performativity is what constitutes subjectivity. This also implies that identity is always incomplete, which gives room for novel practices that institute the social in a new way. As Trevor McCrisken has put it, "[t]he heavy reliance on drone attacks raises all sorts of questions relating to legitimacy, morality, proportionality and accountability"[58] of the United States as an actor in world politics. It is by raising such questions that the ethical dimensions of social inquiry become evident and pressing.

Although any hegemonic process is highly contingent, it might be able to persist for some time. Bush's successor Barack Obama not only inherited the practical problems that came with the "War on Terror"—such as Iraq and Afghanistan—but on a much deeper level he had to free the American people from a hegemonic discourse that made the Patriot Act, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Abu Ghraib, and Guantánamo Bay possible by naturalizing them as the only alternative to absolute chaos in world security. While an echoing press in the United States is one indicator of the continuing strength of the discourse, its power was also apparent in public opinion polls at the time of Obama's electoral victory: According to a Pew Research Survey, the protection of the nation against terrorist attacks was seen as a top foreign policy priority by 82 percent of the respondents, while promoting human rights (25%) and dealing with global climate change (43%) ranked comparatively low.[59] The hegemonic discourse seemed all-pervasive within the American society.

It must therefore be conceded that it was already hard to imagine when Obama took office that the end of the United States' Iraq presence would arrive as smoothly as promised by Obama in his election campaign. Obama's

"measured approach" on the question of troop levels in Iraq, and his threat to send US troops into Pakistan unilaterally kept us on alert. During his tenure, there were times when he blatantly copied Bush's anti-terror imagery, thereby deliberately keeping up the hegemonic discourse. In his speech announcing the death of al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in May 2011, Obama evokes the same emotions that Bush so frequently appealed to when speaking about "9/11": "And yet we know that the worst images are those that were unseen to the world. The empty seat at the dinner table. Children who were forced to grow up without their mother or their father. Parents who would never know the feeling of their child's embrace." Furthermore, Obama continues to glamorize the military and emphasizes the great progress on the way to win the "War on Terror": "Over the last 10 years, thanks to the tireless and heroic work of our military and our counterterrorism professionals, we've made great strides in that effort. We've disrupted terrorist attacks and strengthened our homeland defense." He underscores that Islam is not the target of American efforts, and even refers to his predecessor to make this argument: "I've made clear, just as President Bush did shortly after 9/11, that our war is not against Islam." Finally, the homogenization of the nation, transcendental legitimization and the usage of the empty signifier "liberty" exemplify well the power of the hegemonic discourse: "Let us remember that we can do these things not just because of wealth or power, but because of who we are: one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."[60]

Without downplaying terrorist murder in any way, Bush's as well as Obama's triumphalism has two grave implications: First, it overshadowed the great distress that the "War on Terror" has brought to many civilians in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq, where terrorism has been burgeoning in the years after September 11, 2001, and especially so after the US invasions. Second, the hegemonic discourse that was built on this vocabulary was so successful that it made people articulate the conviction that the United States would win the "War on Terror." As well known US social psychologist Jonathan Haidt put it after the killing of Osama bin Laden: "I believe that last week's celebrations were good and healthy. America achieved its goal—bravely and decisively—after 10 painful years."[61] After two and a half centuries of building the United States on the notions of "freedom," God, superiority and antagonism, one cannot expect an end of the "War on Terror" in the near future. Yet, some hope remains. Crises are omnipresent—not only in the United States—be it in the context of foreign, social, or financial policies. This reminds us of the central argument of this book: Crises, discursively articulated, are deeply engrained in identity change, and they create new discursive voids that have to be filled politically.

Conclusion

The purpose of part IV was to answer the question of how the "War on Terror" was made possible by particular discourses. By analyzing sedimented practices, the dislocation of social structures, antagonism and the institutionalization of anti-terror practices, the central nexus between crisis and change was theoretically substantiated. It was shown how the Bush Administration deliberately constructed a void in the meaning structure of national identity, subsequently filling it by assembling equivalential relations between all Americans, represented by empty signifiers and some highly credible connotations. The process was analyzed as overlexicalization in this part of the book. From the very outset of the illustration presented here, a forceful argument for the reciprocal constitutive connection between crisis and change was presented: Only by restoring the discourse of a mythical purity of the origin can a possible societal future and a sense of community and togetherness become tangible. Redemption and the prospect of a better future can best be achieved by transcendental reliance, exemplified in the American case through divine promise. That, however, does not come without dangers, as myths construct totalitarian discourses of closure, in which only one political solution is seen as legitimate. The ethical question to be raised here is whether politics is not in need of leaving aside all references to myth if it wants to be really democratic and plural. In addition, one might ask whether the rhetoric of freedom will eventually be able to unite a more heterogeneous equivalential chain that stretches beyond American borders and includes subjects that have traditionally been articulated as antagonistic.

The US government's anti-terror discourse is used as a case to strengthen the argument put forward in this study. The example illustrates the intrinsic political constitution of the social. The discourse starts to evolve long before the "events" of September 11, 2001. Subsequently, the American government, by using empty signifiers like "freedom," tried to institute a "cognitive framework" that would determine what action was appropriate and what action was inappropriate to regain a stable identity. The national crisis that the discourse produced after September 11—and which was not triggered by the "events" themselves—seemed ideal for the fruition of a binary discourse relying on a black-and-white picture of the world, based on relations of equivalence, difference, and the construction of antagonistic frontiers. The notion of the "War on Terror"—aberrant as it may still be for the many critical minds inside and outside of American society—has thereby been thoroughly normalized in the United States in the weeks, months and years after September 11, 2001. One of the major arguments of this study has thus been that politics is about the actual process of filling the empty place of

identity. This can be achieved by contingently articulating foreign policy in a particular way, and not in another.

Toward a Discourse Theory of Global Politics

Crisis and Change

This study has tried to develop a discourse theory of crisis and change in global politics. Discourse was conceptualized as coterminous with reality—in fact with a very material notion of reality. Crisis was seen as a permanent attribute of the social. It has a local dimension, in that shifting relations of difference involve particular subjects, thereby dislocating them and setting in motion new processes of subjectification. These processes embody the nexus between crisis and change: *Crisis as dislocation, difference, and incompleteness; change as the continuous but ultimately futile effort to gain a full identity.* The dislocated character of the discursive engenders the transformation of elements into moments of a discourse. Structuring and transformation take place around a nodal point or empty signifier, in the American case symbolized by the notion of "freedom."

Crucially, the local differential relation affects the global level, for every local process of subjectification affects the structure as a whole. Dislocation gains its conceptual substance from a radical notion of "difference," and differential structures are infinitely dispersed. In principle, any act of establishing new social relations involves the system as a whole. To construct a society out of dissimilar elements, some elements must be expelled from the community—a limit has to be established on contingent grounds. Contingency names the space of undecidability between the internal and the external. The analogous process of internal group formation and radical exclusion is therefore necessarily continuous, spatiotemporally provisional, and ultimately incomplete. This incompleteness and contingent character of the social represents the most important condition for democratic politics to become possible and for a theory of crisis and change to become conceivable. It is important to note that crisis and change also entail a temporal dimension, in that the political constitution of society must be conceptualized as an ongoing and never ending venture. Dislocation must essentially be conceptualized as a twofold process with an internal and an external dimension. It embodies the nucleus for social change, and it is in the concept of dislocation where crisis and change conjoin.

Furthermore, in devising a discursive theoretical framework, this book attempted to illustrate that contingency rules out direct causality, linear temporality, and secure normative foundations. Instead, it demands an understanding of the social, which rests on "difference," and in turn indicates

the elusiveness of stability, the lack of stable foundations, and the actual dislocation of seemingly fixed signification. In this new understanding, "crisis" loses its everyday meaning of a periodically occurring event. Instead, crisis in fact becomes an omnipresent feature of the social fabric. "Crisis" represents the absence of ground, of social foundation, and it rests within the subject as well as within the social whole. Where the social is confronted with its absent ground, the essentially crisis-prone and contingent character of signification can no longer be disputed. Contingency and difference work together in this logic, for while the social loses its essential character, the political comes to the forefront.

Drawing on theoretical insights presented by Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and their numerous followers and critics, identity construction becomes possible when a discourse adopts an empty signifier that is able to unite a heterogeneous number of signifiers/subjects in a chain of equivalences and draws a line between a community and a discursively articulated antagonistic Other. Constructing the outside as an antagonist secures the nation's identity by building it on anxiety and fear. Especially in a moment of crisis or discursive dislocation, sedimented practices are innovatively articulated and new political communities constructed. As could be shown, credibility entails availability, which makes it easier for subjects to identify with political projects. In the "War on Terror" discourse, President Bush unsurprisingly developed an antagonizing form of exceptionalism to reinstate the dislocated American identity. However, the Derridean argument that the dualism between the internal and external cannot be preserved, and that any system is constantly defined by the very possibility of external infiltration, also became all too evident in the analysis conducted in part IV.

In conclusion, it must be reiterated once again that the infinitude of the social brings with it a *global* character of crisis and change, which explains why the theory of crisis and change presented in this book must be understood as a theory of *global politics*. Although it might appear that the articulation of the "War on Terror" was first and foremost a domestic political project, the analysis could be readily extended to gain a truly global character. While I have used the term "War on Terror"—as it is frequently employed in the official discourse after September 11, 2001—many scholars and politicians refer to it as the "Global War on Terror" (GWOT). As Tariq Ali reminds us, "[d]omestic and foreign policies remain closely intertwined in the imperial United States."[62] One could add that this argument applies to any country in the world. In the global flow of articulatory differences, hegemony remains a contingent intervention and institutionalization must be characterized as an ongoing endeavor that continuously takes on

new forms. Were signification and institutionalization eternal and locally restricted, dislocation would be replaced by stability.

Moreover, the "event" of "9/11" was not a crisis in itself, but laid bare the profoundly dislocated character of the American as well as global society. In acknowledging the nonessential character of crisis, the book touched on the very essence of politics: Societal principles and the ontic contents of a society are politically produced by society for itself, but society does not end with politically instituted national borders. Moreover, principles are contingent, and any pretension of final closure must be witnessed with caution, for it is ideology that is veiled in the mantle of purported objectivity. Society will inescapably remain incomplete; otherwise politics would lose its substance and direction. To reiterate: If we lived in paradise, politics would come to an end.

Indubitably, this argument has serious ethical repercussions. If the empty signifier "freedom," to which the whole notion of the United States has been related again and again, and which symbolizes universality, perfection, and superiority, is continuously exploited to defend a wealthy, liberal, and Christian part of the world against a deprived, allegedly authoritarian and Muslim part, then a reconceptualization of the term may be in order. It seems as if "freedom" had gained universal authority, which—from the perspective developed in this book—represents a serious danger for democracy.

In fact, every appeal to universal concepts must in principle be seen as dangerous, for if democracy had found its final location in the categorical declaration of universal norms, democratic struggles between particularisms to temporarily gain universal significance would no longer be possible. Thus, even empty signifiers like "freedom" have grave moral dimensions; they are never impartial, but often entail subordination. This study has shown that crisis and social change in essence represent the manifestation of power relations. To summarize the main ethical argument of this study: It is only if terms like "freedom," "justice," and "democracy" serve as essentially contingent and temporary signifiers of a particular political order that the democratic promise can live up to its expectations and radical democratic change can become possible. A fixed understanding of such terms, as transported by the discourse on the "War on Terror," would only be conceivable within a fully sutured, totalitarian polity.

Alternative Paths

A book that is so full with ontological statements must address the "science question." In the present study, it should have become all too evident that the matrix of commonly depicted methodologies—neopositivism,

critical realism, analyticism, and reflexivity (see part II)—does not exhaust the methodological options of social inquiry. Maybe these four options are not even the right path to take when exploring the ways the social can be understood more thoroughly. While for many reasons outlined in the course of this book, positivism and neopositivism are of minor help in capturing contingency, dislocation, discursive articulation and ephemeral processes of subjectification, critical realism, and different forms of idealism have also been renounced as inappropriate for tackling the interplay between crisis and change. Realism focuses on the complex interplay between the material world and the ideas, norms, and discourses that result from this interplay, and idealism—in the form of a so-called mind-world monism—highlights the relationship between ideas and the material world. Both ignore the fundamentally constitutive and generative power of discourses. As argued repeatedly in this book, the notion of "crisis" has its roots in a social science that puts the "mind" at center stage of its metatheoretical orientation. In contrast, "dislocation" refers to a social science beyond the mind. Thus, one could state that the failure to come to terms with the transformation of global social structure in the field of traditional IR is mainly due to a dualist *and* monist orientation in the leading journals and books.

Against calls for methodological and theoretical pluralism, it was seen as a primary task to develop a theory of crisis and change that for the most part relied on one theoretical school—dubbed "poststructuralism" in this book. I maintained that if poststructuralism is about anything, it is about *crisis and change*. This, it can be argued here, made conceptual clarity easier to achieve and orientation in a complex theoretical field a little less painful. However, the exclusion of alternative views makes theorizing an easy target for critique. In fact, the main theoretical source for part III, Ernesto Laclau, has been criticized on different grounds, for example, for privileging the universal over the particular—as one self-interested actor temporarily represents the society as a whole—and for its ambiguous notion of the subject or the absence of any normative prescriptions on how to engage in emancipatory struggles.

