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Peace, Power, and Security: Contending Concepts in the Study of International Relations*

BARRY BUZAN
Department of International Studies, University of Warwick

This article compares the merits of three concepts — peace, power and security — as approaches to the study of International Relations. It argues that peace and power offer only partial, and significantly flawed, views, and yet that thinking within the field has become locked into an excessively polarised framework which is dominated by the opposition between them. The necessity for a new framework arises from the intellectual exhaustion and restrictiveness of this prevailing orthodoxy. Security is put forward as an alternative framework which is capable of encompassing most of what is useful from the other two, plus much of the middle ground that is obscured by them.

The argument proceeds by comparing the quality of insight which each of the three concepts offers into two of the most fundamental elements in international relations: 'the anarchy' and 'the arms race'. The case is made that each of these elements constitutes a highly durable feature of international relations, but not that is either immutable within its form, or necessarily malign in its effect. Power and peace are seen to give only narrow and incomplete views of the anarchy and the arms race. Both result in excessively rigid and negative interpretations, with power leading to an over-emphasis on the inflexibility of both elements, and peace leading to over-optimism about their removability. Security is seen to offer a more balanced perspective. It takes into account the durability of the anarchy and the arms race, but does not lead to necessarily negative views of them. It opens up the considerable scope for positive change which exists within the two elements, and so provides the basis for a synthesis of realist-idealism.

1. Introduction
The theme of this special issue of the Journal of Peace Research indicates the existence of broad dissatisfaction with the basic concepts which have dominated most thinking in the field of International Relations. Peace Research itself began as a revolt against the power-oriented conceptions of the Realist orthodoxy in International Relations. The present call for a new paradigm in thinking about defence and security marks a recognition that peace has proved as conceptually inadequate as power in providing an underlying orientation for empirical studies. Although peace has served well as a perspective from which to mount a critique of Realism, it has failed to generate a comprehensive alternative approach to the study of international relations.

The argument in this paper is that the division between the power and peace views has itself become a barrier to progressive thinking. In

* This article extends an argument suggested, but not developed, in the Introduction to People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations (Buzan 1983). In the book, I establish peace and power as the orthodox contending concepts, and attempt to introduce security as an alternative to them. The argument there is predominantly concerned with developing the conceptual framework of security by exploring its domain, its referent objects, its contradictions, and its potential for generating related concepts which might usefully be applied to both theoretical and empirical work. Here, I wish to return to the same starting point and, now armed with a developed conceptual sense of security, explore the relationship among the three in more depth than was possible earlier. The objective of this piece is the same as that of the earlier work: to promote security as the basis for an alternative conceptual framework. But here the treatment is more balanced, involving a comparison of how the three concepts relate to two of the most basic elements of international relations: the anarchy and the arms race. I would like to thank John Vincent of Keele University for the remark that got me thinking along these lines, and Peter Byrd of Warwick University for comments on the first draft.
part, this barrier arises from the antagonism generated between those Realists and Idealists who take strong stands on either side of the divide. More subtly, it arises by locking patterns of thought into the unhelpful structure of an apparently unresolvable dilemma. The power and peace views do not mix easily, even within a single individual struggling to find a more balanced analytical framework. Consequently, to the extent that international relations is thought about primarily in terms of these two concepts, the middle ground will always be difficult to occupy. Up to a point, opposition between basic concepts is fruitful. Each serves to stimulate the other by providing a contrast, and criticism creates incentives to sharpen and deepen thinking. Beyond that point, however, this process declines into diminishing, and eventually negative, returns. Opposition becomes institutionalised and politicised, and creative thinking is either overridden by the rituals of intellectual entrenched, or stifled by the lack of creative room within the tight contradictory confines of the peace/power dilemma. It is my view that this is the situation in which we now find ourselves.

To break the habits of a long-familiar conceptual orientation is never easy, but the quest for a new approach requires it. That quest also requires a willingness to re-examine the fundamental character of the problem which concepts like peace and power are designed to address. Only by going back to basics can we clarify the insights and the shortcomings of existing concepts. Once these insights and shortcomings are made explicit, we can use them to chart new, and hopefully more fruitful, conceptual directions.

In what follows, my purpose will be first, to identify the basic character of the problem, and second, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative concepts in dealing with it. In pursuing this second purpose, my objective will be to compare the merits and flaws of power and peace as core concepts, while at the same time developing the idea of security as a synthesis between them. The concept of power emphasises the parts of the international system at the expense of the whole, and the dynamic of conflict at the expense of that of harmony. It does, however, identify a factor which is universal both as a motive for behaviour and as a description of the relative status of the actors. The concept of peace emphasises both the international system as a whole, and individuals as its ultimate building bloc, at the expense of states, and emphasises the dynamic of harmony at the expense of that of conflict. Its principal focus is on a possible universal condition.

The concept of security has traditionally been treated as a side effect, arising from the possession of either power or peace. In this subordinate role, it has not been seen as a major concept capable of encompassing the field of International Relations as a whole. The only previous attempt to develop security as a core concept was made by John Herz during the early 1950s (Herz 1950, pp. 157-80; 1951 and 1959, pp. 231-43). Herz’s idea of the ‘security dilemma’ focused on the self-defeating aspects of the competitive pursuit of power. But unfortunately, though it became an accepted concept within the literature, it failed to transcend the Realist paradigm. This failure can in part be attributed to the unlucky timing of Herz’s idea, which surfaced in the midst of deep Cold War conditions highly supportive of the Realists’ power-struggle view of international relations.

But Herz’s failure to achieve a larger conceptual role for security also resulted from the emphasis which characterised his work. Firstly, he was concerned primarily with national security, and therefore like the Realists he concentrated much more on the character of states than on the character of the international system. His focus on the state meant that the concept of security was seen principally as an idea that led immediately to an intractable dilemma. Although it was useful to have this problem identified and labelled, the existence of the dilemma cut off interest in any further development of the concept. Arnold Wolfers’ subsequent, and well-known, essay on the ambiguity of security as a concept was also based on the national security perspective, and so reinforced the conclusion that security was unlikely to prove fruitful as a broad concept.
for interpreting the field (Wolfers 1962, ch. 10). As a consequence of these state-centric uses of security, those who were attracted to its critique of Realism found themselves nonetheless forced back into the Realist mould because of the irresolvable character of the security dilemma at the state level.

