



Realism – Neo-Realism / Structural Realism

Literature:

1. Paul Viotti, Mark Kauppi, *International Relations Theory*,
5th edition, Longman, 2011.
2. Joshua Goldstein, John C. Pevenhouse, *International
Relations*, 9th edition, Longman, 2012.

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Realism

- **Realists believe that power is the currency of international politics.** Great powers, the main actors in the realists' account, pay careful attention to how much economic and military power they have relative to each other. For realists, international politics is synonymous with **power politics**.
 - There are, however, substantial differences among realists. The most basic divide is reflected in the answer to the simple but important question: **why do states want power?** For *classical realists* like Hans Morgenthau (1948a), the answer is human nature. Virtually everyone is born with a will to power hardwired into them, which effectively means that great powers are led by individuals who are bent on having their state dominate its rivals. Nothing can be done to alter that drive to be all-powerful.
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Structural / Neo-Realists

- For **Structural realists**, called **neo-realists**, human nature has little to do with why states want power, it is the **structure or architecture of the international system** that forces states to pursue power. In a state when there is no higher authority that sits above the great powers, and where there is no guarantee that one will not attack another, it makes states to **be powerful enough to protect** itself in the event it is attacked.
 - Great powers are trapped in an iron cage where they have little choice but to **compete** with each for power if they hope to survive.
 - Structural realist theories ignore cultural differences among states as well as difference regime type, mainly because the international system creates the same basic incentives for all great powers. **Whether a state is democratic or autocratic matters little for how it acts towards other states.**
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Neo-Realism

- Realism consists of three main concepts:
 1. **States** are main actors trying to dominate international politics.
 2. State behavior depends on the structure of the system and not on the state nature. **Survival** is the major concept of state.
 3. **Power** and **strength** is most important for states as they compete with each other to gain power. And the result is the war that is the natural occurrence.

Neorealism or **structural realism**, sometimes called *structural realism*, is a 1990s adaptation of realism. It explains international events in terms of the international distribution of power. Compared to traditional realism, neorealism is more "scientific" in proposing *general laws* to explain events in IR.

Neorealism as a theory was first outlined by Kenneth Waltz in his 1979 book *Theory of International Politics*. It is one of the most influential contemporary approaches to international relations. Neorealism emerged from the North American discipline of political science, and reformulates the classical realist tradition of E.H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, and etc.



Political Realism: General Overview

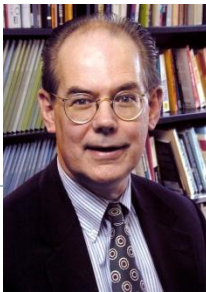


- Political realism considers IR as competition among states (countries), there exists a zero-sum game, whereas, states think about their own survival, self-help and do not believe or rely each other.
 - John Mearsheimer offers five points that describe the political realism in IR:
 1. IR system is **anarchic**. The system consists of independent political units (states) that are not ruled by the central power.
 2. States own the “**weapon of aggressiveness**” and have will to become aggressive and use force against each other.
 3. **Uncertainty** exists among states. States can never be sure about the wills and desires of other states. They cannot be sure that another state will not use its force against them. This uncertainty can never be avoided.
 4. The main motive of states is **self-survival**, as they want to maintain their sovereignty.
 5. States are **rational**, but sometimes due to the lack of information they can fail to determine others behavior.
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Neo-Realism: John Mearsheimer – State Behavior

- According these five principles, Mearsheimer determines three forms of state behavior:
 1. States always expect **threat** from each other.
 2. States depend only on their **self-help**, as all other states are potential threats. *If a state is an ally today, it can become an enemy tomorrow. (Hence, alliances are temporary and states should be egoists).*
 3. States try to increase their relative power. Owning much power than the others is safe for state to survive in anarchical world. The best outcome is to be a **hegemon**, so having strong military power is important.