Some observers criticize the prioritization of the universal over the particular as a violation of the pluralist conception of democracy as put forward by Chantal Mouffe in her single-authored work, or as implied in the final chapter of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.[63] According to Mouffe, the democratic task consists in the recognition of similarities over and above differences in order to institute a pluralist *demos*. To that end, a democratic community cannot be founded on an inflated particular but has to be devoid of any content. It is this emptiness of Laclau's universalist project that has been called into doubt by some observers. Once the *res publica* is established and the common concern materialized in this way, Mouffe sees

democratic citizens as "friendly enemies," and antagonism is transformed into constructive *agonism*.[64] However, the gap between Laclau and Mouffe narrows in their treatment of universalism as an impure void. As I attempted to illustrate in part IV of this study, neither Laclau's universalist concept nor Mouffe's democratic pluralism can be fully instantiated, and the collective identity of a society can never reach ultimate closure. In both cases, a political community can only be constructed on the grounds of a hegemonic reinterpretation of sedimented practices. The illusion of universalism in Laclau's case and radical plural democracy in Mouffe's instance always remain a future promise. The myth of purity, in the case of the United States, is simultaneously articulated as lost origin and future promise.

Another allegation must be addressed here: If, as seemingly put forward in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* by its focus on subject positions, structure is given precedence over social subjectivities, then we supposedly lose our capacity to account for structural change and end up with a conservative bias as seen in Wendt's work. I maintained in this book that for change to become conceivable, a theory must account for the possibility of subjects being an effect of structure, but at the same time it must leave at least some leverage for subjects to identify with positions in an incomplete structure. This is the simple but *sine qua non* requirement of any social theory, and it is developed extensively by Laclau in his later, single-authored work. In this work, the subject is not only differentially constituted within a structure, but fails to represent the subject position the structure provides. Subjects are not seen as the origin of structure in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. Elements are turned into moments by means of articulatory practices, thereby creating some kind of determinism. The question that arises refers to the source of the articulation. Obviously, we are looking for "[a] subject lacking full identity, but with enough identity to perform an act of articulation that results in its own transformation [...] What is needed is a conception of the subject as subject, object and product of articulatory practice."[65] If this requirement is fulfilled, which is not the case in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, the subject performatively constructs its own identity by means of articulation. This, as has been illustrated in part IV, requires an at least tentative introduction of a moment of decision into the structure of articulatory differences. An openness of structure has to be presupposed to make this argument, and the decision's function is to bring a certain closure to the open structure. In Laclau's understanding of the ethical, the ontological function of finality cannot be predetermined, and the actual ontic content can thus only be temporary. A conflation between the ontological surface and the ontic instantiation must be avoided for an ethical decision to become possible at all, a preestablished normative content in the sense of Habermas, which falls outside of the domain of the political, is seen as endangering the ethical project. The only

limit of radical democracy comes with the sedimented practices that have so prominently treated in part IV of this book. The question of the subject and the question of the ethical are connected in this argument, for "the subject who takes the decision is only partially a subject; he is also a background of sedimented practices organizing a normative framework which operates as a limitation on the horizon of options."[66] Against this background, it becomes clearer why the notion of sedimented practices has fared so prominently in the illustrative part IV, as it is directly and reciprocally related to dislocation, antagonism, and institutionalization. These four elements constitute the main elements of a discourse theory of global politics as proposed in this book.

The relationship between these elements can be understood as follows: Due to antagonistic relationships, the structure is always incomplete and thus dislocated. By reference to the act of identification, the subject strives for an illusionary closure of the structure and its own identity. This identity, however, is partial and only materialized in sedimented social practices. Through repetitive acts of identification with those practices, the illusion of a stable identity can be strengthened or reorganized. Yet, any identity remains subject to antagonism and cannot escape the dislocated structure. Dislocation and structural undecidability again set in motion a permanent struggle for closure and search for identity through identification. Without some degree of sedimentation of structures, though, the subject would be completely disoriented and action would be directionless.

All in all, I hope it is legitimate to conclude that the theory of crisis and change proposed here was successful in merging structuralism with contingency, as well as structural condition and the need for subjectification. A number of analogous views to that offered here exist. Although, for example, Foucault's understanding of discourse differs fundamentally from the one presented here, his thinking about knowledge and power bears some resemblance with what we term hegemony, with both theoretical strands aiming to

> ascertain the possibility of a new politics of truth [...]. It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power), but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time.[67]

However, as Foucault's conceptual toolbox diverges from the one presented here, a broad discussion of Foucault was seen as excessive. The "ethos of permanent critique" that Foucault introduced is the only way of moving

forward with radical democracy and an ethical society. Future work on crisis and change in global politics will have to incorporate a more thoroughly developed ethical stance than could possibly be developed within this book. This stance—given the ontological horizon developed here—will stand in stark contrast to Jürgen Habermas's model of "deliberative democracy," most elegantly developed in his two-volume "Theory of Communicative Action" *(Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns)*.[68] While both the approach offered here and Habermas's theory claim to present a particular version of "radical democracy," avoid reducing the political process to the expression of exogenously formed interests and identities, and highlight their constitution and reconstitution through "debate in the public sphere," I would contend—contra Habermas—that any final reconciliation, in terms of complete rationality, is unattainable. In company with Laclau and Mouffe, I would argue, first, that conflict and division are essential elements of a functioning democracy; to think otherwise would put the whole democratic project at risk; and second, that no social agent could ever claim to institute a rational society free of constituting power relations. Universality is deeply contingent; any form of consensus, thus, has to be seen as the result of a hegemonic articulation, which is never total and always threatened by an "outside," antagonistic social force. Consequently, Laclau, in company with Judith Butler and Slavoj Žižek, distances himself from Habermas's conjecture of universality as a premise of the speech act and his assumption that politics is constituted by rational actors.[69] Any universality remains contaminated by particularity and therefore deeply political. According to the theory of hegemony, the concept of the universal cannot be considered under the rubric of dialogical consensus in Habermas's sense.

Where Laclau and Habermas differ is the way the "common ground" of a society is reached, which has important repercussions for the theory of crisis and change developed in this book. The theoretical choice is between dialogical consensus and hegemonization. While I followed Laclau in pointing to the collection of sedimented practices that makes up the normative order of a certain society, Habermas argues that legitimate norms are those that incorporate generalizable interests. In that respect, Laclau's argument of universalism as always permeated by particularism seems closer to what the analysis in part IV demonstrated. Habermas himself concedes that his model is an ideal-type version of deliberative democracy and that empirical investigations will have to consider aspects of power more thoroughly.[70] Moreover, while Habermas focuses on procedural aspects of deliberation, Laclau offers a model of politics as based on struggle and competition between societal actors, with concepts like the "empty signifier" implying a move away from procedures to actual argumentation.

While agreeing with Laclau on his differences with Habermas, Butler questions the logic of Laclau's theory on another ground, that is, "why [one should] conceive of universality as an empty 'place' which awaits its content in an anterior and subsequent event."[71] On the question of "[h]ow empty can empty be?"[72] Laclau asserts that an empty signifier is never "an absolutely empty signifier," specifying that

> universality attainable though equivalential logics will always be a universality contaminated by particularity. There is not, strictly speaking, a signifier which is truly empty, but one which is only tendentially so.[73]

It is easy to agree with Laclau that "the 'good' articulation, the one that would finally suture the link between universal task and concrete historical forces, will never be found."[74] It is, however, also worth asking where the particular that contaminates every universal has actually gone. Has the empty signifier been converted into something new, surpassed, or surmounted by new meanings?

Hence, finally, it is necessary to note that Laclau's theory initially rested on several simplifying assumptions. Most significantly, the logics of equivalence and difference take a stable antagonistic frontier within society for granted. Laclau seems well aware of this obvious shortcoming, as he starts to discuss the notion of *heterogeneity* more broadly in his later work to dispose of the static assertion of a binary opposition. Social heterogeneity must not be conflated with difference, as Laclau insists. While difference requires "a space within which that difference is representable, [...] heterogeneity presupposes the absence of that common space."[75] It is to be understood as exterior to a space of representation, not as exterior to something within that representational space. Antagonism rests on heterogeneity, and "without heterogeneity, there would be no antagonism either."[76] Finally, because there is strong heterogeneity in any society, the "community" has to be continuously reinvented. Empty signifiers hence appear in a new light, as they serve the task of combining heterogeneous demands in an equivalential chain. This process is *the* necessary ingredient of the political. The social will always remain heterogeneous, and no collective identity can ever be pregiven, as with the working class in Marxism, but must be the result of the political articulation of dissimilar elements into chains of equivalences. Remembering Heidegger and his claim that difference must be prioritized over identity—a claim that was introduced in part II of this book—then Laclau's argument points in the same direction, that is, that the relations between particular elements take ontological priority over the intrinsic value of the elements themselves.

In this book, the theory of hegemony was therefore, from an early stage onward, complemented by insights from the Derridean notions of *différance* and deconstruction. It was argued that there always remains a part of the people that resists symbolic integration, which is infiltrated and contaminated by Others. Society is characterized by a degree of complexity that defies homogenization. In consequence, every hegemonic process will be threatened by heterogeneity, which is not purely "outside" but part of a complex game of social interaction and mutual subversion. In a pure binary opposition, the border between inside and outside would be immobile and the social would lose its undecidable character. The floating of certain signifiers would become unimaginable. In a hegemonic operation, the opposite is true. Frontiers are highly unstable and mobile, and the hegemonic process proceeds through the construction of new frontiers.

As to deconstruction, one has to concede that Laclau actually aims to combine it with his discourse theory. While deconstruction is about retracting differences by demonstrating that they are invalid, discourse analysis provides deconstruction with differences to be deconstructed; however, deconstruction serves as the basis for hegemonic discourses:

> Hegemony requires deconstruction: without the radical structural undecidability that the deconstructive intervention brings about, many strata of social relations appear as essentially linked by necessary logics and there would be nothing to hegemonise. But deconstruction also requires hegemony, that is, a theory of the decision taken in an undecidable terrain: without a theory of decision, that distance between structural undecidability and actuality would remain untheorised.[77]

Hegemony therefore moves deconstruction into the realm of politics. While deconstruction focuses on structural undecidability, Laclau supplies us with a theory of the decision in undecidable spheres.

Due to undecidability and radical contingency, in a discourse as it is defined here, any teleological drive of the system remains elusive. While in the field of IR, Wendt sees a world state as "inevitable" but confesses that "the speed with which this one will be realized is historically contingent,"[78] I would dispute, on the one hand, an inherent finalistic logic, accentuating instead the discursive process by which certain regularities establish differential positions. Any position in this system of differential positions can become the locus of an antagonistic relationship, creating, on the other hand, numerous chains of equivalence. On that basis, structural *change* within a crisis-prone society becomes possible, or more bluntly, change is a constantly working mechanism deeply ingrained in any society, as no identity is closed

in itself but is submitted to continuous displacements in terms of combinations and substitutions, contamination and subversion. Thus, an answer to the question of *how it is possible to conceptualize the "crisis of the social," and how we can best understand the relationship between crisis and social change* must necessarily center on the discourse theoretical notions of sedimented practices, dislocation, antagonism, and institutionalization.

Notes

Introduction

1. It will become clearer in the course of this book that subjects lack intrinsic qualities but are produced—like linguistic signifiers—in structures of relational differences. Subjects must not be reduced to human beings. Any signifier produced in a structure of relations can be conceptualized as a subject (e.g., the nouns "Islam" and "Europe" or the adjectives "good," "bad," and "evil"). See, in particular, chapter 4.
2. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 153. In IR, the first comprehensive summary of this argument was offered by Edkins 1999: Ch. 1; see also Pin-Fat 2010: 25–26, and Christine Sylvester's claim from an IR feminist perspective, "that everything is political" (2013: 310). Compare this with Sergei Prozorov's discussion of the question "Why not everything is political" (2014b: Ch. 6). The tradition in IR to differentiate the political from other domains of the social is connected with Hans Morgenthau's theoretical efforts; see Morgenthau 1948: 3–16; for a prioritization of the political, see Walker 2010. Outside IR, this differentiation was prominently introduced by Carl Schmitt; for a broad discussion of the notion of *the political*, see Marchart 2007.
3. Foucault 1970: 312–317.
4. For this kind of rethinking of the term, see the widely employed textbook: Edkins and Zehfuss 2009; cf. also the critical stance with regards to the notion of the "international" taken in Guillaume 2011. In addition, see Walker 2010, who differentiates between "international politics and a politics of the world"; finally Campbell 1998: 38, for a definition of "global politics."
5. The study follows the example of Didier Bigo and R. B. J. Walker 2007: 725, who problematize the notion of the "international" from a political sociological perspective.
6. The term "dislocation" has its origin in material science, where it is understood as a crystallographic defect, or irregularity, within a crystal structure. In this perspective, dislocations generate severe influences on the whole structure of materials.