Secondly, and perhaps even more important, Herz treated security much more as an outcome of power relations, than as a direct motive for behaviour. By not developing the significance of security as a motive, he sacrificed any possibility of using it as the basis of an approach strong enough to challenge the Realist orthodoxy. If security is recognised as an important motive for behaviour in the international system, then it provides a view of international relations which is quite distinct from that which sees security merely as a possible outcome of power relations.

The argument that follows is based on the belief that security is an important motive for behaviour, and that it can be usefully applied to much more than just the state. If freed from the confines of ‘national security’ which tie it closely to the power view, security offers a comprehensive perspective on international relations. As a concept in its own right, it operates on all three levels of analysis — individual, state, and system — and it identifies both a universal motive for behaviour and a possible universal condition. Once expanded into this broader framework, the ambiguity which plagued its use on the national level becomes an asset rather than a liability. The idea of security encompasses the dynamics of both conflict and harmony, and it is precisely this breadth of coverage which makes it so useful when applied to the international system as a whole.

Concepts like power, peace and security play a subtle and vital role in research. By emphasising a particular view of reality, they highlight some issues and discount others, so providing both agendas and priorities for empirical work. My argument will be that while power and peace have both generated valuable partial insights, they are too restricted in their basic view of international relations to generate full understanding. I will argue that the concept of security provides a synthesis which not only preserves and reconciles the valuable insights of both the power and peace schools, but also addresses critical areas which both narrower concepts neglect.

2. The nature of the problem
The basic problem which underlies almost all interest in international relations is insecurity. The influence and status which power and peace have acquired as core concepts stem from the insight, and the guide to action, which they have offered on this problem.

Insecurity is a problem of immense scale and complexity. It stretches across all the levels of analysis from individual to global, and across a spectrum of sectors ranging from cultural and social, through economic and political, to military. Individuals can experience insecurity through all the levels and sectors. The emphasis may be on a very personal level, like fear of violence from neighbours, or from government, for cultural, social, political or economic reasons. It may come via the state level, in the form of tensions or violence between the individual’s state and other states. Or it may come in a more diffuse sense from the international system as a whole, in forms such as threats to economic activity, or fears of nuclear holocaust.

Although individuals are the ultimate repository of insecurity, they do not, because of their limited powers, provide its most potent expression. That role falls to a great variety of organisations whose principal purpose is to aggregate individual insecurities up to a level at which sufficient resources become available to take remedial action. These include banks, insurance companies, cooperatives, many ethnic organisations, many political groupings, and states. These organisations become actors in their own right, and because of their power and structural momentum, they create a level of behaviour which is above, and to a considerable extent distinct from, that of individuals. When the interactions among these organisations are competitive, then the problem of insecurity is compounded.

The modern state is the highest form of such organisation so far achieved. Because of the
extent and totality of its command over the individuals within it, and also because of its primacy in the control of force, the state serves as the basis of a distinguishable system of relations on a global scale. But since relations between states are often competitive, that system is dominated by the problem of insecurity. Insecurity underlies not only relations between states, but also relations between the governing powers in one country and a variety of substate organisations in another. It is to the form of insecurity generated at the levels of state and international system, that the concepts of peace, power and security are primarily aimed.

Peace directs attention towards the need to remove violence in relations between and within states. The peace perspective is oriented towards solving the insecurity problem by removing its causes. Power directs attention towards the means by which individual states can both be controlled internally, and pursue their competitive interests within the state system. It approaches the insecurity problem on the unit level, seeking to solve it by guiding states to play the game of international relations in such a way as to maximise their own advantage. Security directs attention towards the need to find methods that can satisfy the legitimate concerns of states without at the same time amplifying the dynamics of insecurity among them. The security perspective rejects the notion that the problem of insecurity can be solved. It tries instead to develop a management approach which is equally sensitive to both the national and the international dynamics of the insecurity problem.²

Although insecurity has many facets, one, the fear of war, has risen to extraordinary prominence in recent decades. The principal cause of this rise is found in the surplus capacity for destruction which the mechanical and nuclear revolutions introduced into warfare during the present century. These revolutions enormously increased the costs and risks of war without producing any fundamental change in the structure of relations which traditionally made war a normal and expected instrument of state policy (Mandelbaum 1981, ch. 1). As a result, humankind holds the capability for species suicide for the first time in its history. That transformation in the condition of human existence explains why the concept of peace arose as a challenge to the more traditional concept of power. It also explains why the emphasis of this paper is on the insecurity which arises from the fear of war.

If war is the heart of the problem, then in order to investigate the utility of our three concepts, we need to go back to the basic factors which give rise to it. War is a phenomenon of organised groups, and therefore occurs above the level of individual insecurity. Its most feared form is that waged between states, fear stemming from the scale on which states can mobilise the instruments of violence. At the level of states, the most fundamental factors associated with war are the anarchic system of relations among states, and their competitive pursuit of military capability. We will label these factors 'the anarchy' and 'the arms race'. The anarchy provides the political conditions for war by setting sovereign entities into a pattern of relations in which each is responsible for its own welfare, security, and internal political structure. The arms race provides the military conditions for war by equipping states to use force in their relations with each other. The purpose of our enquiry will be to investigate how effectively our three basic concepts take account of these two factors.³

Before we do that, however, we must first establish our assumptions about the anarchy and the arms race, particularly whether or not these factors are seen to be fixed or removable elements within the problem. Consensus on this point is vital if there is to be any new conceptual framework for thinking about defence and security. I will argue here that the anarchy and the arms race are both highly durable, and that they should therefore be treated as essentially fixed factors in any practical approach to the problem of insecurity.

Anarchy in the international system is defined by the absence of any overarching political authority. For more than three centuries, anarchy has taken the form of sovereign territorial states each claiming to be the ultimate source of political authority within its own
domain. Sovereignty and anarchy represent the opposite ends of the same political phenomenon: the claim of sovereignty by the actors in the system automatically defines relations among them as anarchic. The formal definition of anarchy used here derives from the work of Kenneth Waltz (Waltz 1979, chs. 5 and 6). It describes the basic organising principle of the international system which, so long as states continue to define themselves as sovereign, is not affected by the level of interaction or interdependence among the units concerned. The idea of anarchy as a type decentralised political order is all too often submerged by the prominent usage of the term as a synonym for chaos. Even so formidable a politician as Denis Healey has been lured by this double meaning into making the nonsensical statement that: ‘the world would be facing anarchy if governments arrogated to themselves the right to change governments in other sovereign states’. (Reported in Guardian Weekly, 6 November 1983, p. 4).

