The first part of this book demonstrated how various ‘international’ forces have helped shape three different types of state in the present international system. Subsequent chapters analysed the specific security dilemmas and the peculiar sovereignty games pertaining to the modern, the postcolonial, and the postmodern state respectively. The coexistence of qualitatively different types of state in the system is a challenge to IR-theory. How well can existing theories of international relations account for the emergence of different types of state? In what ways are the assumptions, the core contentions, and the strategic recommendations of existing theories challenged by an international system containing three different main types of state? These questions will be addressed with respect to five different major theories or clusters of theories of IR: realism, liberalism, the English school, neomarxist international political economy, and constructivism.

Before entering this discussion, it should be noted that the present analysis is in agreement with the major IR-theories when it comes to maintaining analytical focus on the sovereign state. As indicated in Chapter 1, a singleminded focus on states either ‘winning’ or ‘losing’ in relation to other actors tends to misconstrue the debate because the transformation of sovereign statehood means that the state can be both ‘winning’ and ‘losing’ simultaneously. Furthermore, a broader notion of sovereign statehood which includes not merely states as institutions of government, but also includes society and economy, will incorporate most of those issues that ‘non-statists’ want to bring in to the analysis. In sum, given that the concept of state goes beyond government institutions to include society and economy, the traditional IR-theory focus on sovereign states is warranted. The basic difference between the dominant mainstream theories of realism, liberalism, and the English school on the one hand, and the present study on the other, is that these former theories are all based on a concept of state which strongly resembles the modern ideal type identified in Chapter 6. This creates a number of problems and, it will be argued, a need for theoretical development and adjustment.
Realism

Sovereign states exist in a realm of decentralized authority, that is, anarchy. States (that is, governments) are rational, unitary actors. The condition of anarchy means that states are self-help agents, they ‘must rely on the means they can generate and the arrangements they can make for themselves’ (Waltz 1979:111). Anarchy compels states to be primarily focused on their security. States ‘seek to ensure their survival’, that compels them to worry about their power relative to other states. In a self-help system, states want to preserve their autonomy and freedom of action; they don’t want to become overly dependent on others and they are concerned that gains of cooperation may accrue primarily to others.

I believe this is a fair summary of main assumptions and claims made by most realists and neorealists. Can this starting point account for the emergence of different types of state? Let me begin with the weak, postcolonial states. According to realism, the existence of such weak entities must be understood against the background of the interests of the dominant great powers in the international system. It was noted in Chapter 4 how the old colonial motherlands lost the ability to set the international agenda after the Second World War. The new leading powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, generally favoured decolonization. During the Cold War, those same leading powers intervened in weak states when they perceived that to be in their interest. After the end of the Cold War, the weak, postcolonial states are subject to tighter control by Western donors, but, as Chapter 8 explained, there is no substantial interest, negative or positive, on the side of capable, developed countries to get deeper involved in weak states. There are minimal aid regimes, but the dominant powers continue to basically take care of themselves; there is occasional humanitarian intervention, but none of the leading states have an interest in taking over very weak ones, probably, according to realist reasoning, because the potential costs are higher than the potential benefits. Therefore, the weak, postcolonial states persist.

What about postmodern states? A realist account would again begin from the premise of great power interests. The embedded liberalism regime was, in the main, created by the United States after the war. That is, the new leading Western power compelled the others in the Western camp to cooperate and provided them with incentives to do so. The extraordinarily intense cooperation in context of the EU would appear to present a special challenge to realism. Yet this can also be seen in context of national interests and relative power. Tighter cooperation in the EU reflects an interest on part of European powers to become able to balance against great powers in the system, including Japan and, eventually, the United States. At the present time, this cooperation has not reached a level where it is perceived as a competitive challenge to these latter