1 Crisis

1. Gunnell 1998: 4.
2. Habermas 1986 [1968]: 3; for a critique of epistemology, see Richard Rorty's famous penultimate chapter in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), in which he depicts the death of epistemology; for a comprehensive summary of the philosophy of science in IR, see Chernoff 2005.
3. For this discussion, see also Bigo and Walker 2007; Bartelson 1995 and 2004.
4. Gallie 1955; also Wendt 2003: 289, who characterizes IR as "a field in which almost everything is contested."
5. It has to be stressed at this point that Marxism is far from representing a homogeneous body of thought. Therefore, disputes and contradictions are prevalent in Marxist thinking. A comprehensive overview can be found in Jay 1984. Note here that according to Marxist theorizing, "social action takes place against the background of social structures that preexist the individual as agent" (Edkins 1999: 34, also 35–37).
6. Marx and Engels 1848; for a brief, yet precise and insightful discussion of Marxist conceptions of structure, see Keohane 1984: 41–46.
7. *Capital* Vol. III Part III: "The Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall," Ch. 15: Exposition of the Internal Contradictions of the Law: I. General, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894-c3/ch15.htm [June 10, 2014].
8. Marx 1844.
9. For an analysis of Gramsci's work, see the volume edited by Martin 2002, and Norval 1996: 219–222; for an excellent overview of Marxist crisis theories, see the classic work by Mattick 1981, as well as Sablowski 2012; see also Benjamin Kunkel's analysis of David Harvey's crisis theory (Kunkel 2014). A number of IR theorists have relied on market analogies, most prominently Kenneth Waltz (1979), who argues that the international system—comparable to the market—is characterized by anarchy and a lack of coordination.
10. This argument may be depicted as reflecting the tenor of Bidet and Kouvelakis' volume on the crisis of Marxism; see Bidet and Kouvelakis 2008; see also Newman 2005: Ch. 3.
11. Most prominently: Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 2001; but see also Tormey and Townshend 2006: 2–9 and Ch. 4.
12. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 164) explain with regards to contingency: "forms become contingent, organs are no longer anything more than intensities that are produced, flows, thresholds, and gradients. 'A' stomach, 'an' eye, 'a' mouth: the indefinite article does not lack anything; it is not indeterminate or undifferentiated, but expresses the pure determination of intensity, intensive difference. The indefinite article is the conductor of desire."
13. For a discussion, see Hudis 2013.
14. Marx 1877, italics added.
15. This argument was emphasized by Hudis 2013: 87; see also Tormey and Townshend 2006: 54–55. Later philosophical discussions can, for instance, be found in American *pragmatism*: "It is the beginning of wisdom to realize

that what *we* take to be intuitive, natural, obvious, or universal may not be so at all but is only one historical social possibility among several alternatives" (Bernstein 1983: 105).

16. Agar 2006: 159, also 177–178.

17. For Marx's epistemology, see Kain 1986; on Kant, see Agar 2006: 71–116; on Hegel, see Agar 2006: 117–158.

18. Derrida 1994: 188; on the issue of "undecidability," see also Campbell 1998: 19 and 65; Zehfuss 2002: 201–202, Hansen 2006: 21, Edkins 1999: 5, Uzuner 2010 and Walker 2010: 16, whose focus "is to draw attention to the contradictory, antagonistic, aporetic or radically undecidable character of the most consequential principles enabling modern political life."

19. Derrida 1994: 188.

20. Derrida 1994: 189.

21. While in his monograph *A Realist Theory of Science*, Bhaskar (1975 [1978]) dubs his theory "transcendental realism," he later introduces the label "critical naturalism" (1979 [1998]), which has led to the commonly used combination of "critical realism." In this book, the social science version of Roy Bhaskar's philosophical realism will be called critical realism, while the terms philosophical and scientific realism will be used interchangeably, as Alexander Wendt (1999) and Colin Wight (2006) label their approach scientific realism. See also Kurki 2008: 168.

22. See Kurki (2008: 7), who treats ideas and reasons as "unobservable causes."

23. Most prominently Wendt 1999.

24. For example, Laclau 2014: 133–134.

25. See, for instance, Bidet (2008: 16–17), who contends that: "It is at this global level of the system and its development that the conditions for globalisation, neoliberal policy, the resistance to them, and the movement for an alternative globalisation are to be analysed. It is also at this total systemic level that the ecological crisis provoked by capitalism is most obvious, particularly as a result of the refusal of the leading powers to abandon the logic of profit, which is also a logic of the ineluctable destruction of the nature around us." See also Tormey and Townshend 2006: 19–20.

26. Engels 1880. For a detailed scrutiny of Marxism's perspectives on the environment, see, for instance, Foster 2000, Burkett 2009, and Williams 2010.

27. Williams 2010: 176, who also discusses Marx's analysis of the nexus between capitalism and environmental destruction by quoting the *Capital* at length: "Capitalist production [. . .] disturbs the metabolic interaction between man and the earth, i.e., it prevents the return to the soil of its constituent elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; hence it hinders the operation of the eternal condition for the lasting fertility of the soil" (*Capital*, Vol. 1: 637).

28. For a discussion, see Williams 2010: 80–81.

29. Habermas 1995a and 1995b; Rawls 1971; for an in-depth discussion, see Shapcott 2001; for a utilization of Habermas's discourse ethics in IR, see Linklater 1997; for a discussion of "universalism," see Pin-Fat 2010.

30. Bidet 2008: 13–14.
31. Pollock 1933.
32. For a broader discussion, see Leysens 2008: 75–76 and Ashley 1986; for an in-depth analysis of the state's role in global crises, see Bauman and Bordoni 2014.
33. Bidet 2008: 3, 6.
34. Herrera 2008: 215; also Buzan and Hansen 2009: 125; classically, see Immanuel Wallerstein's *World System Theory* (as an overview: Wallerstein 2000).
35. For such an argument, see Bartelson 2004: 115.
36. See, for example, Deppe 2012; Williams 2010: 14 and Ch. 7.
37. See Mouffe 2000: 119–120.
38. Bidet 2008: 17.
39. For a path-breaking treatment of sociological perspectives on crisis and change, see Alexander 2003. See Badiou 2005, as a *pars pro toto* of nondeterministic work.
40. Hermann 1969: 414; see also Vasquez and Mansbach 1983: 267, who are greatly influenced by Hermann's definition.
41. Hermann and Brady 1972, Robinson 1970, and McCormick 1978.
42. McCormick 1978: 354.
43. McCormick 1978: 356.
44. McCormick 1978: 356.
45. Allison and Zelikow 1999. Some work in the field bears the term "crisis" in their title, yet make no attempt at defining it at all; see, for instance, Brown 2004 looks at contemporary crisis from a strict empirical standpoint but takes an established and commonly accepted meaning of the concept for granted; similarly, see Pepinsky 2012.
46. Allison and Zelikow 1999: 3.
47. Allison and Zelikow 1999: 7.
48. Gilpin 1981: 1; for a comment see Vasquez and Mansbach 1983: 257–258, as well as Koslowski and Kratochwil 1994: 215–216, and George 1994: 127–129.
49. Gilpin 1981: 12.
50. Gilpin 1981: 46; for the causal connection between crisis and war see also Holsti 1996: Ch. 2.
51. Brecher and Wilkenfeld 1982: 381.
52. Wilkenfeld et al. 2005; see also Asal and Beardsley's (2007) focus on crisis behavior and the definition of crisis solely on the basis of the use of violence, as well as He's (2013) long-term analysis of foreign policy crises, Gartzke and Hewitt (2010) on the impact of political and economic regime type on crisis intensity, finally Starr and Thomas (2002) on conflictual and cooperative border politics. Three other institutes are engaged in crisis management research from an actor-based perspective: the Crisis Management Research and Training (CRISMART) program at the Swedish National Defence College, the Crisis Research Center at Leiden University, and the Transboundary Crisis Management Working Group at Syracuse University; for an overview of their

research see the *International Studies Review* forum on "Managing crisis in the 21st Century" (Dayton 2004). For critical remarks, see Weldes 1999b.

53. See, for example, Akbaba et al. (2006: 230), who formulate their research questions in the following way: "Why do some states stay out of crisis mode while others do not? Under what conditions will one side perceive a threat but not trigger that perception in the opposing state? In such one-sided crises, what are the substantively important features that emerge regarding violence, outcomes, and subsequent levels of tension? This study seeks answers to these questions in hope of potentially valuable discoveries about the sequencing of crisis decisions, ultimately in an effort to advance the research on crisis behavior, most notably as related to escalation, outcomes, and legacy."

54. Brecher 1984: 239 (italics in original).

55. Brecher and Wilkenfeld 2000: 3–5; see also Brecher 1984.

56. The project defines "the degree of violence observed" (Akbaba 2006: 231) and criticizes case studies, for "often these observations do not lead to generalizable understandings" (Wilkenfeld et al. 2005: 5).

57. See, for example, Stern 1999 and the excellent summary of crisis decision-making literature in Stern 2003. For further summaries, see Boin 2004, as well as Kouzmin and Jarman 2004, who focus on "crisis management."

58. See Booth 2007: 403–418, who speaks of "decisional crisis."

59. Siniver 2008: 16–17.

60. Doran 1991.

61. Leng 1993, Doran 1991 and Hebron and James 1997.

62. Robinson 1972: 27.

63. Hay 1996: 424.

64. Hay 2005.

65. Hay 1996: 424; see also Vasquez and Mansbach 1983, for a focus on "perceptions," as well as Peterson and Venteicher 2013.

66. Hay 1996: 425.

67. Hay 1996: 427.

68. Hay 1999.

69. See, for example, Holland 2013, Min 2007 and Olson and Gawronski 2010. Interestingly, this argument also applies to constructivist work. For instance, Janice Bially Mattern maintains in her study on the Suez Crisis that "key British and American statesmen responded to each other's confrontational and highly divisive dissent by using representational force to trap each other into complying with the status quo narrative of their friendship" (Bially Mattern 2001: 351).

70. Hay 2002: 127.

71. Wallerstein 2010: 133.

72. Birkland 2004. Others, like Stephen Walt, have called it "the most rapid and dramatic change in the history of U.S. foreign policy" (Walt 2001: 56).

73. Widmaier, Blyth, and Seabrooke 2007: 748; italics in original; for an explanation of "intersubjectivity," see, for example, Kratochwil 1989: 229.

74. Widmaier, Blyth, and Seabrooke 2007: 748; italics in original.
75. For such a perspective, see Alexander 2003: 126; for a discussion of the notion of the "event," see Marchart 2007: 2–3, Lundborg 2012, and Badiou 2005: 187–201; for an insightful discussion of "meaning structures", see Fierke 2013.
76. Widmaier, Blyth, and Seabrooke 2007: 749.
77. Widmaier, Blyth, andSeabrooke 2007: 750.
78. Widmaier, Blyth, and Seabrooke 2007: 751. Other authors make a similar distinction between "real and perceived" crises. See, for example, Badie 2011.
79. Widmaier and Park 2012: 123.
80. A number of contributions published after the turn of the millennium offer valuable insights into foreign policy decision-making, but say less about crisis. See, for example, Brulé 2005, Boin and Rhinard 2008. Other contributions, such as Davies and Johns 2013, stay on the empirical level and do not make an effort to define different sorts of crisis. Instead, their "crisis types" are (1) nuclear proliferation among rogue states and (2) British soldiers taken hostage by terrorists. In fact, nothing is said about crisis types at a more general level. For an analysis of social power, see Ham 2010: 1–23.
81. Hay 2013: 23.
82. Bernstein 1976: xiii, Bernstein 1983: 77; cf. also Evans 2013: 7, who refers to French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty to make a similar point.
83. All those mostly French theorists since the Second World War who have been inspired by or who have critiqued the structural linguistics developed by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure are summed up under the label poststructuralism in this book, the most important being Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault. Later theorists such as the Argentine political theorist Ernesto Laclau broadly fall into the same strand of theorizing. For a great discussion of dislocation see Newman 2001; for an overview of postructuralist or "postmodern" work in IR, see George 1994: 29–34, Diez 2006 and Herschinger 2011: Ch. 1; for a discussion of the term "poststructuralism," see Mackenzie 2001 and Edkins 1999; for an analysis of "essentialism" as an ontological category, see Behr 2014: Ch. 1.3. The broadest discussion of these issues and their link to global politics was perhaps offered by Edkins 1999, later by Walker 2010.
84. Classically, see Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998; for an extension of the argument, see Buzan and Waever 2009.
85. Weldes 1996, 1999a, 1999b.
86. Weldes 1999a: 37. For a clarification of the notion of the "event," see chapter 7 of this study.
87. The term "sedimentation" in the context of social reality goes back to Husserl's distinction between *sedimentation* and *reactivation*; for a discussion, see Laclau 2014: 122–123. The term "sedimentation" is later employed by Berger and Luckmann (1966: 85–88). As Zehfuss (2002: 199–200) explains with reference to Derrida: "This implies, however, that each event which is said to determine

structures or meaning must itself already be determined by yet prior events." See also Edkins 1999: 5.

88. Walker 2010, in particular 31–35; for a discussion of spatiotemporality, see also Prozorov 2011.

89. Diken and Lautsen 2005: 68; 161. These analyses might be traced back to Carl Schmitt's *Ausnahmezustand* ("state of exception"), which refers to a temporal interruption of the order of things; see, for example, Marchart 2007: 52–55.

90. Kessler 2012: 275.

91. Brassett and Clarke 2012.

92. See Kiersey 2011, for a discussion. There is thus a great deal of uncertainty in such systems: "Intense disagreement over what is happening, who should be in charge, and what needs to be done is a major feature of ill-structured problems" (Mitroff, Alpaslan and Green 2004: 176).

93. Croft 2006. Recent contributions have also added insights on the nexus between economic crisis and trauma, and the role of gender in constructing the crisis; see Brassett and Clarke 2012, and Prügl 2012. For a good introduction to "critical security studies," see Peoples and Vaughan-Williams (2010).

94. Croft 2006: 2.

95. The relationship between crisis and uneven development is aptly summarized in his study: "Uneven development is not only significant with regard to the shifting and unstable distribution of material power, but also because it gives rise to an organic tendency toward crisis within capitalist development through: (i) the way in which the cumulative effects of the profit drives of individual firms can lead to either overaccumulation or unsustainable sources of demand and (ii) the difficulties and tensions of managing uneven development within and across different territorial jurisdictions highlighted in the outbreak of the 2008–2009 crisis" (Saull 2012: 327).

96. Saull (2012: 328) maintains from a neo-Gramscian perspective that, "a single state is hegemonic only to the extent that it is at the center of the dominant mode of (capital) accumulation and is able to draw in other states and societies into participating in this mode of accumulation."