For the actors within it, anarchy is a self-help system which provides no authoritative form of constraint on conflict among the actors. Such constraints as do exist arise from actions taken by states in relation to each other. These actions may produce a balance of power in which the incentives to use force are low. War, whether by accident or by design, is a natural, though not an inevitable, feature of anarchic systems. Its frequency and its intensity may vary greatly according to the historical conditions affecting both the grounds for conflict and the incentives governing the use of force. War can result from conscious competition among states, and from misunderstanding among them as to each other's intentions. Anarchy does not in a strict sense cause war, but it does provide the fragmented political conditions which make war a prominent feature of relations among states. It is this facilitative role which makes the question of whether anarchy is a fixed or a removable condition so important.

The available evidence, both theoretical and empirical, points to anarchy as immensely durable. On the theoretical side, anarchy is durable because its structure contains a powerful mechanism of self-preservation. The system imposes self-help conditions on its constituent members which require them to struggle to preserve their own existence. Their success in that struggle sustains the anarchy. This 'invisible hand' mechanism means that the uncoordinated and unconscious behaviour of the units continuously regenerates the character of the system in which they are all embedded. The units and the system are thus linked in a mutually reinforcing relationship which is extraordinarily difficult to break.

On the empirical side, the evidence is overwhelming that both the system, and its mechanism of self-preservation, are extremely robust. The system has endured without falter for more than three centuries, and within the last three decades has tripled its membership and expanded to encompass virtually the whole of humankind within the framework of sovereign states. The new members have embraced the system with exceptional passion, with the result that humanity is probably more consciously and more extensively fragmented politically than at any time in history.

A host of revolutions in human affairs have been promoted as heralding the doom of the anarchic political system, but none has so far made a significant impression upon it. The growth of an international economy has not dissolved political boundaries as some hoped it would. The rising terror of war resulting from successive revolutions in the destructiveness and cost of the resort to military force, has failed to overwhelm the anarchy. And direct attempts to build universal political organisations have resulted in institutions which serve, rather than undermine, the existing structure of fragmentation. No compelling evidence suggests that any of the new revolutions now beginning to impinge on human affairs will have any better fortune in breaking the grip of anarchy. Neither global communications nor environmental interdependence, for example, look at all likely to provide greater leverage than the economic and military developments that have already failed to shift the deeply institutionalised structure of human political relations at the international level.
The arms race, like the anarchy, is also an exceptionally durable feature of international affairs. Aside from the question of policing within states, it can be argued that the arms race is merely an aspect of the anarchy. The need for weapons on a large scale only arises because of the fragmented political structure of the species which obliges states to treat each other with suspicion. While this is true, it does not encompass the whole substance of the arms race. The arms race also has a dynamic of its own which bears strongly on the problem of insecurity.

Within the context of anarchy, the principal dynamic of the arms race results from competition among states in the accumulation of weapons. Even states with no aggressive intentions are compelled by the possibility of war to participate in this competition. The condition of anarchy thus promotes the arms race through the mechanism of the power-security dilemma, by which the efforts of each state to preserve its security lead to a self-reinforcing cycle of competition among all of them. For an extensive discussion, see Buzan 1983, ch. 7. When the system contains, or is thought to contain, aggressive expansionist states, the pressure to arms race becomes even more intense. From this point of view, it can be argued that the durability of the anarchy sustains the durability of the arms race. The uncertainty created by the dividedness of the global political system, and the consequent possibility of states using force against each other, compels each state to behave in such a way as to sustain the role of weapons in the system overall. Only the replacement of the anarchy by a world government of some sort — in other words the elimination of states as sovereign actors — could free peoples of the requirement to arm themselves as an insurance against war.

In addition to the drive imparted by anarchy, the arms race is also sustained by the independent pressure of general development in science and technology. That part of the arms race which is generated by the condition of anarchy would occur even if weapons technology remained static. But the steady expansion of knowledge in science and technology gives an additional dimension to the process. Weapons technology inevitably rides along the wavecrest of the broad advance in human knowledge. That advance has a self-sustaining dynamic of its own which, excepting the case of a large-scale collapse of political order, is substantially independent from the particularities of human political affairs. As a consequence, military technology is subject to a relentless improvement which is strikingly illustrated by the rapid and amazing transformations in military hardware which have dominated international relations for the last one and one-half centuries. The same knowledge that produced the industrial revolution also produced the mechanical revolution in warfare. And advance in theoretical physics made it impossible to ignore the fact that nuclear weapons had become technically feasible.

The potential for new and more powerful weapons which is inherent in the advance of knowledge seriously exacerbates the effect of the anarchy on the arms race. The possibility of new weapons developments heightens the uncertainty in military relations among states, and so subjects them to constant pressure to keep their own military equipment at the forefront of what the current state of knowledge makes possible. By responding to the general advance of science and technology in this way, states begin to distort the natural pattern of advance by directing large resources specifically to areas likely to produce militarily useful offshoots. In this sense, the dynamics of anarchy accelerate the military consequences of knowledge, and a closed cycle of incentives is created which makes military competition an intensely self-reinforcing process.

Although the particular exacerbation of the arms race by the anarchy is an important feature, the main point here is that the arms race is independently driven by the general advance in science and technology. This means that even without the push given by the military pressures of the power-security dilemma, the known potential for new weapons would increase rapidly and remorselessly in line with developments in the civil sector. This fact has profound implications for disarmament, and,
along with the impact of the anarchy, is the basis for the argument that the arms race is a highly durable feature of international relations.

The existence of knowledge is more fundamental to the dynamics of the arms race than is the existence of the military hardware deriving from it. Because the hardware can be created quickly once the knowledge for it exists, even the removal of the hardware does not much dampen the intensity of military insecurity between states. This link between knowledge and military insecurity is illustrated by the early years of the nuclear competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Soviets would not agree to American proposals for nuclear disarmament and international control of the nuclear industry. They reasoned that because the Americans had tested a bomb, whereas the Soviets had not yet reached that stage, disarmament would leave the Americans with an edge in knowledge. That edge would give the Americans a lead in recreating nuclear weapons should they decide to violate the disarmament agreements.

