science of relations among sovereign states and to begin to reconstruct realism—that is, not merely to criticize it but to suggest the patterns of a more precise and synoptic science of the field, building on what we have learned from studies of realism. Our method is to draw on empirical research, including the freshest research reflected in the chapters of this book, and to review realism in the light of this scientific scholarship.

We begin with realism not because we agree with its normative conclusions or its scientific claims—in fact, the editors and contributors to this volume all have had reason to find fault with realism throughout our careers. Rather, we begin with realism for several mutually reinforcing reasons. Realism, more ambitiously than any other approach, claims to offer a comprehensive theory of world politics, has powerful advocates in both academic and policy-making circles, and has consequently been the subject of many of the empirical studies that have attempted to revolutionize international relations in the past quarter century. Furthermore, the agenda for future research in areas such as security studies is primarily driven by realist assumptions (Walt 1991; see also Kolodziej 1992). However, little of that empirical research has filtered back to influence realist theory.[1] Therefore, we are left with a theoretical structure in need of modernization yet oblivious to the modern currents of scholarship that might inform it. We aim for a reconsideration of realpolitik and thereby make empirical scholarship more relevant to theory, by more explicit tests of realpolitik models. Such a reassessment of realism, if it is to meet our needs for a comprehensive theory of world politics, must not only take stock of the questions realism is poised to answer but also be conscious of those questions that, although central to relations among sovereign states, remain, sadly, beyond the domain of realism.

Preliminary Definition of Realism

Let us stipulate what we mean by realism and locate it within the field. Initially, this is a daunting challenge to author and reader alike because realism is not a theory or conceptual framework but rather something more like a paradigm (Mansbach and Vasquez 1981) or a set of questions with contending answers (Cusack and Stoll 1990). As such, and embracing as it does authors from the age of Pericles to our time, the school of realism is one characterized not by accepted orthodoxy but by disagreements over common ground. In describing such a body of ideas, one must try to begin with widely shared and basic tenets and reserve the complications for subsequent resolution. Leaving aside until later in this chapter the very troublesome ambiguities in all realist writing (not to mention the variety of authors whose work has realist elements), we begin by quickly summarizing the basic tenets of realism as we see them (Cusack and Stoll 1990; Smith 1986). To keep our task manageable at

the outset, we believe we must start in one place, and we further believe that the best place to start is the most influential realist book, Hans Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, first published in 1948. In doing so, we start with the work that has had a powerful effect on scholars of all methodological and epistemological persuasions.

Realism emphasizes the anarchic nature of the international system, in which there is no effective legislature, judiciary, or police force. In such a system, according to the realpolitik model, nation-states pursue their own national interests and conceive these national interests primarily in terms of power. Nation-states are fearful of conquest by other nations and therefore build up national capabilities (including armaments) and form coalitions (including military alliances) to protect themselves. They do so especially when the system contains one or more revisionist states. Revisionist states are those willing to use force to overthrow the status quo; Germany, Italy, and Japan just before and during World War II were classic revisionist states. Realists are skeptical of international law, of the United Nations, and of any ideals (such as communism, world brotherhood, or environmentalism) that attempt to transcend or replace nationalism. Realists believe that the defeat of aggression and the preservation of national independence hinges on the successful implementation of national policies (diplomacy, military strength, and alliance formation) to form a "balance of power" against revisionist states (Morgenthau 1985; Walt 1985).

This synopsis is only a first step into political realism, for realist thought has undergone many transformations, from its roots in ancient civilizations to contemporary neorealism and empiricism. Nor is this an intellectual tradition like math or physics in which earlier work is incorporated in later developments. Instead, contemporary realists would urge students to learn the lessons to be gained from the old books. In such a tradition, the work of Morgenthau, while impressive, can no more capture the whole realist approach than a photograph of a crucial touchdown can capture the whole of a football game. It therefore behooves us to briefly examine the evolution of realism (Smith 1986).

The Evolution of Varieties of Realism

In the study of relations between sovereign states, realism is perhaps the most ancient approach, dating as it does back to Thucydides, whose history of the Peloponnesian War contains—in the debate, for instance, over why Athens should go to war—a clear statement of balance of power calculations. Thucydides also contains—in the debate over the fate of the people of Melos—a clear statement of the reasons states abuse human rights and ignore appeals to universal ideals in the single-minded pursuit of their own interest in