97. See, among others, Michael Dillon's Derrida-inspired contribution on the "force of transformation," in Dillon 2013; also R. B. J. Walker's scattered but intriguing remarks on the notion of "crisis" in *After the Globe, Before the World*, in which he suggests that boundary-creating clichés "are always liable to be activated in moments of stress, of crisis, of emergency; at times when their crass over-simplifications, their polarized appeal to both a radical conservatism and an apocalyptic revolutionism works so as to mobilize acquiescence in the necessity of drawing lines, or of their erasure" (Walker 2010); see also Alexander (2003: 125–126) for a comparable discussion of contingency in "discursive structures". Finally, see Evans (2013) for a brilliant analysis of politics of the exception, "imaginaries of threat" and the notion of the "event."

98. Wallerstein 2010: 140.

99. Dobry 1986 and 2005.

2 Change

1. For a discussion of Aristotle's understanding of cause, see Kurki 2008: 27–28. Kurki (2008: 31–32) also highlights the significance of "efficient causes" in the work of René Descartes. See also Ferguson and Mansbach's (2004) differentiation of "permissive" and "compelling" causes in their chapter on "Technology and change." For an explicit privileging of "agency" in a theory of change, see Shaw (2000: 17), who "asserts the role of conscious human agency in global transformation."

2. See Maliniak et al. 2012 for details in method and for the following data.

3. The term "realism" is not defined in the questionnaire. For example, it remains unclear whether the term refers to classical or structural realism. Among others, Germany, Japan, Russia and China are excluded from the survey, which means that a number of very active IR communities had no impact on its results.

4. Own survey, conducted on August 10, 2012, at scholar.google.de. Due to the lack of a widely acknowledged ranking of the most influential IR books from the last 30 years, I tried to approximate this myself by checking the amount of quotations on scholar.google.com. As a starting point and reference I took the 20 most influential authors from the 2011 TRIP Study (Maliniak et al. 2012), which surveyed about 7,000 individuals in IR faculties around the world. From there on I added books that I personally found most interesting in IR and global studies, and which were not mentioned in the survey. I produced a list of about 50 books. The list is by no means intended to be exhaustive, but nevertheless it gives us an idea about the works in IR in relation to other influential works.

5. Waltz 1959: 29.

6. Waltz 1979: 81.

7. Waltz 1959: 231.

8. Waltz 1979: 78.

9. Waltz 1959: 232. For an early critique, see Ashley 1986; in later statements, see George 1994: 118–127 and Waever 2009.

10. For a broad discussion of structure, see Waltz 1979: Ch. 5.

11. Cox 1981: 134.

12. Waltz 1979: 70.

13. Dessler 1989; also Drulák 2001: 364; for a discussion, see Wight 2006: 79–80 and 91–99.

14. See, for instance, Gilpin 1981: 85–86; for a similar take, see Ikenberry (2014: 1), who contends that: "The global system is in the midst of a great transformation. The distribution of power is shifting."

15. Gilpin 1981: 2, also 11.

16. Gilpin 1981: 29.

17. Gilpin 1981: 88.

18. Gilpin 1981: 211. Thus, as Barry Buzan (2014: 234) concludes in his critique of Gilpin's work: "Ironically, given the book's title, it is only about change within

the essentially realist story of endless continuity shaped by the material rise and decline of great powers in a context of a competitive anarchic structure mediated by the legitimate use of war."

19. Cox 1981: 131–132.
20. Morgenthau 1948: 7.
21. Morgenthau 1948: 7.
22. Morgenthau 1948: 17. It is exactly at this point where "a close examination of Morgenthau's discussion quickly reveals that power and interest are actually remarkably flexible and indeterminate concepts" (Williams 2005: 107).
23. See chapter 3 for a detailed analysis of "mind-world monism."
24. Morgenthau 1948: 21.
25. Morgenthau 1948: 18.
26. Morgenthau 1948: 20.
27. Morgenthau (1948; parts eight and nine).
28. Morgenthau 1948: 455; for a discussion Morgenthau in this context, see Pin-Fat 2010: Ch. 3.
29. Morgenthau 1948: 456.
30. Morgenthau 1947: 12.
31. Morgenthau 1947: 14. "It is therefore a vital—practical as well as intellectual—concern of the middle classes to avoid outside interference, especially violent interference, with the delicate mechanics of the social and economic system, which stands for the rationality of the world at large" (Morgenthau 1947: 48–49).
32. See Keohane 1984, also Keohane 1981.
33. Keohane 1984: 56.
34. "The actors are located in structures of power that provide incentives for action, by affecting the payoffs of various strategies" (Keohane 2002: 13); classically also Keohane 1984: 182–183.
35. Keohane 2002: 43.
36. See, in particular, the critique formulated by Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986.
37. The turn from rationalism to constructivism is often associated with Kratochwil 1989, Onuf 1989, and Wendt 1987; for a discussion of critical theory, see Cox and Sinclair 1996.
38. Wendt 1999. The centrality of ideas is equally acknowledged by other critical realists. For instance, Wight (2006: 56), writing about "conceptions," maintains that: "It is important when discussing this issue that the centrality of agents' ideas and concepts is not lost." Later, Wight (2006: 57) adds that: "Unlike the natural sciences, however, the object studied by social science includes ideas; people act in accordance with ideas." For a discourse analysis centering on "ideas," see also Sjöstedt (2007: 235), who discusses "policies that consist of specific ideas directed toward one single issue."
39. In IR, culture is often seen as consisting of ideas, norms, and identities of a group of social actors in a particular place and time (Crawford 2002: 6, 59 and Wendt 1999: 140–142). For a discussion, Nabers 2005, 2006.

40. This, at times, leads to confusing and contradictory statements. Compare, for instance, the following two claims, in which the material substance is first regarded as unimportant, then as decisive for international political outcomes: (1) "the role of the material base in international politics is relatively small, even if it remains essential for preserving a causal theory of reference" (Wendt 1999: 73); (2) "Not all Others are 'significant' Others. But where there is an imbalance of relevant material capability social acts will tend to evolve in the direction favored by the more powerful" (Wendt 1999: 331). See also Shaw (2000), who sees "ideas" as mental products.
41. This argument is in need of extensive development. It cannot be sufficiently expounded in a section on the "flaws" of constructivism. Instead, I will deal with it in the following sections.
42. Wendt 1999: Ch. 6; cf. also Wendt 2003. Norms are commonly defined as "collective expectations about proper behavior for a given identity" (Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein 1996: 54). Their strength is a function of the extent to which they are shared by the units in a social system (Boekle, Rittberger and Wagner 1999). Norms constitute actors' identities and interests, delineate collective goals and prescribe or proscribe behavior.
43. Wendt 1999: Ch. 6.
44. Wendt 1999: 337
45. For a critique cf. Herborth 2004, Brglez 2001, Smith 2000, Suganami 2001, Zehfuß 1998, and Zehfuss 2002.
46. Alker 2000: 146.
47. Drulák 2001: 371–373.
48. Wendt 1999: 328.
49. Wendt 1999: 315, 339.
50. Wendt 1999: 42, 188; for a comment: Herborth 2004.
51. Wendt 1999: 330–331, also 327.
52. Wendt 1999: 331.
53. Wendt 1999: Ch. 7
54. Wendt 1999: 84
55. Zehfuß 1998 and Zehfuss 2002.
56. Wendt 2003: 495. At a prominent widely quoted place in his *Social Theory*, Wendt even underlines the inextricable link between identities, culture, and discourse: "Thinking depends logically on social relations, not just causally. Human beings think through culture. And since the structure of shared beliefs is ultimately a linguistic phenomenon, this means that language does not merely mediate thinking, it makes thinking possible" (Wendt 1999: 175).
57. For such a view, see Wendt 2003. Cf. also the conceptualization of social change in differentiation theory, introduced to IR by Buzan and Albert 2010.
58. Buzan and Albert 2010.
59. Adler 2005: 13.
60. Adler 2005: 21.

61. "In order for an interaction to succeed, in the sense that actors bring their beliefs enough into line that they can play the same game, each side tries to get the other to see things its way. [...] This ability will vary from case to case and dyad to dyad. Not all Others are "significant" Others. But where there is an imbalance of relevant material capability social acts will tend to evolve in the direction favored by the more powerful" (Wendt 1999: 331).

62. Adler 2005: 14, 25. For a critique of the notion of "speech act," which is directly related to intentionality and a dualism between action and state of the "world," see Zehfuss 2002: Ch. 5.

63. See also Oran Young's differentiation between *structural*, *entrepreneurial*, and *intellectual* leadership (Young 1991). First, leadership is essentially relational; structural leadership aims at translating relative power capabilities into bargaining leverage by making use of material threats and promises. Forming effective coalitions can be crucial in this process. Second, a leader will be able to act as agenda setter, showing innovative solutions to overcome deadlocks or operate as broker to gain support for salient solutions. Third, leadership is a reflective process, necessitating a deliberative process of exchanging arguments. It implies the "power of ideas to shape the intellectual capital available to those engaged in institutional bargaining."

64. In Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde's excellent *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, the authors stick to a realist concept of discourse, in which threats are sometimes "unambiguous and immediate" and therefore evolve outside of discourse; see Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde (1998: 30). Furthermore, the notion of "intersubjectivity," which their analysis relies on, does not seem to be mediated by discourse. Another indication for these realist tendencies is the introduction of "referent objects," understood as "things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival." Another such approach is presented by Nicholas Onuf's *World of our Making* (1989), which departs from Wittgenstein and highlights the significance of performativity, only then to continue by stressing the role of material reality as a constraint on discursive constructions. An example of later constructivist work is Pouliot's *International Security in Practice*, which builds on the argument that "meanings are never fixed or static but always part of a dialectical process between knowledge and reality" (Pouliot 2010: 63). Finally, such dualisms are sometimes detectable in poststructuralist IR work as well: "Foreign policies need to ascribe meaning to the situation and to construct the objects within it [...]" (Hansen 2006: 6). In this quote, it seems as if foreign policy falls into one—the discursive—domain, whereas "the situation" falls into another—the "real world."

65. A prominent reference point for this kind of methodological orientation is John Searle's *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995: 190). Adler refers to Searle in his argument; see Adler 2005: 101. Wendt (1999: 53), in that context, maintains that the search for "truth always implies successful reference". More on the distinction between "transitivity" and "intransitivity" will follow in chapter 3.

66. "One of my main goals in this chapter has been to challenge the epistemological skepticism that underlies post-structuralism, but the substantive theory that I develop in the following chapters is nevertheless indebted to it" (Wendt 1999: 89). For an insightful discussion of the differences between constructivism and poststructuralism, see Debrix 2003b; also Hansen 2006: 1.

67. Wendt 1999: 135.

68. Such a move was excellently taken by Zehfuss 2002, who discusses the role of discourse as a "limit of reality."

69. Vasquez and Mansbach 1983: 267: "First, there is an atmosphere of crisis among decision makers, produced by the conviction that the issue must be resolved if disaster is to be avoided. This produces a sharp increase in the frequency of interaction among new rivals. Second, there is a crisis in that a change in the objectives of foreign policy and the focus of political contention has produced a high degree of uncertainty, along with a subsequent change in the prior pattern of agreement and alignments." A similar argument is put forward by Pepinsky 2012.

70. See Vasquez and Mansbach 1983.

71. Easton 1965: 50.

72. This actor-centrism has been widespread in IR constructivism. The following quote may serve as a *pars pro toto* for this perspective: "Taking a constructivist approach, we argue that in all politics, domestic and international actors reproduce or alter systems through their actions. Any given international system does not exist because of immutable structures but rather the very structures are dependent for their reproduction on the practices of the actors" (Koslowski and Kratochwil 1994: 216).

73. For a short discussion of Cox's work, see the introductory chapter of Cox and Sinclair 1996.

74. Campbell 1998: 4; for the classical treatment of "positivism" in IR, see George 1994: Ch. 2; see also Debrix 2003b: 13–17, who discusses the works of Derrida and Foucault in this context; Hansen 2006, who relies on Foucault, Derrida, Kristeva, and Laclau and Mouffe.

75. Ashley 1986.

76. Der Derian and Shapiro 1989; for different perspectives see the overview by Campbell 2007.

77. Der Derian 1990: 297.

78. Der Derian 1990: 296.

79. Der Derian 1987 and Shapiro 1988.

80. Prominent conceptualizations or theorizations of the "Other" can be found in Walker 1993, Campbell 1998, Neumann 1999, Shapcott 2001, Zehfuss 2002, Hansen 2006, Guillaume 2011, and Herschinger 2011.

81. Ferguson and Mansbach 2004: 276. See also the final section of chapter 4 for a treatment of "Otherness" in IR.

82. Edkins 1999: 3; on rupture and transformation, see Crawford 2002: 1.

83. Herschinger 2011: 1.

84. Dillon 2013: Ch. 8; see also Edkins 1999: 4–5 and Walker 2010.
85. Zehfuss 2002.
86. Walker 2010: 2–3, 6.
87. Hansen 2006: 48; for a broader discussion, cf. Ferguson and Mansbach 2004: Ch. 3.
88. Edkins 2002: 246. For a good summary of the notion of trauma, see also Schostak 2002: 210.
89. Zehfuss 2002: see Ch. 5, for a brilliant introduction.
90. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 8. In IR, see, for instance, Sylvester 2013; Edkins 1999: 30–37; Wibben 2011.
91. Butler 1992; see also Laclau 1996.
92. Wittgenstein 2003.