The importance of knowledge as a factor in the arms race must not be underestimated. Not only does the existence of knowledge mean that military hardware deriving from it can be constructed in short order, but it also means that a vast range of civil goods will also exist which could, in the absence of hardware specifically designed as weapons, be used for military purposes. Consequently even a disarmed world would not escape the fear of war. Military security would rest, as it did early in this century, on mobilisation timetables, and fear would reside in the prospect of one country gaining a mobilisation edge which would enable it to transform its knowledge into military hardware earlier than its opponents. A current example of this situation is the fear centred on those states which are using the acquisition of civil nuclear technology as a means of providing themselves with a short option on building nuclear weapons. In a disarmed world, even the fear of immediate attack would still exist. It is easy to conjure up scenarios in which civil goods like jumbo jets and chemical poisons could be quickly converted into potent instruments of mass destruction.

The real engine of the arms race is the advance in human knowledge, and that advance cannot be touched more than superficially by measures like disarmament. Because it is the potency of knowledge which underlies military insecurity, disarmament, even if it could be accomplished at the hardware level, would make little basic difference to the dynamic of the arms race within the anarchy. The world government solution to the arms race is blocked by the durability of the anarchy. Any attempt to suppress existing knowledge, or to stop further developments, would require an ideology of arcadianism so draconian as to be beyond the possibility of political realisation. The durability of the arms race thus rests on the durability of the whole system of human knowledge.

Acceptance of the argument that both the anarchy and the arms race are fixed rather than removable factors in the problem of insecurity provides the foundation for assessing the utility of peace, power, and security as basic organising concepts. Any concept which rests on the assumption that either is removable, exposes itself as fundamentally impractical as a basis for policy. Equally misleading, but more subtle, are concepts which allow ‘fixed’ to be read in its narrowest sense as ‘invariable’. Such concepts lead to the excessive realism of social Darwinism, which is just as inappropriate as the excessive idealism of assumptions that the anarchy and the arms race can be removed. If a new framework for thinking about defence and security is to have any relevance for policy, it must avoid both of these extremes. The present danger is that power inclines towards excessive Realism, and peace towards excessive Idealism. Because the mass emotional currents which surround these issues are very strong, there exists a constant risk that an essentially false polarisation between the power and peace views will obscure the vital middle ground. Fear of war, fear of defeat, and fear for individual interests, provide a potent political fuel which can easily be flared into highly divided views, and the consequent replacement of thought by dogma.

In the search for middle ground, it is essential
to recognise that while the anarchy and the arms race are fixed factors in any time-scale relevant to contemporary policy, they are neither immutable nor wholly negative in character. The excessive Idealism of peace is a logical response to the perception that the anarchy and the arms race are wholly, or preponderantly, negative in character. The excessive Realism of power is a logical response to the perception that they are immutable. Both perceptions are incorrect, and it is in the recognition that the anarchy and the arms race, though fixed, are neither immutable nor inevitably negative that the concept of security finds its grounds for development.

The key to assessing peace, power, and security as organising concepts thus does not lie only in how they relate to the fixity of the anarchy and the arms race. It lies also in how they relate to the broad options available within the anarchy and the arms race, and the positive and negative features which define the range of those options. Our final task in this section must therefore be to outline the malign and benign aspects of the anarchy and the arms race.

The malign view of anarchy equates the term with chaos, and emphasises disorder as a necessary consequence of the absence of overarching political authority. Anarchy is seen as a primitive, or failed, condition in which a somehow natural human unity is denied political expression. The persistence of political fragmentation reflects old parochialisms which are increasingly out of tune with the scale of human ecological, cultural, and economic activities, a disharmony compellingly illustrated by the extent to which the power of weapons has outgrown the framework of war. Anarchy breeds war as it has always done, and perpetuates the outdated, inward-looking views that continue to send millions of people to an early death. Like illness and poverty, anarchy is seen to represent the absence of a desired good — in this case political order — and therefore needs to be eliminated by the provision of that good as soon as possible. Hobbes' war of all against all needs to be cured at the international level by the creation of a universal government, as it was cured earlier at the individual level by the creation of states.

The benign view, by contrast, focuses on the anarchy not as a negative condition but as a positive form of political structure. The rationale of anarchy is the political primacy of the parts over the whole. Anarchy is not chaos, but a decentralised form of political order. Because states are not at all like individual human beings, an anarchic order at the international level has quite different implications from the application of the same political principal at the level of individuals. An international anarchy expresses not only the historical and political variety of humanity, but also the profound absence of even a basis for universal agreement on an organising ideology for the planet as a whole. Anarchy emphasises the values of independence, self-determination, and cultural identity, and the stability of the system lies in the resilience of the units which compose it.

From the benign perspective, anarchy is a system structure which offers an immense range and variety of internal political arrangements. Although the basic structure of anarchy — no central government — is so durable as to be fixed for the foreseeable future, in no sense does this imply that the relationship between anarchy and insecurity is also fixed. Within anarchy, political arrangements are highly mutable in ways that make a big difference to the problem of insecurity. The division of the global sovereignty into separate parts can, for example, be accomplished in an infinite variety of ways. Numbers of members can range from very small to very large: the anarchy can be highly aggregated into a handful of large units, or highly disaggregated into hundreds or thousands of small ones. These units can be fairly similar in size, power, degree of internal coherence, and character of organising ideology, or they can be very different. The degree of recognition and respect that the units accord each other can range from nearly zero, in which case anarchy does approximate chaos, to very considerable, in which case the problem of insecurity would be substantially mitigated. The character of an anarchic system can, in
other words, vary from being crude and conflictual, to being developed and stable. It is this range of possibilities, and their implications for the problem of insecurity, which are ignored as a sphere for action by those who move too quickly either to embrace world government as the only solution, or to assume that anarchy must always be malign.

The malign view of the arms race is too well known to need detailed elaboration. Armaments are seen as dangerous, wasteful, and self-defeating. Because of the competitive dynamic of military power between states in the anarchy, armaments are seen as a self-defeating method of achieving security, and as a general stimulus towards war. Within the state they lead to extravagant waste of material resources, and, via the necessity for military organisations, to the corruption, or even to the subordination, of domestic political life. Armament’s are also subject to the moral case against the use of force in human relations, and to the functional critique that they perpetuate rather than resolve the problems they are used to address. As with the anarchy, the continued addiction of our species to weapons is seen by many as being outdated, outrageous, and out of tune with the level of civilisation we have now achieved.