Self-help World

- Great powers also understand that they operate in a self-help world. **They have to rely on themselves and ensure their survival, because other states are potential threats and because there is no higher authority they can turn to if they are attacked.** The more powerful a state is relative to its competitors, the less likely it is that it will be attacked. No countries would dare strike the USA, because it is so powerful relative to its neighbors.
- States want to make sure that no other state gains power at their expense.
- Each state in the system understands this logic, which leads to a competition for power.



Relative and Absolute Gains



- *Structural realists offer two conceptions of **gains** among states: **Relative** and **Absolute gains**.*
- If a state is concerned with **individual, absolute gains**, **states** are interested to get maximum profit and the gains of others is not important - *"As long as I'm doing better, I don't care if others are also increasing their wealth or military power."*
- If a state is concerned with **relative gains**, it is not satisfied with simply increasing its power or wealth, but is concerned with how much those capabilities have kept pace with other states. (For structural realists, the relative gains assumption makes international cooperation in an anarchic world difficult, particularly among great powers prone to improving the relative position in international competition).



Security Dilemma

- Given **international anarchy** and the lack of trust in such a situation states find themselves in what has been called a **security dilemma**.
- The more state arms to protect itself from other states, the more threatened these states become and the more prone they are to resort to arming themselves to protect their own *national security* interests.
- **The essence of that dilemma is that most steps a great power takes to enhance its own security and decrease the security of other states.** E.g. any country that improves its position in the global balance of power does so at the expense of other states, which lose relative power.
- In this **zero-sum world**, it is difficult to improve its prospects for survival without threatening the survival of other states. This process leads to **perpetual security cooperation**.



Arms Race

- The dilemma is that even if a state is sincerely arming only for defensive purposes, it is rational to keep pace in any arms buildup. The dilemma is a prime cause of arms races in which states spend large sums of money on mutually threatening weapons that do not ultimately provide security.
- **Realists tend to see the dilemma as unsolvable, whereas liberals think it can be solved through the development of institutions.**
- An **arms race** is a process in which two (or more) states build up military capabilities in response to each other.
- The mutual escalation of threats erodes confidence, reduces cooperation, and makes it more likely that a crisis (or accident) could cause one side to strike first and start a war rather than wait for the other side to strike.
- *The arms race process was illustrated vividly in the U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms race, which created arsenals of tens of the weapons on each side.*



Why do states want power?

- The answer is based on 5 structural realists assumptions about the international system.
 - 1. The first assumption is that great powers are the main actors in world politics and they operate in an anarchic system. Anarchy is an ordering principle; it means that there is no centralized authority or ultimate arbiter that stands above states. The opposite of anarchy is hierarchy, which is the ordering principle of domestic principle.
 - 2. The second assumption is that states possess some offensive military capability. Each state has the power to inflict some harm on its neighbor. That capability varies among states and for any state can change over time.
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Why do states want power?

- 3. The third assumption is that **states can never be certain about the intentions of other states**. States ultimately want to know whether other states are determined to use force to alter the balance of power (**revisionist state**), or whether they are satisfied enough with it that they have no interest in using force to change it (**status quo states**). The problem is that it is almost impossible to discern another state's intentions with a high degree of certainty. Intentions are in the minds of decision-makers and they are especially difficult to discern. Even if one could determine another state's intentions today, there is no way to determine its future intentions. It is impossible to know who will be running foreign policy in any state 5 or 10 years from now.
 - 4. The fourth assumption is that the main goal of states is **survival**. States seek to maintain their territorial integrity and the autonomy of their domestic political order. **They can pursue other goals like prosperity and human rights, but those aims must always take a back seat to survival, because if a state does not survive, it cannot pursue those goals.**
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Why do states want power?

5. The fifth assumption is that states are **rational actors**, which is to say they are capable of coming up with sound strategies that maximize their prospects for survival. This is not to deny that they miscalculate from time to time. Because states operate with imperfect information in a complicated world, they sometimes make serious mistakes.