3   Reality

1. Colin Wight, as one of the most prominent critical realist scholars in IR, underlines the importance of the mind even for critical realist research: "Realism normally implies that objects have a mind-independent existence. Social objects clearly violate this principle: no people, no social objects. Social objects depend upon minds" (Wight 2006: 26). As I will later specify in more detail, the two most widely quoted, early realist figures in the field both employ categories related to the mind; see Waltz 1979 and Morgenthau 1948. But also Wendt, who featured prominently in the previous section, cannot escape the focus on the mental: "To explain why Jones robbed the bank we need to get inside *his* head, at *his* desires and beliefs, not the heads of those who 'made him do it'" (Wendt 1999: 173).

2. It is noteworthy that the modern theoretical grounds, on which the unity of the subject is agreed upon, has always been fragile. While Hume famously could never find a self but a "bundle of perceptions," the Hobbesian account ties this bundle to a presocial unit of self that is endowed with the capacity to reason rationally. See, for instance, George 1994: 11–12, Wight 2006: 208–209 and Pin-Fat 2010: 4–7.

3. In particular Jackson 2011; between 2011 and 2014, the book has won two book awards (the Yale H. Ferguson Award from the ISA-Northeaster Section and the ISA Theory Section's Best Book of the Year). Furthermore, it has been the subject of three published Forums (one in *Qualitative and Multi-Method Research*, one at the blog *The Disorder of Things*, and one in *Millennium— Journal of International Studies*).

4. Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 108 (italics in original); for a slightly different, but equally anti-monist view, see Feyerabend (1975: 232): "Instead of looking for the psychological *causes* of a 'style' we should therefore rather try to discover its *elements*, analyse their *function,* compare them with other phenomena of the same culture (literary style, sentence construction, grammar, ideology) and

thus arrive at an outline of the underlying *world view* including an account of the way in which this world view influences perception, thought, argument, and of the limits it imposes on the roaming about of the imagination."

5. Deleuze 2000: 61. From a logical perspective, Hidemi Suganami (2013: 253) calls into question the very distinction between monism and dualism, for "any knowledge claim is made by someone about something; there is the knower and the known and every knowledge claim has a referent. This almost makes one have a knee-jerk reaction to the dualism/monism question in favor of 'dualism'—for there are two items here, either the knower and the known or a knowledge claim and its referent." For a more thoroughly conducted philosophical discussion, see Rorty 1979 and Bernstein 1983.

6. Gadamer 1989: 130; for an excellent discussion of Gadamer within IR, see Shapcott 2001.

7. For Example, Doty 1996a, Larsen 1997, Waever 1998a, Diez 1999, Milliken 1999 and Crawford 2002.

8. A wide range of definitions of "discourse" consider communication as the production and exchange of meanings; discourses constitute and construct the world in meaning (Jaworski andCoupland 1999 and Wodak 1996). Van Dijk, one of the leading modern discourse theorists, also points out that discourse should be understood as an act of communication (van Dijk 1977). There can in principle be no objective starting point and no conclusion of a discourse, since every element of a discourse is connected with many others and can only be understood on the basis of others. From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which will not be followed in this book, discourse is understood as actually constituting the social in a web of *intertextual* relations. The social, against this background, has three dimensions: knowledge, social relations and social identity (Fairclough 1992: 8). In that sense, texts are, according to Fairclough, "sensitive barometers of social processes, movement and diversity, and textual analysis can provide particularly good indicators of social change" (Fairclough 1999: 204).

9. Monteiro and Ruby 2009; see also Jackson's critique (Jackson 2009).

10. Most prominently, see Rorty 1979 and Bernstein 1983. In the study of IR, see, for instance, Campbell 1998: 93, who explains how people "make experience amenable to predetermined authority."

11. Jackson 2011: 6. A focus on "the empirical" is widespread even in critical or poststructuralist IR work, for example, Guillaume 2011.

12. At times, Jackson advances a self-contradictory argument, when, for instance, he claims that phenomenalism is based on "the limitation of knowledge to those aspects of the world that can be empirically grasped and directly experienced" (Jackson 2011: 42).

13. Jackson 2011: 60; for a similar argument, see Hansen 2006: 17–18; for the argument that "[p]resence can serve as a secure foundation of our thought only if it is given, pure, and absolute," see Zehfuss 2002: 198; for a discussion of phenomenalism, see Kurki 2008: 44; finally, see Agar 2006: 12–15, for a brief discussion of Kant's critical transcendental idealism.

14. Popper 1972; for a discussion, see Bernstein 1983: 69–70 and 115–118; also George 1994: 46–49.
15. Jackson 2011: 21.
16. Some critical realists would dispute the difference between critical realism and reflexivity in this regard; see Wight 2013; Suganami 2013 convincingly shows that analyticists can actually be transfactualists and emphasize the congruence between critical realism and reflexivity; for the problem of clearly separating "mind" and "world," see Michel 2013.
17. It is one option to follow Suganami's example and use "understanding" instead of "knowledge"; see Suganami 2013: fn. 30. Given the centrality of "difference" in the approach here, I would neutrally employ the term "meaning" to describe a field of articulatory differences, without, however, seeing "meaning" as static or deterministic. In fact, meaning is deeply historical and can only be grasped by taking into account previously establishes norms, rules, and sedimented practices in general; for a similar view, see Zehfuss 2002: 199.
18. Foucault, in *The Birth of the Clinic* (1973), defines scientific empiricism as "progress in observation, a wish to develop and extend experiment, an increasing fidelity to what can be revealed by sense-perceptible data, abandonment of theories and systems."
19. Jackson 2011: 19.
20. Jackson 2011: 95.
21. Kurki 2008: 237.
22. In her discussion of Marxism, Edkins (1999: 34) puts this perspective in plain words: "We cannot think what we choose—our position in the social structure and the nature of that structure in terms of the predominant mode of production dictate (more or less) what our ideas will be." The—in my view misguided—obsession with material structures is conspicuous in Wight's work: "The idea we have of Islamic extremism, of international terrorism, of US foreign policy [...] have all been shaped, and continue to be shaped, by the material events of that day. Yes, the meaning of the events varies among individual and collective actors, but the fact is that these varied meanings exist in a complexly structured relationship to the events themselves. In effect, the meanings have no meaning outside of some relationship to the events" (Wight 2006: 159).
23. This qualification is formulated by Jackson 2011: 87.
24. Wight 2013: 335.
25. Two quotes from Colin Wight's work may illustrate this argument. While the first quote refers to what Jackson would label dualism, the second calls this distinction into question: (1) "Critical realists certainly argue that there is such a thing as a 'mind-independent' world" (Wight 2013: 332). (2) "[...] the division of the world into monist and dualist forms of thought is itself a form of dualism" (Ibid.: 330).
26. Jackson 2011: 28ff.
27. Monteiro and Ruby (2009: 25); for a similar view, see Jackson (2009: 459), who argues that philosophical commitments "dictate how one should study the social world."

28. Jackson 2011: 27; for a critical discussion of the difficult notion of "truth," see again Bernstein 1983: 118–131.

29. Jackson 2011: 28.

30. A number of prominent philosophers have questioned the philosophy of science's role in providing precise standards for the conduct of science. See, for example, Bernstein 1983 and Feyerabend 1975. I thank Ryoma Sakaeda for fruitful discussions of this aspect; for a more philosophical account of Jackson's typology, see Michel 2013; for a discussion of political philosophy, see Marchart 2007: 74–83; for continental philosophy, see Dillon 1997 and George 1994: 18–29.

31. For a critique of "intersubjectivity" from a Derridean perspective, cf. Zehfuss 2002: 229; for a discussion of "ideology," see Edkins 1999: 8–9 and 26; for a discussion of humanism against poststructuralism, see Mackenzie 2001; for an IR beyond the mind, see Campbell 1998: 6–7.

32. Again, in his treatment of Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*, Jackson (2011: 114) refers to "theories—and the minds that generate them;" for a thorough critique of Jackson's understanding of monism as idealism see also Wight 2013; for a critique of ideology, see Marchart 2007: 101–102.

33. Sylvester 2013: 312. Although authors like Hidemi Suganami go a long way toward providing an extended and in themselves convincing modification of Jackson's typology, they do not move beyond the centrality of the mind. For a discussion of the impossibility of clearly separating monism and dualism, see Suganami 2013: 253 ("There is, therefore, a sense in which those who believe in the mind-dependence of the world are also 'dualists.'"); for his modification of Jackson's matrix, see especially Suganami 2013: 263.

34. For such an argument see, for instance, Wight 2013: 330–331.

35. Wittgenstein 1963 [1921]: 1.1.

36. Dummett 2006: 7; see also Pin-Fat 2010: 5–6.

37. I will thus follow Hannah Arendt's suggestion of abandoning the concept of truth altogether from political analysis; see Arendt 1968.

38. See Dummett 2006: 23; for a similar view of metaphysics, see Dillon 1997: 20.

39. Jackson 2011: 130, emphasis in original.

40. Jackson 2011: 134, referring to Geertz 2000: 56–58.

41. Jackson 2011: 134.

42. Wight 2006: 259.

43. Examples can be found in Wight 2006: 248 ("needle in a haystack"), 252 ("the earth was indeed once flat"), and 283 ("it is not the aim of nuclear physics to explain, or have predicted, the disaster at Chernobyl in 1986"), Wight 2013: 339 ("experiments at CERN"), but also in Jackson 2011: 75 ("seeds grow when watered").

44. Kurki 2008.

45. Hollis and Smith 1990.

46. Kurki 2008: 6.

47. Wendt 1999: 25, 77–88.
48. Jackson 2011: 106–107; see also Wight 2006: 48 and in particular 117.
49. Although at some points, Jackson suggests that his methodologies do not exhaust the range of possible perspectives, his word-choice sometimes leads in different directions. For instance, after having covered neopositivism and critical realism in his book, he claims that "we have already foreclosed half of the available philosophical-ontological positions" (Jackson 2011: 74).
50. For feminism, see Sylvester 2013; furthermore, see Suganami 2013.
51. See also Wendt 1999 and Wight 2006.
52. van Dijk 2001: 352.
53. Fairclough 1989: 26.
54. The version of post-Marxism presented by Laclau is very critical of the socialist and Stalinist political systems that developed in various countries in the twentieth century. Laclau (1996: 25) puts his criticism of totalitarianism in plain words: "Between the universal character of the tasks of the working class and the particularity of its concrete demands and increasing gap opened, which had to be filled by the Party as representative of the historical interests of the proletariat. The gap between class itself and class for itself opened the way to a succession of substitutions: the Party replaced the class, the autocrat the Party, and so on." See also Marchart's (2007: 101–102) discussion of Claude Lefort's critique of ideology and totalitarianism.
55. Sylvester 2013: 312.
56. Wittgenstein 1963. In his critique of poststructuralism, Wight (2006: 136) makes the usual mistake of reducing poststructuralism to the scrutiny of language: "Indeed, all social life is to be read as text, and the underlying ontology is flat, one-dimensional and reductionist." See also Pin-Fat 2010: 10, 13–14.
57. Laclau and Bhaskar 2007.
58. For "critical realism," see Wight (2006: 98), who also conceptualizes agents as preexisting structures: "Social structures are dependent upon social agents for their reproduction. No agents, then no structures." However, later in the same book, Wight (2006: 116) stresses that: "agential phenomena cannot be fully understood by exclusive reference to their internal dynamics; they have to be seen as conditioned by circumstances inherited from the past, as well as driven by beliefs about potential futures."
59. Wendt 1992: 425.
60. See, for example, Chrobak 2013.
61. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 105–114.
62. For an extended discussion of the term, see part II of this book.
63. For a detailed discussion of the nexus between the political and the social, see also Critchley and Marchart 2004, Dallmayr 2004, Marchart 2004 and Wenman 2003; for a discussion of contingency see Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 4–6.
64. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 153; also 107.

65. Wight 2006: 278. In Kurki's work, "reasons, ideas and discourses" are usually mentioned in the same breath; for example, Kurki 2008: 11, 12, without ever defining the terms in relation to each other.

66. Laclau and Bahaskar 2007: 10. On a critical realist analysis of causation, see Kurki 2008; for a brief poststructuralist discussion, see Hansen 2006: 9–11.

67. The notion of "social construction" goes back to the work of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966), in which the authors introduce "subjective consciousness" into sociological theory and build a bridge into social psychology.

68. Bernstein 1983. On relativism, see also Behr 2014: Ch. 1.2.

69. Derrida 1980, Hurst 1998, Currie 2004: 8–9, Agar 2006: 12–14, George 1994: 55–56 and Walker 2010: 150–183.

70. Bernstein 1971: 5.

71. It is interesting to see that even poststructuralist scholars refer to the notion of "representation" in reference to "real world" phenomena, thereby establishing a dualism that is not inherent in poststructuralist theorizing; see, for instance, Hansen 2006: 5–6.

72. Bernstein 1983: 19, emphasis in original.

73. Bernstein 1983: 7.

74. Rorty 1979, Bernstein 1983 and Feyerabend 1975; within IR, see Walker 2010.

75. Bernstein 1983: 45; see also Alasdair MacIntyre's famous and widely quoted statement that "[t]he teaching of method is nothing other than the teaching of a certain kind of history" (cited in Bernstein 1983: 57).

76. Cf. Rorty 1979.

77. Fink 1996.

78. Hurst 1998: 115; for a discussion of language in IR, see the volume edited by Debrix (2003a); for an analysis of "linguistic turns," see Fierke 2003, who argues that these turns originate in Ludwig Wittgenetsein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 1963 [1921].

79. See, in particular, Winch 1958. See Schmitt 2003, for a broad discussion of the metaphysics of the social.

80. Howarth 2000: 101 and Edkins 1999: 2–3.

81. Howarth 2000: 50.

82. Smith 1998: 85 and Campbell 1998: 4.

83. In particular Butler 1993.

84. For postcolonialism, see the volume edited by Seth 2013a; on the "postcolonial subject," see also Jabri 2013; see also the intriguing discussion of Russia as a "subaltern empire" by Morozov 2015. For a summary of postfoundationalism, see the work by Marchart 2007. In IR, Zehfuss 2002 has queried the "real as presence" by an extensive discussion of Derrida; finally, see Edkins 1999: 7–9.