But here too, there is a strong case that this factor is neither immutable nor wholly negative. Armaments have long been recognised to play a paradoxical dual role within the affairs of the anarchy. On the one hand, their use in war provided the principal demonstration of the elements of chaos and disorder within the anarchy. But on the other hand, their use in enabling states to create spheres of political order and balances of power have played a vital role in underpinning long periods of peace. Through the balance of power, armaments can serve to stabilise relations even when the anarchy contains units which are highly competitive and hostile. Because the stability of the anarchy rests on the resilience of states, and because the resilience of states depends to a significant extent on their armaments, therefore the stability of the anarchy derives in part from the existence of armaments. Singularly great powers, like Britain during the nineteenth century, and the United States after the Second World War, can use their command of military power to create broad spheres within which stable and peaceful relations can flourish. Military power even offers one of the solutions to anarchy, though the self-sustaining mechanisms of the anarchy would doubtless make extremely bloody any attempt at universal empire.

Armaments underlie both the positive and the negative aspects of the anarchy. The right of self-defence is essential to units even within the benign image of anarchy. Armaments not only sustain the claim to independence and sovereignty, but also provide a crucial element in regulating relations among the units within the anarchy. The ideal image here is a situation in which the configuration of military power is such that no country has reason to doubt that the probable costs of the aggressive use of force will greatly outweigh the probable gains. Such a situation can be achieved either by the dominance of defensive weapons over offensive ones, or else by the mutual dominance of offensive weapons which allows costs to be inflicted by retaliation. For elaboration of this way of thinking, see Jervis 1978, pp. 167-214. As with anarchy, we can again imagine a huge range of situations which vary according to the military and political conditions created by weapons. In the worst of these scenarios, military relations will be very unstable, with incentives to strike first high all around, and probable rewards exceeding probable losses. In the best of them, states are still independently armed, and the arms race is still subject to the pressures of both anarchy and technology, but military configurations are stable, and incentives to resort to force are kept very low regardless of the level of political hostility present.

Some of the contemporary work on deterrence is aimed at producing this situation (see for example Waltz 1981) is is work exploring territorial defence policies which maximise defensive capability without posing military threats across borders (Roberts 1976; and Report of the Alternative Defence Com-
mission 1983). From this perspective, both the national political developments which make the use of territorial defence strategies feasible, and the nuclear revolution in military affairs, hold out great promise as well as great threat. Nationalism can serve as a stabilising force both by increasing the internal coherence of states, and by enabling them to define clearly their relationship to each other. In addition, for the first time in history, military power exists in such excess that effective deterrence becomes a real possibility. If deterrence can be made stable, then a massive constraint is imposed on war, and a long step is taken towards conditions in which more developed, stable and benign forms of anarchy become possible.

Seen from this perspective, the fact that the anarchy and the arms race are fixed factors no longer defines the basic issues of insecurity. In terms of assessing our three concepts, the critical choice does not lie between succumbing to the anarchy and the arms race in a fit of excess Realism on the one hand, or rejecting them in a fit of excess Idealism, on the other. Because both contain very broad possibilities for internal variation, and because both encompass strong positive as well as negative features, a massive area of middle ground becomes evident. Within this ground there exists enormous scope for addressing the problem of insecurity.

The positive features of the anarchy and the arms race provide plenty of room for the strong idealist drive which justifiably finds the present situation unacceptable. The possibility of a ‘realist-idealism’ avoids the futility and frustration of the pendulum swings between the two pointed out by E.H. Carr. A realist-idealism would escape the danger of political irrelevance which stems from advocacy of policies which are unattainable. It would also avoid the error of excessively negative views about the anarchy and the arms race, which lead to advocacy of policies which, if implemented, reproduce and emphasise the features which gave rise to them in the first place. In what follows, I hope to make the case that the concept of security provides a vehicle for a realist-idealism.

3. The anarchy and the arms race

Concepts like peace, power and security lack precise, agreed definitions. They identify broad issues or conditions clearly enough to serve as important frameworks for discussion, but at the empirical level they cannot be, or have not yet been, reduced to standard formulas. Attempts to make sense of them in any particular case are still dominated by the circumstances unique to that case.

In this section, it is the role of these concepts as approaches to the study of international relations that provides the focus for our enquiry. Each concept serves as an instrument through which the user hopes to obtain a significant insight into the object of his or her enquiry. As in the physical sciences, the choice of instrument emphasises some aspects of the object and obscures others. The human body looks very different according to whether the instrument of observation is the naked eye, a microscope, an X-ray machine, or a heat scanner. In what follows, I hope to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the view that each of these three concepts provides of the anarchy and the arms race. The absence of agreed definitions for the concepts makes this a hazardous task. In trying to spell out the way in which an ambiguous concept orients perceptions of basic factors like the anarchy and the arms race, one relies on broad impressions of large and diverse literatures. The attempts to generalise is in permanent risk of tipping into caricature. The task must nonetheless be attempted, because it is the only way of assessing the relative utility of peace, power, and security as organising concepts within the field.

3.1 The anarchy

3.1.1 Power

The great strength of power as a concept is also its great weakness, namely that it draws attention to the reality of anarchy by focusing observation onto the capability of the constituent units. Power identifies not only a central descriptive feature of anarchy, but also a principal motive of the units. As a consequence, it enables us to make both empirical
and theoretical observations about the structure of anarchy (the distribution of power), and the dynamics of relations within it (the balance of power) (Waltz 1979, esp. chs. 5, 6 and 8). The firm roots of power in the anarchy are the source of its advantage as a concept, an advantage which is complemented by its utility for expressing the form of problems as they occur for decision-makers within units. One reason for the widespread influence of power as a concept has been the good fit between the kind of insight it provides into the anarchy, and the kinds of problems faced by decision-makers. In this context, the ambiguity of power — whether it is primarily a means or primarily an end — has been an advantage. Orienting their perceptions through the concept of power has enabled decision-makers to avoid dealing with awkward questions about the means and ends of their policies.

These considerable advantages are offset by some potent disadvantages. Although power scores well for taking into account the importance and durability of the anarchy, it achieves this only at the cost of a narrow and negative view of the character of anarchy. The view of anarchy through power is clear, but one-dimensional. Because power concentrates attention on the units, and in particular on their capabilities, it leads to an excessively competitive and conflictive view of relations within the anarchy. By focusing on the power of the units, and on the power relations between them, the concept of power filters out the non-conflictual features and motives on which the benign view of anarchy rests.