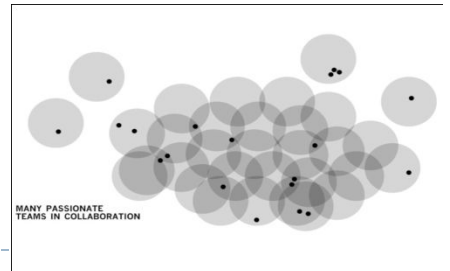
System

- States interact within a set of “rules of the game” that shape the international system. The most important characteristic of the international system in the view of some realists is the ***distribution of power*** among states.
- **Neo- or structural realists** have argued that various distributions of power or capabilities among states is divided into - ***unipolar, bipolar, multipolar system***.

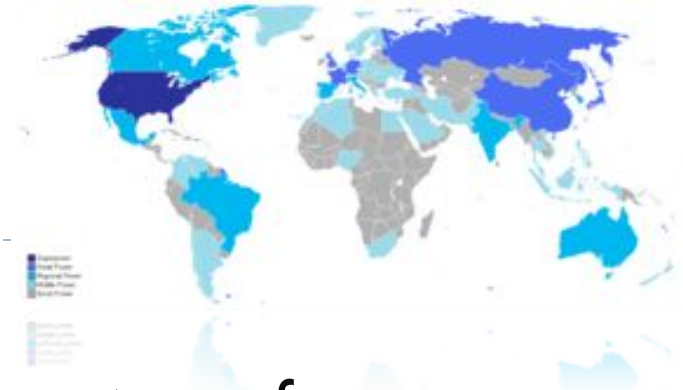


Polarity

- The ***polarity*** of an international power distribution refers to the number of independent power centers in the system.
- A **multipolar system** typically has five or six centers of power, which are not grouped into alliances. Each state participates independently and on relatively equal terms with the others.
- *In the classical multipolar balance of power, the great power system itself was stable but wars occurred frequently to regulate power relations.*



Polarity

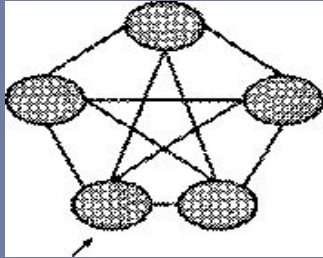


- **Tripolar systems**, with three great centers of power, are rare, owing to the tendency for a two-against-one alliance to form. Aspects of tripolarity colored the "strategic triangle" of the United States, the Soviet Union, and China during the 1960s and 1970s.
- A **bipolar system** has two predominant states or two great rival alliance blocs. (*IR scholars do not agree about whether bipolar systems are peaceful or warlike.*)
- A **unipolar system** has a single center of power around which all others revolve. This is called **hegemony**.

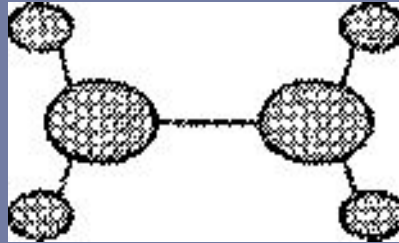


Power Distribution in the International System

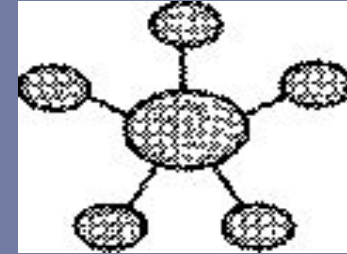
Multipolar System



Bipolar



Unipolar (Hegemony)



Flat hierarchy

More reciprocity

Less stable?

Split hierarchies

Dominance within blocs

Reciprocity between blocs

Stable

Steep hierarchy

More dominance

More stable

Some might argue that peace is best preserved by a relatively equal power distribution (multipolarity) because then no country has an opportunity to win easily. In fact, the opposite proposition has more support: peace is best preserved by hegemony (unipolarity), and next best by bipolarity.