85. Ivison, Patton and Sanders 2000: 3, Barcham 2000 and Jabri 2013; on European encounters with Islam, see Mavelli 2012.

86. Marchart 2007: 18; Debrix (2003b: 17–22) discusses this perspective under the heading of "nonfoundationalism."

87. See Marchart 2007: 3, 27.
88. Luhmann 1996: 64. Oliver Feltham has in an equally precise manner summarized the notion of contingency in the preface to his translation of Badiou's *Being and Event* (2005: xxix): "there *may* be an eventual site in a situation, an event *may* happen at that site, someone *may* intervene and name that event, others *may* identify an operator of fidelity, series of enquiries *may* develop, and finally, at a global level, these enquiries *may* be generic." With regards to origins, Jonathan Culler speaks of "nonoriginary origns" (Culler 1983: 96).
89. Marchart 2007: 30, drawing on Kari Palonen and J. G. A. Pocock.
90. See the edited volume by Bedorf and Röttgers 2010, for a comprehensive introduction. For a broad discussion of the discussion about political philiophy, see Marchart 2007.
91. Butler 1992 and Laclau 1996. Laclau (ibid: 103) explains that: "If politics is the ensemble of the decisions taken in an undecidable terrain—that is a terrain in which power is constitutive—then the social can consist only in the sedimented forms of a power that has blurred the traces of its own contingency."
92. Marchart 2007: 8; emphasis in original.
93. Cox 1981; see also George and Campbell 1990, for a poststructuralist perspective, as well as Jackson 2011: Ch. 6, for a discussion from a monist and transfactual perspective.
94. Foucault 1995. The critical questioning of foundations also applies to the work of Derrida, for example, Derrida 1976 and 1980; for a critique see, for instance, Bernstein 1994. In the field of IR, see, in particular Kratochwil 1989: 123 (referring to Kurt Baier and Alan Gewirth in this context), who proposes an argument which relies on some positive "moral point of view;" on criticism raised against Derrida, see Zehfuss 2002: 205–206; on power, see Edkins 1999: 3–4, who discusses Lefort's and Laclau's work; on Foucault's work, see Edkins 1999: Ch. 3; finally, on poststructuralist ethics, see Shapcott 2001: 63–67.
95. Foucault 1995.
96. Lang 2008.
97. Lang 2008: 130.
98. See, for instance, Leatherman 2008; in particular also Mertus and Rawls 2008: 35.
99. Hunt 2008.
100. For instance, Riaz and DiMaggio 2008, Dartnell 2008 and Manokha 2011.
101. Leatherman 2008 and Selmeczi 2011.
102. Lang 2008: 14 and Leatherman 2008: 3.
103. See Zehfuss 2002: 213–216, for a discussion of these terms; for a discussion of both authors and their approach to "science," see Kurki 2008: 80–84; finally, for an analysis of ideology and ideological critique, see Edkins 1999: 35–37; and for a scrutiny of modes of resistance, see George 1994: 212–216.
104. In the field of IR, Crawford (2002: 2) has maintained with regards to the end of colonialism that "ethical argument analysis is a way to understand and explain normative change in world politics."

105. Laclau 2000: 81; also Pin-Fat 2010: 4–5. On the significance of temporality in any form of ontology, see Behr 2014: 9; for a similar argument, see Inayatullah and Blaney 2004: 3–4.
106. Zehfuss 2002: 230; for a comparable argument, see Edkins 1999: 13 and Dillon 2013: 136–137; for a broad treatment of "justice," see Shapcott 2001 and Pin-Fat 2010.
107. Shapcott 2001: 10. To my knowledge, no other author in IR has gone as far as Sergei Prozorov (2014a, 2014b) in elucidating the tension between universalism and particularism.
108. For a similar argument, see Laclau (2014: 133), who maintains that "there would be no distinction between—for instance—justice and what a certain society considers as just at some point in time." For a discussion of these question in IR, see Shapcott 2001 and also Dillon's (2013: 137) statement that: "If the political therefore always concerns the ontological, government and rule always concern the mechanics of forms of life."
109. Foucault 1984a.
110. Foucault 1984b.
111. Foucault 1984c.
112. Foucault 1984d.
113. Foucault 1984b: 380. For an introduction to this problem, see also Nabers 2010.
114. Lukes 2005 [1974].
115. Lukes 2005 [1974]: 11.
116. For a critical appraisal of Foucault's theory of power, see Digeser 1992 and Keenan 1987.
117. Foucault 1984d: 206–207.
118. For clear statements on this aim of his work, see Foucault 1984c and 1984d.
119. Foucault 1984c: 376. This theoretical stance is comparable to Derrida's notion of deconstruction, which will be discussed in the next chapter. As Zehfuss (2002: 205) explains: "What Derrida is driving at is precisely that we cannot escape the logic of logocentrism, which would, however, not stop us from questioning it."
120. Foucault 1984d: 381. In the field of IR, Campbell (1998: 5) speaks of "a form of dissent that celebrates difference."
121. It should be clear by now that "context" must not be conflated with "foundations." It does not refer to the determination of meaning from a location outside discourse. Laclau 2014: 134; in IR, the question of universal standards was raised, for instance, by Shapcott 2001: 10–12.
122. Foucault 1984d: 384. See also Foucault's discussion of psychiatry: "I have tried to see how the formation of psychiatry as a science, the limitation of its field, and the definition of its object implicated a political structure and a moral practice" (Foucault 1984d: 386).
123. Jackson 2011: 157, 167.
124. Jackson 2011: 43.
125. Jackson 2011: 173.

126. Jackson 2011: 173.
127. Cox 1981 and Feyerabend 1975.
128. Jackson 2011: 184.
129. Jackson 2011: 179.
130. For a discussion, see, for example, Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010: 37–39; see also Enloe 2000.
131. Foucault 1984a: 42.
132. Foucault 1984a: 43, 45.
133. Foucault 1984a: 46.
134. Cf. Kant's definition of enlightenment: "Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leistung eines anderen zu bedienen. Selbstverschuldet ist diese Unmündigkeit, wenn die Ursache derselben nicht am Mangel des Verstandes, sondern der Entschließung und des Mutes liegt, sich seiner ohne Leitung eines andern zu bedienen" (Kant 1977: 53).
135. Jackson 2011: 168.
136. Marchart 2007: 6.
137. Both quotes taken from Mouffe 1999: 2.
138. Foucault 1984d: 387.

4 Difference

1. See, for instance, Mackenzie 2001 and Currie 2004.
2. A similar argument is put forward by Seyla Benhabib in the introduction to her classic volume on the topic of *Democracy and Difference;* see Benhabib 1996. In a comparable fashion, Hartmut Behr draws on Simmel, Schütz, Lévinas, Derrida, Arendt and Morgenthau to substantiate this claim; see Behr 2014. Finally, Campbell 1998: 70, builds his analysis on the claim that "all meaning is constituted through difference."
3. Heidegger 1969: 61; for a discussion, see Marchart 2007: 18–22. On *Being* from an IR perspective, see Behr 2014. For the relationship between identity and difference in Western metaphysics, see also Zehfuss 2002: 218: "It is also important to consider the identity/difference dichotomy where the former is privileged over the latter. Although identity is an effect of differences, identity is the valued term."
4. Deleuze 1994: xv.
5. Heidegger 1969: 62–63.
6. Heidegger 1969: 64.
7. Deleuze 1994: xv-xvi; on *Dasein* see Behr 2014: 11.
8. Deleuze 1994: 56–57.
9. Jean-Luc Nancy, in comparable fashion, is more interested in the plurality of being, the "being-with" instead of the singular being; see, in particular, Nancy 2000. This explains why Ernesto Laclau, when discussing the ethical, speaks of a "moment of transcendence" (Laclau 2014: 131).

10. Lévi-Strauss 1963 and Geertz 2000.
11. For a critical appraisal of Saussure's work, see Culler 1986; for a discussion in IR, see Edkins 1999: 21–26. When Ferdinand de Saussure is referred to, it should be mentioned here that Saussure himself never wrote what he has always subsequently been praised for. It was only *post mortem* that some of his students and colleagues put down on paper three courses on general linguistics Saussure had given at the University of Geneva between 1907 and 1911. I will follow the general convention of using expressions like "Saussure wrote/maintained/put forward etc." for mere practicality.
12. This is one of Wendt's core arguments in the development of his "states systemic project"; see Wendt 1999; on the concept of sociality in IR, see Behr 2014: Ch. 1.
13. Saussure 1974: 120; for a discussion Smith 1998: 84–85 and Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 9–10; also Wight 2006: 132–134.
14. Currie 2004: 31.
15. Saussure 1974: 68; for a comment Currie 2004: 8–10.
16. Saussure 1974: 117.
17. For a discussion of this aspect of de Saussure's work, see, for instance, Allen 2000: 8–10.
18. Culler 1986: 38.
19. Saussure 1974: 108–109.
20. For a longer discussion of this aspect see Currie 2004: 12–19.
21. Saussure 1974: 46.
22. Saussure 1974: 14.
23. Culler 1986: 45.
24. Saussure 1974: 10.
25. Saussure 1974: 16.
26. Currie 2004, also Bradley 2008: 61–79. There are numerous semioticians who have treated the notion of difference, perhaps most prominently Algirdas Julien Greimas; for a discussion, see also Benhabib 1996. In French poststructuralism, see Derrida 1976 and 1980 and Deleuze 1994; in the field of IR, a wide range of topics is covered by Dillon 2013. For a thorough discussion, see Bennington 2006; briefly also Wight 2006: 134–136.
27. One of the subtitles in Derrida's treatment of Saussure, see Derrida 1976.
28. Derrida 1976: 46; for a discussion in IR, see Debrix 2003b: 13–15.
29. Derrida 1976: 47, emphasis in original; for an extensive discussion in IR, see Zehfuss 2002: Ch. 5.
30. Bennington 2006: 197.
31. Bennington 2006: 193; for a discussion of the temporal dimension of difference, see Bernstein 1983: 81–82; also Zehfuss 2002: 198–200, Edkins 1999: 14 and Inayatullah and Blaney 2004: 86–89; finally Pin-Fat 2010: 13, who contends that: "[…] meaning cannot be fixed, since there are innumerable possibilities of what may come 'before' and 'after.'"
32. Finlayson and Valentine 2002: 11.

33. Currie 2004: 59–60.
34. Spivak 1976: lxxvii.
35. "To locate the promising marginal text, to disclose the undecidable moment, to pry it loose with the positive lever of the signifier; to reverse the resident hierarchy, only to displace it; to dismantle in order to reconstitute what is always already inscribed. Deconstruction in a nutshell." (Spivak 1976: lxxvii). See also Bradley 2008: 72–73.
36. de Man 1971: 140.
37. Derrida, quoted in Spivak 1976: lxxv; see also Zehfuss 2002: 229–230.
38. Derrida, quoted in Spivak 1976: xliii; for a discussion of the normative aspects from an IR perspective, see Behr 2014; also Doty 1996b and Dillon 2013.
39. See, for example, Currie 2004: 55, 48–60, Edkins 1999: 12–13, Behr 2014: 11 and Bennington 2006: 194–199.
40. It is emphasized in this study that poststructuralism resists categorization or even definition. It refers to a rich tradition of philosophers and political theorists with different foci, who are impossible to group together under one heading. A common ground might exist in the reference to categories like discourse, power, language, and undecidability.
41. Marchart 2007: 28.
42. Derrida 1976: lix, translator's preface. An analogous argument is put forward by Deleuze, who analyzes the multiplicity of differences in each of its instantiations. See Colebrook 2002.
43. Saussure 1974: 80.
44. Saussure 1974: 52; for a comment Culler 1986: 55.
45. For a brilliant discussion of Lévi-Strauss's anthropology, see Wiseman 2007.
46. See Foucault 1972.
47. Wendt 1999: 285–297. In his discussion of the notion of *homogeneity* as one of his master variables, Wendt introduces another tentative notion of difference when he suggests that state actors may become embroiled in a "narcissism of small differences," arguing on the basis of poststructuralist literatures (Roland Barthes and William Connolly) that "homogeneity can also be a threat because the existence of any group as a distinct entity requires a cognitive boundary separating it from other groups ('difference')." Without inquiring more deeply into the nature of such boundaries, and devoid of any further discussion of the cited texts, Wendt's work again essentializes state actors as he emphasizes their "'natural' functional complementarities"; see Wendt 1999: 355–356.
48. For instance, Behr 2014 and Inayatullah and Blaney 2004; noteworthy also, though not classical IR books: Arditi 2007, Connolly 1991, and Young 1990. The most comprehensive overview of "Poststructuralism & IR" was perhaps offered by Edkins 1999. It is, however, worth noting that most of her sources—Foucault, Derrida, Lacan and Žižek—are foreign to IR.
49. For example, this argument played a role in George and Campbell's contribution to *International Studies Quarterly's* Special Issue titled "Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissidence in International Studies," in which most of the

articles were in one way or the other influenced by poststructuralist thought, although this impression of unity would probably be denied by the majority of the authors. The term "difference," if used at all, is understood as the quite practical relationship between *different* cultures or identities, while no ontological space is reserved for difference per se. See George and Campbell 1990. See also George 1994: 11, who directs our attention to the argument that "reality is always characterized by ambiguity, disunity, discrepancy, contradiction, and difference."