The power view of anarchy is one in which relations are dominated by fear. The political dividedness of the system is read as meaning that the interests of the units are largely opposed, instead of just being separated, and therefore that relations among them must tend to be hostile. The power view of anarchy can offer no idea of progress, because the balance of power game is endlessly self-perpetuating. The achievement of universal empire by one actor might end the game, but this outcome would reflect the victory of one actor over the others rather than a politically desired pattern of relations. Because power emphasises interests at the unit level it offers only a distorted view of relational patterns. The survival of units through the pursuit of power becomes the centre of attention, and the collective consequences of that approach to policy are discounted. The power view contains no moral constraint on war, relying solely on the balance of material factors to preserve the peace. Both the self-defeating aspect of the pursuit of power by competing units, and the risk of war, are simply accepted as part of the reality which anarchy imposes on its constituent units.

In sum, the power view correctly identifies the anarchy as central to the problem of insecurity, but misses the full significance of anarchy by illuminating only its most negative aspects. Because it focuses on the units more than on the system as a whole, the concept of power is vulnerable to cooption by the forces of emotional ethnocentrism within units. In this sense, the power view is peculiarly self-reinforcing: the more it influences the views of those who make policy, the more the system will conform to the negative image of anarchy inherent in the view, and the more policy will be pushed into the conflictual mould.

3.1.2 Peace
The view of anarchy through peace is as distorted as that through power, although the distortion is in the opposite direction. The peace view suffers from a tendency to discount the durability of the anarchy, and to overrate the prospects for harmonious relations.

One of the main strengths of the peace view is that it focuses attention directly onto the problem of war. In so doing, peace encourages both a useful, holistic perspective, and a normative stance opposed to the aggressive use of force in international relations. This combination of holism and anti-war sentiments usually means that anarchy is seen primarily as part of the problem. Because anarchy is such an important facilitative condition for war, its continuation is naturally seen as antithetical to the highest priority of the peace view. The peace view is thus fundamentally at odds with our argument that the anarchy is a fixed factor.
Because anarchy is seen as part of the problem, rather than as a condition of the problem, the view through peace leads to policy prescriptions which discount or ignore the enduring realities of the anarchy.

The most typical forms of these prescriptions depend on the anarchy being so weakly rooted that it can either be replaced outright, or else if not replaced, then its malign effects easily overridden. Enthusiasm for world government defined the mainstream of the peace view for a long time, though it has not been in the forefront of peace thinking since at least the early 1970s. Such proposals are a perfectly logical response to the problem of insecurity, but their assumption about the removability of the anarchy makes them extravagantly idealistic. The intellectual logic underlying idealistic internationalism displays a curious link to the logic of the power view. Although the perspectives through power and peace differ absolutely about the durability of the anarchy, they agree strongly on the negative, conflict-oriented, view of relations within the anarchy which derives from the power analysis. It is because they accept this negative view that advocates of peace are tempted into the excesses of idealistic internationalism.

The failure of internationalism to have any practical effect on policy, has, over the years, eroded interest in it. But the peace view has nonetheless remained popular, even though it has lacked much influence on policy. Its more modern versions display a greater realism in terms of accepting the durability of the anarchy. But in order to achieve this, and at the same time retain the commitment against war, its advocates have had to assume that the malign effects of the anarchy can be overcome in a relatively straightforward manner. Its clearest expression has been in advocacy for arms control and disarmament, discussion of which belongs in subsection 3.2 below. It is typical of the peace view to assume that harmonious relations are within relatively close reach. Much of the enthusiasm for arms control and disarmament rests on the narrow assumption that weapons are a principal obstruction to more harmonious relations, and that removal of them will transform relations within the anarchy. Similarly, those engaged in conflict resolution frequently assume that most conflicts rest on misunderstandings, and therefore that better forms of communication will allow an underlying harmony to come to the surface. Enthusiasts for interdependence are also susceptible to the view that either the anarchy, or its malign effects, can be overridden by an increasing network of economic, environmental and cultural ties.

Because the peace view requires an emphasis on the elimination of war, those who hold it are required to discount the importance of anarchy at the level of the state. The peace view emphasises individuals, and the international system as a whole, and consequently fails to confront the problem of durable anarchy at the level of the state. Like the power view, the peace view is vulnerable to emotional idealism, though its focus is quite different. The emotionalism of power expresses itself through the state in the form of nationalism. The emotionalism of peace is usually focused on the extreme of reductionism, the individual, and the extreme of holism, the international system as a whole. This difference in emotional focus explains the ease with which the more public proponents of the power and peace views fall into opposed camps.

3.1.3 Security

The security view of anarchy incorporates much from both the power and the peace views. Virtually the whole of the power view finds a place, but with the essential qualification that it represents only a part of what needs to be taken into account. Thus the security view accepts the reality and durability of the anarchy, the importance of the units within it, and the role of the power dynamic amongst those units. Most of the peace view also finds a place, but within, rather than outside, the context of the anarchy. Thus the security view accepts the moral imperative against war, the need to concentrate on harmonious relationships, and the need to concentrate on both individuals and the system as a whole. These normally opposed views can be reconciled because security
represents a broader behavioural motive than either power or peace, and because the security view of anarchy is both more comprehensive and more positive than the view through either power or peace. In the power view, anarchy is an unpleasant reality which has to be accepted. In the peace view it is an artificial and detrimental condition which needs to be removed. In the security view, anarchy is a preferred form of political relations within which options exist for both conflictual and harmonious relations.

In the security view, the power dynamic represents the malign side of anarchy, but not the whole, or even the main, pattern of relations within anarchy. The response to it is not to seek a solution outside the anarchy, but to apply the peace perspective to the anarchy itself. The basic rule of anarchy can manifest itself in a great variety of forms, and it is within that variety that the idealist impulse against war can find scope for operation. The particularities of a policy based on security can only be determined in relation to a specific case, a task beyond the scope of this paper. We can, however, easily illustrate the general scope for idealism within anarchy.