Polarity - Debate

- Is a bipolar or a multipolar balance of power more conducive to the stability of the international system? There is a question whether an increase in the number of actors makes war more or less likely.
- **Kenneth Waltz** (*neo- or structural realist*) argued that **greater uncertainty makes it more likely that a policymaker will misjudge the intentions and actions of a potential foe.** Hence, a *multipolar system*, given its association with higher levels of uncertainty, is less desirable than a bipolar system because multipolarity makes uncertainty and thus the probability of war greater.
- **Singer** and **Deutsch**, made the opposite argument, believing that a *multipolar system* is more favorable to stability because uncertainty breeds caution (carefulness) in states.

Kenneth Waltz
(1924-2013)



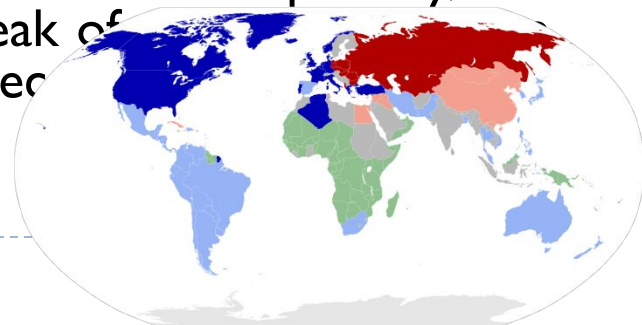
Polarity - Debate

- According to other structural realists the *unipolarity* is unstable and other states will balance against it, and that unipolarity will not last longer.
- They think that the world will become increasingly multipolar - great powers including, for example, a reconstituted Russian Federation, China, Japan, India, and the European Union. Although the United States now holds the predominant position, they see a shift taking place in the distribution of capabilities among states.




Polarity of the System

- A longstanding debate among realists is whether bipolarity is more or less war-prone than multipolarity.
- Realists who think that bipolarity is more less war-prone offer 3 arguments:
 1. First they maintain that there is more opportunity for great powers to fight each other in multipolarity. There are only 2 great powers in bipolarity, which means there is only one great power versus great power dyad.
 2. Second, there tend to be greater equality between the great powers in bipolarity, because the more great powers there are in the system, the more likely it is that wealth and populations, the principal building blocks military power, will be distributed unevenly among the great powers. It is possible in multipolar system for 2 or 3 to gang up on a 3rd great power.
 3. Third, there is greater potential for miscalculation in multipolarity, and miscalculation often contributes to the outbreak of war. There is greater clarity about potential threats in bipolarity, because each great power is more clearly defined than in other great power.






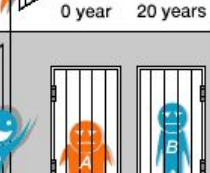
Polarity of the System

- Some argue that multipolarity is less war-prone. This optimism is based on 2 considerations.
 1. First, deterrence is much easier in multipolarity, because there are more states that can join together to confront an aggressive state with overwhelming force. In bipolarity there are no other balancing partners.
 2. Second, there is much less hostility among the great powers in multipolarity, because the amount of attention they pay to each other is less than in bipolarity. In a world with only 2 great powers, each concentrates its attention on the other. In multipolarity, states cannot afford to be overly concerned the any one of their neighbors. They have to spread around their attention to all the great powers. Plus, the many interactions among the various states in a multipolarity system create numerous cross-cutting cleavages (=seperation) that mitigate (=soften) conflict. Complexity in short, dampens the prospects for great power war.
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Game Theory - The Prisoner's Dilemma

- **Game theory** is an approach to determining rational choice in a competitive situation. Each actor tries to maximize gains or minimize losses under conditions of uncertainty. The game called **Prisoner's Dilemma (PD)** captures the kind of collective goods problem common to IR.
- In this situation, rational players choose moves that produce an outcome in which all players are worse off. They all could do better, but as individual rational actors they are unable to achieve this outcome.
- *How can this be?* **The original story tells of two prisoners questioned separately by a prosecutor.** The prosecutor knows they committed a bank robbery, but has only enough evidence to convict them of illegal possession of a gun unless one of them confesses.