50. Walker 1993; also Hansen 2006, Campbell 1998: 3 and Shapcott 2001. This argument is also prominent in research on the European Union; see, for example, Manners and Whitman 2003.

51. Although some observers certainly still see intense rivalry between the two European countries as a source of threat creation especially in the economic, but also in the political sphere. For the argument of different qualities of the "Other," see also Rumelili 2008: 254–255 and 262–265.

52. More important than "Otherness," therefore, are Connolly's insinuations about Columbus's discovery of the "new world" as a *text*, interwoven with earlier texts and those yet to be produced, to which we will return when discussing the concept of "intertextuality" (see part III of this book). See Connolly 1990 and 1991; for work on "Otherness" in IR, see also Diez 1999 and 2004, finally Guillaume 2011, in particular 22–29.

53. Der Derian 1987: 167.

54. For an excellent discussion, see George 1994.

55. In particular Neumann 1999: Ch. 1, who sketches four paths of theorizing Self-Other relations: the ethnographic, psychological and Continental philosophical paths as well as the "Eastern excursion." In the latter path, Neumann produced novel insights into the study of collective identities by drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin.

56. Walker 1993: 117.

57. Dillon 2013: 35.

58. Campbell 1998: 12; for a similar understanding of the unfinished ontology of the state, see Hansen 2006.

59. As Dillon (2013: 36) puts it: "identity is not an essence but the site of semantic contestation located in space and time." It needs to be added here that some work in this strand of theorizing still seems to insinuate that although identities are dialogically produced, they *are* still possible, while difference demands a conception of identity that allows for indefiniteness, lack, and transience. See, for instance, the otherwise brilliant analysis offered by Guillaume (2011: 2): "[T]his book is a theoretical endeavor to provide a process-based account of the international by delineating a dialogical approach of how collective identities are formed." Furthermore, the notion of discourse employed here is at times not sufficiently clarified. Very often, "forms of discourses" are distinguished from "actual practices" (Guillaume 2011: 3), as if the latter were somehow graspable outside of discourse.

60. Howarth 2000: 101.
61. Edkins 1999: 30. For a good introduction to "critical feminism" in IR, see Wibben 2011.
62. George 1994: 7.
63. Crawford 2007. For work on indigenous thought, see also the volume edited by Katzenstein 2010, as well as Inayatullah and Blaney 2004: 42–83.
64. Connolly 2013.
65. See, for instance, Seth 2013b, who provides a good summary of important postcolonial arguments; for a brilliant and critical overview, see Moore-Gilbert 1997.
66. Grovogui 2013.
67. Inayatullah and Blaney 2004: 4–11.
68. Inayatullah and Blaney 2004: 15.
69. Hansen 2006: 1.
70. Guillaume 2011.
71. Herschinger 2011, in particular her discussion of Laclau and Mouffe in Ch. 1.
72. Walker 2010: 10.
73. Shapcott 2001: 2. It is interesting to note that even rationalist scholars like Robert Keohane discuss cosmopolitanist concepts and contrast them with utilitarianism. In doing so, Keohane introduces John Rawls's "difference principle." This, however, is his only reference to the notion of "difference;" see Keohane 1984: 250–251.
74. Shapcott 2001: 3.
75. Best 2009: 462. For a broader analysis, also see Best and Paterson 2009.

5   Hegemony

1. See, for instance, the comprehensive analysis offered by Torfing 1999; furthermore, see Finlayson and Valentine 2002: 1 and Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 6, who call Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory "the purest poststructuralist theory in their selection."
2. Andersen 2003: 56; for a comment on the different intellectual trajectories of Laclau and Mouffe, see Critchley and Marchart 2004 and Wenman 2003.
3. Kant 2008.
4. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 105.
5. Nancy 1998: 97; for an excellent discussion, see Marchart 2007: Ch. 3.5.
6. Wight 2006: 159.
7. Torfing 1999: 94; also Laclau 1977 and Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 107; for a discussion, see Norval 2004 and Smith 1998.
8. Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Preface to the Second Edition: xi; also Dallmayr 2004: 39.
9. See, for instance, Laclau 2000: 82. Hudson (2006: 307) explains: "These beliefs and values, and the demands from which they cannot be separated, set the coordinates of what it is possible for the subject to choose and will. They frame

the horizon of the possible for the subject, rather than falling within it." One might also refer to Derrida (1992: 17–20), who draws similar conclusions.

10. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 95 and Smith 1998: 87.
11. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 104.
12. Laclau 2000: 79.
13. Stavrakakis 2005: 70, emphasis in original; see also Žižek 1990; for a discussion, see Critchley and Marchart 2004 and Williams 2007.
14. Hudson 2006: 304.
15. Laclau 1996: 20–21.
16. Andersen 2003: 52, Laclau 2000: 58 and 1990: 60–63.
17. Foucault 1977: 208; see also Williams 2007.
18. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 106.
19. Laclau 1996: 35.
20. Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Preface to the Second Edition: xiii; also Laclau 1996: 43 and Laclau 2005: 115.
21. The notion of subversion is prominent in Laclau's work. As he maintains in *Emancipations*: "This is precisely what we understand by subversion. It is as if each of the two incompatible logics presupposes a full operation that the other is denying, and that this denial leads to an orderly set of subversive effects of the internal structure of both of them" (Laclau 1996: 8).
22. Schor 1995: 22; also Laclau 1996: 15.
23. Laclau and Zac 1994: 31; also Laclau 2000: 47.
24. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 113.
25. Laclau (1996: 13) aptly maintains that "something is particular in relation to other particularities and the ensemble of them presupposes a social totality within which they are constituted." And Rodolphe Gasché (2004: 25) explains: "Compared to the (apparent fullness of) the system, its beyond, without which there can be no objective order (with its limits), is a mere negativity. On it hinges […] not only the possibility of a system, but, within the latter, the very possibility of differential identities. However, if this is the case, signification of this excluded outside within the system and its elements is essential lest its frontiers collapse."
26. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: Ch. 3; also Smith 1998: 97–98 and Gasché 2004: 24–25.
27. See Laclau 2005: 107, Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 128 and Critchley and Marchart 2004: 4; for a comment, see Dallmayr 2004: 39.
28. Laclau 2005: 70; in *Emancipations*, Laclau explains: "If we are speaking of *real* emancipation, the 'other' opposing the emancipated identity cannot be a purely positive or neutral other but, instead, an 'other' which prevents the full constitution of the identity of the first element" (Laclau 1996: 2). On degrees of "Otherness" in IR, see Hansen 2006: 38–41.
29. Laclau 1996: 39, also 52; for a comment Howarth 2000: 105, Critchley and Marchart 2004: 4 and Gasché 2004: 25.
30. Dallmayr 2004: 38.

31. Laclau 1996: 39: "It is only by privileging the dimension of equivalence to the point that its differential nature is almost entirely obliterated—that is emptying it of its differential nature—that the system can signify itself as a totality."
32. Laclau 1996: 14; in IR, see Hansen 2006 and Campbell 1998.
33. Laclau 1996: 30; see also Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 122, 127.
34. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 110 and Laclau 2000: 55.
35. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 112 and Laclau 2014: 144–145; also Thomassen 2005: 9. I am grateful to Frank A. Stengel for fruitful discussions on this point.
36. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 113, emphasis in original.
37. Schostak 2002: 210.
38. For a discussion of these terms, see Imdahl 1997: 143–146 and Edkins 1999: 13–14, for a discussion of empty signifiers in IR.
39. Laclau 1996: 28.
40. Townshend 2004: 271 and Laclau 2005: 133.
41. Laclau 2005: 81. Other examples Laclau uses in his work are, among others, South African apartheid (Laclau 1996 : 27–31), Perónism in the Argentina of the 1960s and 1970s (Laclau 1996: 54–55) and the German economic crisis of the 1920s (Laclau 1990: 65–66).
42. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 105; 134; for a comment Dallmayr 2004: 39.
43. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 136 and Laclau 2005: 132.
44. Laclau 2005: 88.
45. "I am Charlie, because freedom is a universal right;" www.charliehebdo.fr (January 14, 2015).
46. Andersen 2003: 53.
47. Laclau 2000: 58; emphasis in original; see also Nabers 2006.
48. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 112; also Laclau 2000.
49. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 7, 13, Laclau 1977: 103 and Laclau 2005: 122.
50. Norval 2004: 142.
51. Laclau in an interview in 2001, cited in Norris 2006: 133.
52. As Laclau puts it in *Emancipation(s)*: "If all differential struggles [. . .] are equally capable of expressing [. . .] the absent fullness of the community, [. . .] if none is predetermined per se to fulfil this role; what does determine that one of them rather than another incarnates, at particular periods of time, this universal function?" (1996: 42). In this context, we can refer again to Vasquez and Mansbach (1983), who contend that global political change proceeds through identifiable stages; for an analysis of ideal-types in IR, see Williams 2005: 111–113.
53. Laclau 2014: 68. For a discussion of myth in Derrida's work, see Derrida 1992: 10–11, where he argues that: "Monogenealogy would always be a mystification in the history of culture." Cf. also Norval 1996: 7, who analyzes the "construction and purification of the Afrikaner community."
54. Laclau 2014: 101–103.
55. Laclau 1990: 64; cf. also Vasquez and Mansbach's (1983) discussion of "routinization," in which they suggest that "at the end of each crisis actors learn

a set of rituals that are brought to the next encounter. Eventually, ritualization produces, through a process of tacit bargaining, a set of principles, norms, expectations, and rules." Cf. also Laclau 1977.

56. Laclau 1990: 64, Norval 1996: 13, 96 and Smith 1998: 165. Wendt at one point (Wendt 1999: 264) introduces the concept of the "tipping point," which he considers to be the threshold beyond which structural change becomes possible. At this point, according to Wendt, the representations of individual actors take the logic of the system, making structural change possible. For a critique, see also Drulák 2001: 369.
57. Jackson 2011: 115.
58. As Laclau (2000: 54) aptly put it: "A power which is total is no power at all."
59. Smith 1998: 57, Butler 2000: 14 and Laclau 2005: 115.
60. Crawford 2002.
61. Norval 1996: Ch. 5.
62. Laclau, as cited in Smith 1998: 105.
63. Laclau 2000: 82; see also Laclau 1990: 66.
64. Smith 1998: 106.
65. Butler 1993: 187; see also Laclau 1977: 103 and 2005: 106, 115.

6   Discourse Analysis

1. See, for example, Howarth 2000 and 2005, Glynos et al. 2009, Hodges 2011, Debrix 2003a and 2003b, and Hansen 2006. For a discussion of method from a poststructuralist viewpoint, see Inayatullah 1998.
2. Farr 1989: 32; from a CDA perspective, see also Hodges 2011: 3.
3. Currie 2004: 41.
4. Norval's brilliant book comes closest to what I aspire to do in the present study; see Norval 1996.
5. Howarth 2000, Howarth, Norval and Stavrakakis 2000 and Norval 1996.
6. Benhabib 1994: 79–80.
7. Waever 1995: 254; see also Larsen 1997. In this sense, discourse analysis adopts a strict position against neorealism, in which "words mean what they say and say what they mean" (Der Derian 1995: 376).
8. Barthes 1977: 145.
9. Culler 1986: 44.
10. Dummett 2006: 16.
11. See, for instance Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 50, who use the following example: "'Liberal democracy' becomes liberal democracy through its combination with other carriers of meaning such as 'free elections' and 'freedom of speech'. By investigating the chains of meaning that discourses bring together in this way, one can gradually identify discourses (and identities and social spaces)."
12. Teubert 2005: 12.
13. Fairclough 1999: 204. See below, for the ontological difference between the discourse theory proposed here and CDA.

14. For an excellent overview, see Allen 2000; for an application in IR, see Hansen 2006.
15. Allen 2000: 12.
16. Bakhtin and Medvedev 1978: 121; for an analysis of Bakhtin's work in IR, see Guillaume 2011: 39–62.
17. Currie 2004: 22–29, Culler 1986: 59–60, and Laclau 2014: 23–24.
18. Currie 2004: 27.
19. For example, Currie 2004: 1–2 and Nabers 2009.
20. Currie 2004: 4.
21. de Man as cited in Laclau 1998: 158; see also Laclau 2014: Ch. 3 and Laclau 2005: 72. For IR work on metaphor, see also Drulák 2006.
22. Lacan 1977: 156–157; also Barthes 1967: 60, Laclau 2014: Ch. 3 and Currie 2004: 27–29.
23. Laclau 1998: 168; see the helpful discussion of this aspect in Wenman 2003: 583–584.
24. Laclau in Butler, Laclau, andŽižek 2000: 302.
25. Spivak 1976: lxxv.
26. Linke, Nußbaumer, and Portmann 1994: 233.
27. Domke 2004, Nabers 2005 and 2006; for a comparable approach, see Hansen 2006: 20, who also draws on Laclau and Mouffe in her study.
28. For a broad introduction, see Sinclair 2003.
29. For a good introduction and more precise explanation of the following, see Teubert 2005.
30. Teubert 2005: 3.
31. This might seem a slight departure from Teubert (2005: 4), who maintains that, "[i]t is the discourse itself, and not a language-external taxonomy of linguistic entities, which will have to provide the categtories and classifications that are needed to answer a given research question." In the actual analysis, the differences will turn out to be minor, as corpus linguistics always needs to be supplemented by qualitative analysis.
32. The official website of the OFR explains: "Each Public Papers volume contains the papers and speeches of the President of the United States that were issued by the Office of the Press Secretary during the specified time period. The material is presented in chronological order, and the dates shown in the headings are the dates of the documents or events." See http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/publications/presidential-papers.html (March 10, 2014).
33. AntConc 2014.
34. As explained on the *wordle* website: "The clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text. You can tweak your clouds with different fonts, layouts, and color schemes. The images you create with Wordle are yours to use however you like. You can print them out, or save them to the Wordle gallery to share with your friends." See http://www.wordle.net (March 10, 2014).
35. Hudson 2006: 303.