The single rule of anarchy requires us only to avoid overarching political authority. Within that rule, we can imagine a spectrum of anarchies ranging from very primitive at one end to highly developed at the other. In the most primitive possible anarchy, units would be internally unstable, and would accord each other no political recognition. Capability would be the only constraint on the use of force amongst them. Units would recognise no bounds to their own domain other than those set by the limits of their own power, and the system would have no rules other than force by which the units conducted their relations with each other. In such a system war would be frequent, insecurity would be very high, and anarchy would approximate to chaos.

In a highly developed anarchy, by contrast, mutual recognition and respect among the units would be a major feature. Units would accord each other recognition as political equals, and boundaries amongst them would be fixed according to some set of common principles derived from factors such as race or nationality or geography. Ideological differences in the domestic organisation of units might be quite profound, but there would be agreement on political non-interference in each other's affairs. Such a system might be organised around a number of very large units, each relatively self-reliant in economic terms, and each capable of mounting a credible military deterrent. The units themselves would also have to be internally cohesive and stable in order for the system as a whole to be stable. Unstable units, as illustrated by the situation in much of the Third World today, invite both local conflict and competitive external intervention from units which are more strongly constituted, and more powerfully equipped. A stable anarchy cannot exist until most of the units within it have themselves achieved political maturity. International institutions might well exist to facilitate cooperation on issues of planetary scope. But like the United Nations today, these would support, rather than undermine, the principle of anarchy.

It should be obvious that our current anarchy falls somewhere in the middle range between these two extremes. The danger of anarchy is contained in the scope for regression. The potential for a realist-idealism is indicated by the gulf separating our present condition from that of a highly developed anarchy. The objective of policy based on security would be to encourage movement towards a more developed anarchy. Such policy requires attention to all three main levels: individual, state, and system. Politically strong states cannot be built without consideration for the individuals within them. And states cannot make themselves secure without pursuing both nationalist policies, which reduce their vulnerabilities to threat, and internationalist policies, which reduce the levels of threat they receive from the international system at large. Security requires action at both the national and the international levels, and can only be sought in the complex balance between the two. Excessive attention to national security leads to the self-reinforcing dynamic of the struggle for power, while exces-
sive attention to international security leads to the unrealistic idealism associated with the peace view. A true security policy requires states to attend both to their own stability and vulnerability, and to the pattern of relations in the system as a whole, with particular emphasis on their impact upon it.

Because the security view of anarchy requires a focus on all three levels of analysis, it is much less subject to the narrow emotionalism which affects both the power and peace views. This wider perspective has the advantage of avoiding conflict-prone sectional dogmatism, but at the cost of losing the politically easy appeal which enables proponents of the power and peace views to obtain mass support. Security requires a broad and rational approach to policy which is hard to reconcile with the crudely informed and narrowly based dynamic of contemporary mass politics. Pursuit of security policy would thus require the elaboration of striking idealist images within the confines of anarchy. Only by promoting such images could the security perspective hope to complete politically with the parochial appeal of pure nationalism, and the grand ideal of global peace.

3.2 The arms race
3.2.1 Power
In relation to the arms race, as with anarchy, the great strength of the power view is that it accepts the factor as a fixed feature of international relations. In addition, the power view also encompasses the positive view of weapons as a source or order, as well as of disorder, within the international anarchy.

These strengths, however, are offset by an excessive emphasis on the role of weapons which results from the perception that military strength is the ultimate definition of power. Because of its narrow focus on the state, the power view of the arms race leads to self-reinforcing and self-defeating policies in which the competitive and conflictual role of weapons dominates their role as a foundation of international order. Because the power view emphasises the state, it tends to discount the negative interactive effect which results from each state accumulating arms in pursuit of its own security.

The power view assumes that fear of defeat outweighs fear of war, and therefore encourages destabilising competitive accumulations of weapons. At worst, the power view results in obsession with weapons, and vulnerability to the lure of national expansionism through the successful pursuit of superior military power. Because of the prominence of military capability in the power perspective, policy based on it is persistently vulnerable to the tendency to translate political problems into military ones. As a consequence, a reasonable military policy like deterrence can come to replace almost all attempts to deal with relational problems on the political level, making the inflammatory idiom of the arms race almost the sole vehicle for political dialogue. Under these circumstances, military deployments can replace political negotiations to such an extent that the self-reinforcing dynamic of arms accumulations comes to dominate the whole pattern of international relations.

Thus, although the power view has some basic strengths in relation to the arms race, its inherently narrow perspective leads to policies which defeat themselves by emphasising the negative over the positive role of arms in the system. Although the power view can accommodate measures of arms control and disarmament (ACD), its emphasis on state interests results in a perspective which makes it unlikely that substantial ACD measures will be achieved. The effective pursuit of ACD requires a perspective in which state and system interests are given equal weight.

3.2.2 Peace
The principal strength of the peace view of the arms race is its high sensitivity to the self-defeating potential of the competitive accumulation of armaments by states each seeking to enhance its own security. From this sound start, however, the proponents of peace typically leap to extreme views about the negative role of arms in the international system, and therefore to unrealistic policies requiring their removal.

Because it places such strong emphasis on weapons as a cause of conflict, the peace view is inherently prone to discount, or even
ignore completely, the constructive role which military power plays as a foundation of order within the international anarchy. This tendency is reinforced by the hostile attitude towards the anarchy which is also characteristic of the peace view. Indeed, within the peace perspective, it is hard to disentangle the consequences of the view of anarchy from those of the arms race. Because the peace view discounts state interests, it is prone to exaggerate the extent to which armaments themselves cause conflict within the international system, and to underestimate the depth and impact of political disagreement as a source of conflict. This view leads to the assumption that the fear of war outweighs the fear of defeat, and therefore to policy proposals which underrate the need for national security, while overrating the ease with which international security measures like ACD can be achieved.

Because, in the peace view, arms are seen to play a leading role in war, and because the removal of war lies at the heart of peace objectives, disarmament and arms control naturally feature as principal peace policies. Such policies frequently assume that weapons can be substantially eliminated from international relations, and that assumption clashes directly with the arguments made above about the durability of the arms race. To the extent that the arms race is a fixed feature, then policies requiring extensive disarmament are misguided and naive.