Prisoners' dilemma

		prisoner B	
		confess	remain silent
prisoner A	confess	 5 years 5 years	 0 year 20 years
	remain silent	 20 years 0 year	 1 year 1 year

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The Prisoner's Dilemma

1. The prosecutor tells each prisoner that if he confesses and his partner doesn't confess, he will go free.
2. If his partner confesses and he doesn't, he will get a long prison term for bank robbery (while the partner goes free).
3. If both confess, they will get a somewhat reduced term.
4. If neither confesses, they will be convicted on the gun charge and serve a short sentence.

- This game has a single solution: both prisoners will confess. Each will reason as follows: **"If my partner is going to confess, then I should confess too, because I will get a slightly shorter sentence that way. If my partner is not going to confess, then I should still confess because I will go free that way instead of serving a short sentence."** The other prisoner follows the same reasoning.
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The Prisoner's Dilemma

- The *dilemma* is that by following their individually rational choices, both prisoners end up serving a fairly long sentence - when they could have both served a short one by cooperating (keeping their mouths shut).
- ***The story assumes that only the immediate outcomes matter and that each prisoner cares only about himself.***



PD-type Example:

- PD-type situations occur frequently in IR. One good example is an **arms race** - the rapid buildup of weapons by each side in a conflict.
- Consider the decisions of **India** and **Pakistan** about whether to build sizable nuclear weapons arsenals. Both have the ability to do so. Neither side can know whether the other is secretly building up an arsenal unless they reach an arms control agreement with strict verification provisions.



Example:

- In 1998, India detonated underground nuclear explosions to test weapons designs, and Pakistan promptly followed suit.
- In 2002, the two states nearly went to war, with projected war deaths of up to 12 million. A costly and dangerous arms race continues, and each side now has dozens of nuclear missiles.
- Avoiding an arms race would benefit both sides as a collective good, but the IR system, without strong central authority, does not allow them to realize this potential benefit.



The following preferences regarding possible outcomes are plausible:

- the best outcome would be that oneself but not the other player had a nuclear arsenal (=a building where weapons and military equipment are stored) (the expense of building nuclear weapons would be worth it because one could then use them as leverage);
- second best would be for neither to go nuclear (no leverage, but no expense);
- third best would be for both to develop nuclear arsenals (a major expense without gaining leverage);
- worst would be to forgo nuclear weapons oneself while the other player developed them.



Balance of Power

- **Power is based on material capabilities that a state controls.** The balance of power is a function of the military assets that states possess, such as armoured divisions and nuclear weapons. However, states have a second kind of power, **latent power** (=potential/secret power), which refers to the socio-economic ingredients that go into building military power. Latent power is based on a state's wealth and the size of its overall population.
- Great powers need money, technology, and personnel to build military forces and to fight wars, and a state's latent power refers to the raw potential it can draw on when competing with rival states. War is the only way that states can gain power, but they can also do so by increasing the size of their population and their share of global wealth, as China has done over past few decades.

Balance of Power: Voluntarism

- Henry Kissinger (a classical realist) emphasizes **voluntarism** - the balance of power is a foreign policy creation or construction by statesmen; it doesn't just occur automatically.
- **Makers of foreign policy are its creators and are free to exercise their judgment and their will as agents for their states in the conduct of foreign policy with the expectation that they can have some constructive effect on outcomes.**



*Henry
Kissinger*

Balance of Power: Determinism

- In contrast to this voluntarist conception is that of Kenneth Waltz, who sees the balance of power as an attribute of the system of states that will occur whether it is willed or not.
- He argues that **"the balance of power is not so much imposed by statesmen on events as it is imposed by events on statesmen."**
- For Waltz, the statesman has much less freedom to maneuver, much less capability to affect the workings of international politics, than Kissinger would allow.