36. "Something can no longer function within the traditional mechanisms that regulated this inscription, and the camp is the new, hidden regulator of the inscription of life in the order—or, rather, the sign of the system's inability to function without being transformed into a lethal machine [...]" (Agamben 1998: 99).
37. See, for example, Leysens 2008: 56.
38. Wendt 1999: 10.
39. Wight 2006: 217.
40. Foucault 1980: 121.
41. Foucault 1980: 121.
42. See Martin 2002, for a discussion.
43. Martin 2002: 58.
44. Hansen 2006.
45. Smith 1998: 88.
46. For example Fairclough 2003: Ch. 5.
47. See Jørgensen and Phillips 2002 for a comprehensive summary of differences and similarities between the two approaches; see also Fairclough and Wodak 1997 and Hodges 2011.
48. Fairclough 2003: 3.
49. Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 271–280.
50. Fairclough 2003: 40.
51. Fairclough 2003: 55–56.
52. Fairclough 2003: Ch.5.
53. The following represents a summary of Fairclough 2003: 145–155. Grammatical roles are excluded from the list.
54. See also Jackson 2005, Fairclough 1992, Jäger 2001 and Potter 1996.
55. Birkland 2004.
56. Walt 2001: 56.
57. See also Holland 2009.

7   Dislocation

1. In the field of theoretically grounded studies on US foreign policy and IR discourse analyses, Campbell 1998, Neumann 1999, Zehfuss 2002, Jackson 2005, Croft 2006, Hansen 2006, Legro 2007, MacDonald 2009; Guillaume 2011, Patman 2010, Hodges 2011, Lundborg 2012, Nabers and Patman 2008, Evans 2013, and Solomon 2015, represent prominent examples. A wide variety of aspects are covered in these books, but none resembles the approach adopted here for the metatheoretical and methodical reasons outlined in parts I and II. This argument also applies to IR work that has relied on sources from other disciplines, such as Wibben 2011, who rethinks security theory from a feminist perspective, or the volume edited by Bigo and Tsoukala 2008, which focuses on the pervasive resort to illiberal security practices by contemporary liberal regimes since September 11, 2001. All in all, perhaps Solomon 2015 is most closely related to the stance developed here.

2. Gaddis 2002: 50.
3. Sorel 1990: 21.
4. Norval 1996: 9.
5. MacIntyre 1971: 253; see also de Beistegui 1998: 162, for a discussion of myth; finally, in IR, see Guillaume 2011: 2 and Der Derian 1995: 367, who investigates the "metaphorical and mythical beginnings of a uniform realism."
6. Madsen 1998.
7. For a *tour de force* through the history of American "exceptionalism," see Hodgson 2009 and Madsen 1998.
8. Bercovitch 1975. Prominent IR theorists have also called "exceptionalism" a myth; see, for example, Walt 2011; on national identity, see also Prizel 1998; on "America" as an "imagined community," see Campbell 1998: 91–132.
9. Alexander 2003: 156; see also 157–158.
10. Alexander 2003: 162.
11. Nancy 1993: 68; for a discussion Marchart 2007: Ch. 3.
12. Madison 1829.
13. Campbell 1998: 3.
14. Weldes 1999a: 38. For the leadership role of the United States during the Cold War, see also Sjöstedt 2007; for a conceptualization of "threat" and "danger" as discursive conditions, see Campbell 1998.
15. Laclau and Zac 1994: 36; see also Laclau 1990: 78, Laclau 1996: 11 and Laclau 2000.
16. Alexander 2003: 157.
17. For an overview of the period between the American Revolution and the Civil War, see Hodgson 2009: Ch. 1 and 2.
18. Lincoln 1863.
19. Also widely quoted is Lincoln's Annual Message to Congress in 1862: "In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last, best hope of earth." See Lincoln 1862.
20. Hodgson 2009: 182.
21. Wilson 1918.
22. Campbell 1998: 23. For a broad analysis of the central tenets of US foreign policy during the Cold War, see also Weldes 1999a: 41, who identifies four constitutive facets of US practices: "as a global and hemispheric leader, as the bastion and defender of freedom, as strong and resolute, and as credible."
23. U.S. Department of State 1950.
24. U.S. Department of State 1950.
25. See, for example, NRA Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer Wayne LaPierre's summary of US identity: "Today's NRA was built on the backs of the greatest generation: the American heroes who fought and died for our freedom in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. [...] Those heroes left the battlefield but never the fight. Their voices rang out through every statehouse in America for decades, demanding every office holder recognize and fight for the same freedoms for which their brothers in arms died" (LaPierre 2013). For

the argument of "masculinity" in US identity, see also Weldes 1999a: 46, who concludes that: "U.S. identity, in short was not only masculinist but aggressively macho;" finally Sjöstedt 2007: 241.

26. Bennington 2006: 193.
27. Kennedy 1961: 369.
28. Truman 1950.
29. Eisenhower 1953.
30. Reagan 1983.
31. Reagan 1982.
32. Reagan 1983.
33. Reagan 1986.
34. See Carter 1977: "Because we are free we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere. Our moral sense dictates a clearcut preference for these societies which share with us an abiding respect for individual human rights. We do not seek to intimidate, but it is clear that a world which others can dominate with impunity would be inhospitable to decency and a threat to the well-being of all people."
35. Clinton 1992.
36. See, for example, the allusion to God in Clinton 1992 ("One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.") and Carter's quote of prophet Micah in his inaugural address ("He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."); see Carter 1977.
37. Chomsky 2005: 40, 51–53, 61, 104 and Nabers andPatman 2008.
38. Derrida 1992: 18–19. On the "new War on Terror," see also MacDonald 2009: Ch. 5.
39. The White House 2001g.
40. Der Derian 2009.
41. The operations were codenamed *Operation Infinite Reach*; see The White House 1998. For a good overview of how the Clinton Administration addressed the threat of al Qaeda, see Patman 2010: Ch. 6.
42. Dueck 2004: 523–524 and Western 2005: 109–11. In a similar vein, William G. Hyland (1999: 203) argues with regard to Clinton's foreign policy: "In the absence of an overall perspective, most issues were bound to degenerate into tactical manipulations, some successful some not. Clinton stumbled from crisis to crisis, trying to figure out what was popular, what would be effective, and what choices would pose the lowest risks to his presidency, and, especially to his reputation."
43. For a discussion of these measures, see Romano 2011.
44. Holland 2009: 276; for other critical realist analyses of the "War on Terror" discourse, see, for instance, Sjöstedt 2007.
45. Cf. Monten 2005. In the words of Condoleezza Rice in April 2002: "America seeks a greater world beyond the victory over terror. We seek not merely to leave the world safer, but to leave it better" (Rice 2002).

46. The White House 2002a.
47. Domke 2004: 3–4.
48. Bacevich and Prodromou 2004, for a discussion of this phrase.
49. Zehfuss 2002: 231.
50. Croft 2006.
51. Jackson 2005: Ch. 6.
52. Bush 1991a.
53. Bush 1991b.
54. U.S. Department of State 1998.
55. McCrisken 2011: 784, who identifies a puzzling continuity from Bush to Obama and asks: "How can we explain the distance between the apparent rhetoric of change in 2008 and what has followed?"; for a discussion of US counterterrorism after WW II, see also Naftali 2005.
56. Bill Clinton, as cited in Patman 2010: 102.
57. The White House 2001a.
58. Some IR theorists identify an eye-catching aphonia in the days after September 11: "[L]anguage itself appeared to collapse along with the Twin Towers," as Richard Jackson put it (Jackson 2005: 29).
59. See below, for a discussion of the relationship between dislocation and "pure event."
60. Žižek 1990: 249; for a discussion of the notion of "anomie," see Evans 2013: 10.
61. For a brilliant discussion of these Deleuzian terms in relation to the "War on Terror," see Lundborg 2012; see also Laclau 2014: 92, 96.
62. For instance, Campbell 2002, Holland 2009 and Nabers 2009.
63. Holland (2009: 277) argues "that the 'nature' of the void enabled, shaped and constrained attempts by politicians and the media to frame events."
64. Bush 2001a.
65. In particular Laclau 2005 and 2014.
66. Secretary of State Powell on October 26, 2001: "It was an attack against the world, not just against the United States." (US Department of State 2001).
67. Der Derian 2002: 102, emphasis in original.
68. Diken and Lausten 2005. See also the many examples given by MacDonald 2009.
69. For an analysis of the temporal dimension of the "War on Terror," see Lundborg 2012.
70. The White House 2001d.
71. The Vice President's Office 2003.
72. The White House 2001a.
73. The White House 2001c.
74. Rice 2002.
75. The White House 2003.
76. For a broad comparison of the two doctrines, see Sjöstedt 2007.
77. Bush 2005.
78. Bush 2005.

8 Hegemony: Toward a Discourse Theory of Crisis and Change

1. Campbell 1998 and Doty 1996b: 333.
2. Laclau 1996: 38.
3. Zehfuss 2002: 217.
4. Campbell 1998: 73.
5. The White House 2002a.
6. U.S. Department of State 2001.
7. The White House 2001d.
8. The White House 2002b; in this context, see also the notion of "islamofas-cism," Brown 2004.
9. The White House 2001a.
10. For a comprehensive analysis of the "Evil Terrorists and Good Americans," see Jackson 2005.
11. The White House 2001a.
12. The White House 2001a.
13. The White House 2001f.
14. The White House 2001b.
15. The White House 2002c.
16. The White House 2002a.
17. President Bush and other members of his administration have continued to say they believe there were ties between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda. One year after the start of the Iraq war, Vice-President Dick Cheney still maintained that, Saddam "had long established ties with Al Qaeda." This view was backed by Bush; see The White House 2004.
18. Laclau 2001, in an interview, cited in Norris 2006: 133.
19. The White House 2001e.
20. The White House 2002a.
21. U.S. Department of State 2001.
22. U.S. Department of Defense 2001.
23. Campbell 1998: 75–90.
24. Butler 2009.
25. The White House 2002c.
26. Jackson 2005: 62.
27. Derrida 1976.
28. "Under Saddam, prisons like Abu Ghraib were symbols of death and torture. That same prison became a symbol of disgraceful conduct by a few American troops who dishonored our country and disregarded our values." The White House 2004.
29. Butler 2009: 126.
30. "Just 3 days removed from these events, Americans do not yet have the distance of history. But our responsibility to history is already clear: To answer these attacks and rid the world of evil." Bush 2001b. For a discussion, see Evans 2013: 99.

31. Bush 2001b.
32. President Clinton's speeches during his second term contain 60 references to Islam. For instance, in a speech to the UN General Assembly on September 21, 1998, Clinton acknowledged that, "Islam is one of our fastest growing faiths." See U.S. Department of State 1998.
33. The White House 2001d.
34. For this argument, see Campbell 1998: 43–48, 61.
35. Campbell 1998: 3.
36. The White House 2002d.
37. Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 112.
38. Campbell 1998: 58.
39. Laclau and Zac 1994: 16.
40. Bush 2003b.
41. The 2002 National Security Strategy highlighted that the United States "will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country." The White House 2002b.
42. Bush 2003b.
43. Clinton mentions the term 28 times in his second term. At times, the President refers to the "Jewish homeland," "our homelands," or Ireland "as the homeland of over 40 million Americans." See, for instance, Clinton 1998.
44. Bush 2002a.
45. Department of Defense 2004; for a detailed analysis of the process, see Johns 2005.
46. As president Obama declared on January 22, 2009: "This morning I signed three Executive orders. First, I can say without exception or equivocation that the United States will not torture. Second, we will close the Guantanamo Bay detention camp and determine how to deal with those who have been held there. And third, we will immediately undertake a comprehensive review to determine how to hold and try terrorism suspects to best protect our Nation and the rule of law." See Obama 2009b. For a brilliant and critical discussion of the problems connected with the detention camp in Guantánamo Bay, see Neal 2006.
47. The President of the United States 2002.
48. Bush 2003a.
49. Bush 2002b.
50. Butler 2009: 47.
51. The White House 2013.
52. Obama 2009a.
53. The White House 2010.
54. Obama 2007.
55. Obama 2007.
56. Obama 2008.
57. The White House 2013.

58. McCrisken 2011: 794.
59. Pew Research Center 2008.
60. The White House 2011.
61. Haidt 2011. Interestingly, Haidt—in direct correspondence to exceptionalist vocabulary—went on to declare that "in the communal joy of last week, many of us felt, for an instant, that Americans might still be capable of working together to meet threats and challenges far greater than Osama bin Laden."
62. Ali 2010: 119. See also Evans 2013: 18, who contends that "within the systemic trope even the smallest of disruptions can end up having enormous and sometimes catastrophic consequences."
63. Wenman 2003.
64. See Mouffe 2000: 13. For a critique of Laclau's work, see Gasché 2004.
65. Hudson 2006: 302, 303.
66. Laclau 2000: 83.
67. Foucault 1984a: 75.
68. Habermas 1995a, 1995b.
69. Butler, Laclau, and Žižek 2000: 3.
70. Habermas 1996: 287.
71. Butler 2000: 34.
72. Gasché 2004 and Zerilli 2004.
73. Laclau 2000: 304.
74. Laclau 1996: 63.
75. Laclau 2005: 140.
76. Laclau 2005: 149.
77. Laclau 1996: 59–60, 66–83; for a comment Critchley and Marchart 2004: 5.
78. Wendt 2003: 491.

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