Even on the more limited objective of arms control, the peace view causes difficulties. Although it is a strength of the peace view that it emphasises arms control, it does so in a mirror image of the extreme assumptions that make the power view of ACD ineffective. Just as the power view undercuts the possibilities for arms control by overemphasising narrow state interests, so the peace view diminishes the practicability of arms control by underemphasising state interests. While the followers of power embrace arms with too much enthusiasm, the followers of peace reject them with too much fervour. As a consequence, both views result in unrealistic arms control policies. As illustrated by the small result from the many arms control negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union, power policies overindulge particularistic state interests, and concede too little to collective interests at the system level. And as illustrated by proposals like the one for the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, peace policies overestimate collective interests, and take too little account of state interests (Buzan 1981). As a result of their bias, peace policies condemn themselves to impracticality, disillusionment, and eventually cynicism, and so ironically often end up by reinforcing the assumptions of the power view.

3.2.3 Security

The security view of the arms race avoids the opposed simplicities of the power and peace views, but as a consequence, loses the easy political appeal which is available to the other perspectives. The security view accepts both the permanence of the arms race and the permanence of the contradiction between the order- and disorder-producing effect of military power. It rejects as self-defeating the temptation of the power view to see armaments as a tool for national aggrandizement. It also rejects as unrealistic the peace view that armaments can and should be removed from international relations. The rather complex view which results loses both the moral clarity of the peace view and the purposive clarity of the power view. But it gains a realism which acknowledges the positive as well as the negative potential of military power, and confronts, rather than evades, the permanent contradiction of the role of arms within the international anarchy.

The principal objective of security policy on the arms race is to preserve and enhance the order-producing effects of military power within the anarchy, while at the same time trying to minimise the disorder-producing effects. Such policy is neither simple, nor easy to achieve. It requires actors to generate a sensitivity to the impact of their own behaviour on the system which is at least equal to their sensitivity to the impact of the behaviour of other actors on them. It also requires a willingness to deal with political problems in political rather than military terms, and a commitment to pursue arms
control on the basis of mutual security. In pursuing military security, states must give equal weight to the military task of reducing their own vulnerabilities on the one hand, and the political task of reducing the threats they perceive from the rest of the system on the other. These objectives are subject to constant pressure from innovations in military technology, from misperceptions among actors, and from the possibility of deception and cheating.

The particularities of security policy on the arms race can only be worked out in relation to a specific case. But the underlying principle is to enhance the ability of states to make themselves militarily secure, without at the same time increasing the threat which others perceive from them. It is in seeking ways to make this principle operational that the scope for idealism within the security view lies. As noted above, two areas within which some work along these lines has already been done are deterrence and territorial defence. In territorial defence, the objective is to make a country difficult to occupy without acquiring military forces which could threaten invasion of neighbouring states. In deterrence, the objective is to exploit the surplus capacity for destruction, and the consequent high fear of war, which nuclear weapons have introduced into international relations for the first time. The transformation of military values by nuclear weapons opens the possibility of finding mutual configurations of strike forces which are self-paralysing. A pattern of relations among the major powers in which nuclear deterrence reduces the incentives for major war to zero, would represent one form of perfect outcome for security policy on the arms race.

4. Conclusions

In this paper I have argued that security is a more comprehensive concept than either power or peace for understanding the basic problems of international relations. I have shown that power and peace lead to narrow and distorted views of both the anarchy and the arms race, and that this narrowness leads to an artificial and unhelpful polarisation in the main conceptual framework used in thinking about international relations. The extent to which the power and peace views highlight opposite extremes of the anarchy and the arms race only emphasises the degree to which these concepts offer a partial view of the insecurity problem. I have also shown how the concept of security combines many of the strengths of the other two concepts, and how it opens up previously neglected areas for research by pointing to the large potential for idealistic thinking which exists within the fixed, but not immutable, factors of the anarchy and the arms race.

To the extent that these arguments have force, the task at hand is to develop security as an explicit conceptual orientation for research. Security-oriented thinking is already evident in much work, but it appears mostly in the form of hedged options on the liberal wing of power thinking and on the conservative wing of peace thinking. A proper security-based approach would require a conscious rejection of the current polarisation between peace and power, and the assertion of security as a fully-articulated framework in its own right.

The two old concepts have been developed to their fullest potential, and their inherent limitations mean that they have little further insight to offer. The pressing need is to move away from the sterile argument between them, and to begin developing a new synthesis. The intellectual space for that synthesis lies in the large middle ground between peace and power which has been obscured from view by the intensity with which the older concepts have divided opinion. It is in the nature of a synthesis that much of the material for it is already familiar and ready to hand, so the shift to a new conceptual orientation is not so difficult as might at first appear. Neither Realism nor Idealism in their extreme forms have served us well. The concept of security offers a realism which is more realistic than that of power, and an idealism which is more practical than that of peace. The realist-idealism of security perhaps offers us a chance to recover the energies that we now so frequently lose either in opposing each other, or in confining our own thinking to a narrow and contradictory framework.
NOTES

1. On reasons for the underdevelopment of security as a concept, see Buzan, 1983, pp. 3-9.

2. The use of the terms 'insecurity' and 'security' in this context appears to run the risk of circular argument. This risk, however, is more apparent than real. It arises simply from an unfortunate parallelism in the common usage of the terms, and does not involve a predetermined or closed logical linkage. The three concepts of power, security and insecurity each represent a distinct response to the common problem of insecurity. They are what Gallie (1962) (see also Little 1981, pp. 34-37) has called 'essentially contested concepts'. Such concepts cannot be defined in strict terms, and the attempt to do so misunderstands their function in thinking about problems within Social Science. They represent . . .

3. This focus on the anarchy and the arms race discounts factors arising within states as a cause of war, such as the difference between democratic and totalitarian governments. The argument here is that such differences make only a secondary contribution to the problem of war. The historical record does not conspicuously identify any kind of state as peaceful, and ideological analysis is highly divided as to the merits of different forms of political-economy in relation to the question of aggressiveness.


5. Carr 1946, p. 93. Interestingly, Herz 1950, pp. 178-80, also tried to follow the logic of synthesis, but along rather different lines which he referred to as 'Realist Liberalism'.


7. For a cogent intellectual history of this line of thought up to 1914, see Hinsley 1963, chs. 1-7.

8. One major exception to this rule was the extreme liberalism of Bentham and Cobden which dominated peace thinking during the first half of the nineteenth century. Because they believed in the near accessibility of natural harmony, they embraced the model of an anarchy composed of liberal nation-states as the ideal structure for international peace, and opposed traditional notions of peace through international governmen. Ibid., chs. 5 and 6.

9. See the works of John Burton on conflict resolution, for example, Burton 1972.

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