***Kenneth
Waltz***



How Much Power? Defensive Realists



Defensive

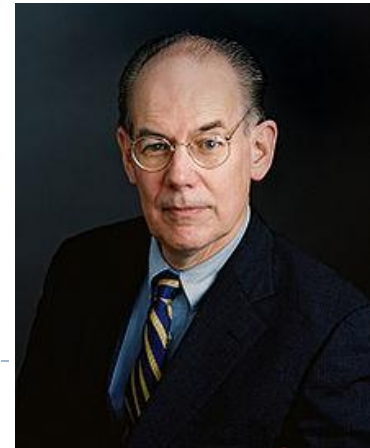
- **Defensive** and **offensive realism** are the directions of **structural theory**.
- According to **defensive realists**, states **try to maintain status-quo** and the **balance of power in system**. Their **main goal is to maintain their power**.
- **Defensive realists** such as *Kenneth Waltz* start by assuming that states seek to maintain their **security** in a world full of threats and other challenges. Defensive realists argue that while under anarchy, efforts to increase power may generate spirals of *hostility*.



How Much Power? Offensive Realists

- **Offensive realists** argue that the anarchy provides strong incentives for the expansion of power capabilities relative to other states. **States strive for maximum power relative to other states as this is the only way to guarantee survival**.
- **John Mearsheimer** places emphasis in his **structural realism** on *offensive or power-maximizing*. Offensive realism is about how states behave and survive in a dangerous world. He sees states as trying to maximize their power positions - a state's ultimate goal is to be the hegemon in the system.
- For Mearsheimer, the ***“best way for a state to survive in anarchy is to take advantage of other states and gain power at their expense.”***

*John
Mearsheimer*



How Much Power? Offensive Realists

- Offensive realists mention that balancing is inefficient, especially when it comes to forming balancing coalitions, and that this inefficiency provides opportunities for a clever aggressor to take advantage of its adversaries. They argue that conquerors can exploit a vanquished state's economy for gain, even in the information age.
- Offensive realists expect great powers to be constantly looking for opportunities to gain advantage over each other, with ultimate prize being hegemony. **The security competition in this world will tend to be intense and there are likely to be great power wars.**



How much power is enough? – Defensive Realists

- Defensive realists recognize international system creates strong incentive to gain additional increments of power, they maintain that it is strategically foolish to pursue hegemony. States instead should strive for what Kenneth Waltz calls an 'approximate amount of power'.
 - **They argue that if state becomes too powerful balancing will occur.** Other great powers will build up their militaries and form a balancing coalition that will leave the aspiring hegemon at least less secure, and even destroy it. This is what happened to Napoleonic France (1792-1815), Imperial Germany (1900-18), and Nazi Germany (1933-45) when they attempted to dominate Europe.
 - Defensive realists argue that conquest is feasible, **the costs outweigh the benefits.** Because of nationalism, it is difficult for the conqueror to subdue the conquered. It will be difficult to exploit the modern industrial economies, as IT requires openness and freedom. In sum, it is difficult to conquer another state as they get few benefits and lots of trouble.
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Hegemony

- **Hegemony** is one state's holding a main power in the international system, allowing it to single-handedly dominate the rules and arrangements by which international political and economic relations are conducted.
- Such a state is called a hegemon. (Example: Britain in the 19th century, and the United States after World War II).



Hegemonic Stability Theory

- **Hegemonic stability theory** holds that hegemony provides some order similar to a central government in the international system: reducing anarchy, deterring aggression, promoting free trade, and providing a hard currency that can be used as a world standard.
- **Hegemons can help resolve or at least keep in check conflicts among middle powers or small states.** When one state's power dominates the world, that state can enforce rules and norms unilaterally, avoiding the collective goods problem. In particular, hegemons can maintain global free trade and promote world economic growth, in this view.
- This theory attributes the peace and prosperity of the decades after World War II to U.S. hegemony, which created and maintained a global framework of economic relations supporting stable and free international trade, as well as a security framework that prevented great power wars.



Realists' Ideas on Globalization



According to realists:

- first, there is the problem of definition. A generally accepted definition of globalization does not exist, although it is common to emphasize the continual increase in transnational and worldwide economic, social, and cultural interactions among societies that transcend the boundaries of states, aided by advances in technology.
 - second, the term is descriptive and lacking in theoretical content.
 - Third, the term is trendy (=influenced by the most fashionable styles and ideas), which alone makes realists suspicious.
 - Fourth, the literature on globalization assumes the increase in transactions among societies that has led to an erosion of sovereignty and the blurring of the boundaries between the state and the international system.
 - **For realists, anarchy is the distinguishing feature in international relations, and anything that questions the separation of domestic and international politics threatens the centrality of this key realist concept.**
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Realists' Ideas on Interdependence

For realists, interdependence is viewed as being between or among states:

- First, the balance of power can be understood as a kind of interdependence.
- Second, interdependence among states is not such a good thing. Interdependence is typically a dominance-dependence relation with the dependent party particularly vulnerable (=easily harmed or hurt) to the choices of the dominant party. Indeed, interdependence is a source of power of one state over another. To reduce this vulnerability, realists have argued that it is better for the state to be independent or, at least, to minimize its dependency.
- Third, in any event, **if a state wants to be more powerful, it avoids or minimizes economic dependency just as it avoids political or military dependency on other states.**
- Finally, interdependence, according to realists, may or may not enhance prospects for peace. Conflict, not cooperation, could just as easily result.



REALISTS AND THEIR CRITICS – Realism, the term itself

- What is most impressive about the realist image of international politics is its longevity. Although modifications, additions, and methodological innovations have been made down through the years, the core elements have remained basically unchangeable.
- If realism represents a "realistic" image of international politics - one represented as close to the reality of how things *are* (not necessarily how things *ought* to be).
- Some argue, that by describing the world in terms of violence and war, and then providing advice to statesmen as to how they should act, such realists are justifying one particular conception of international relations.



REALISTS AND THEIR CRITICS – Realism, the term itself

- Another reason for the longevity of realism is that realism has always had strong policy-prescriptive components.
- Machiavelli's *The Prince*, for example, was presented as a guide for the ruler. Also, some of the best-known American political scientists who have held national security advisor positions in the White House - **Henry A. Kissinger** in the Nixon-Ford years, **Zbigniew Brzezinski** in the Carter years, and **Condoleezza Rice** in the George W. Bush administration - are classified realists.



REALISTS AND THEIR CRITICS - Realists and the State

- The criticism is that **realists** are so **obsessed with the state** that they ignore other actors and other issues not directly related to the maintenance of ***state security***.
- Other non-state actors - *multinational corporations, banks, terrorists, and international organizations* - are either excluded in the realist perspective. Other concerns such as the socioeconomic gap between rich and poor societies, international pollution, and the implications of globalization rarely make the realist agenda. A preoccupation with ***national security*** and the ***state*** by definition makes other issues of secondary importance.
- Realists counter that a theory concerned with explaining state behavior and national security naturally focuses on states, not multinational corporations or terrorist groups and thus global welfare and humanitarian issues will not receive the same degree of attention.



REALISTS AND THEIR CRITICS - Realists and the Balance of Power

- Although **balance of power** has been a constant theme in realist writings it has been criticized for **creating definitional confusion**.
- One of the critics found at least seven meanings of the term then in use - *(1) distribution of power, (2) equilibrium, (3) hegemony, (4) stability and peace, (5) instability and war, (6) power politics generally, and (7) a universal law of history.*
- *Indeed, one is left with the question that if the balance of power means so many different things, can it really mean anything?*
- Balance of power has also been criticized for leading to war as opposed to preventing it.



REALISTS AND THEIR CRITICS - Realism and Change

- Given the realist view of the international system, the role of the state, and balance-of-power politics, critics suggest that very little possibility is left for the peaceful transformation of international politics.
- Realists, claim the critics, offer analysis aimed at understanding how international stability is achieved, but nothing approaching true peace.
- A world in which the *strong do what they will and the weak do as they must, dominate the realist image.*
- Critics say that we are given little information or any hope as to how peaceful change can occur and thus help us escape from the security dilemma.



“Hard and Soft Power in American Foreign Policy”

- Joseph S. Nye, JR.

- As noted in the text, power is a key concept for IR theorists, particularly realists. It is utilized, for example, in *balance-of-power*, *power-transition*, and *hegemonic power theorizing*.
- Using the United States as his principal case, the author sees the power of a state as including both hard and soft components - the former traditional economic and military and the latter composed of cultural dimensions or the values that define the identity and practices of a state.
- **Soft power involves attracting others to your agenda in world politics and not just relying on carrots and sticks. Soft power entails getting others to want what you want.** Combining hard and soft power assets effectively - "smart" power as Nye now calls it is essential to attaining national objectives and affecting the behavior of others.
- Soft power becomes manifest in international institutions (listening to others) and in foreign policy (promoting peace and human rights).

(1937) an American political scientist. Nowadays, he is the Professor at Harvard University, a member of the faculty since 1964.



“Hard and Soft Power in American Foreign Policy” - Joseph S. Nye, JR. - DISCUSSION

- “Power in the 21st century will rest on a mix of hard and soft resources. No country is better endowed than the United States in all three dimensions - military, economic, and soft power.”
- Some argue that, one of the missions of American troops based overseas is to “shape the environment.”
- “The balance of power and multipolarity may prove to be a dangerous approach to global governance in a world where war could turn nuclear.”



Case Study: Can China Rise Peacefully?

- The Chinese economy has been growing since the early 1980s, and many experts expect to continue at a similar rate over the next few decades. If so, China with its huge population, will have the wherewithal (=money, wealth) to build a formidable military. China is almost certain to become a military powerhouse, but what China will do with its military muscle, and how the USA and China's Asian neighbors will react to its rise, remain open questions.
 - There is no exact answer to this questions. Some realist theories predict that China's ascent will lead to serious instability, while others provide reasons to think that a powerful China can have relatively peaceful relations with its neighbors as well as the USA. While **offensive realism**, predicts that a rising China and the USA will engage in an intense security competition with considerable potential for war.
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The rise of China according to offensive realism:

- Ultimate goal for great powers, according to offensive realists is to gain hegemony in order to survive. In practice, it is impossible to achieve global hegemony – to project and sustain power around planet and onto the territory of distant great powers. **The best outcome is to be a regional hegemon, which means dominating one's own geographical area.**
 - States that gain regional hegemony they seek to prevent great powers in other geographical regions from duplicating their feat. Regional hegemons do not want peer competitors. Instead they want to keep other regions divided in several major states, who will then compete with each other and not be in a position to focus on them.
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The rise of China according to offensive realism:

If offensive realism correct, we should expect a rising China to:

- Imitate USA to become a regional hegemon in Asia.
- Maximize power gap between itself and its neighbors, especially Japan and Russia. Beijing should want a militarily weak Japan and Russia as its neighbors.
- Try to push US military forces out of Asia.

US does not tolerate peer competitors, therefore USA will work hard to contain China and weaken it to the point where it is no longer threat to control the Asia.

China's neighbors are also sure to fear its rise, and they too will do whatever they can to prevent it from achieving the regional hegemony. There is evidence that countries like India, Japan, and Russia, or Singapore, South Korea, and Vietnam are worried and will contain it. They will join US-led balancing coalition to check China's rise, in the same way as Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and even China, joined forces with the USA to contain Soviet Union during the Cold War.



The rise of China according to defensive realism:

Defensive realism offers optimistic story about China's rise. **They recognize that the international system creates strong incentives for states to want additional increments of power to ensure their survival.**

- China will look for opportunities to shift balance of power in its favor.
 - USA and China's neighbors will have to balance against China to keep it in check.
 - China with a limited appetite should contain and engage in cooperative endeavors.
 - Nuclear weapons will be a force for peace if China continues its rise. It is difficult for a any great power to expand when confronted by other powers with nuclear weapons. India, Russia and the USA all have nuclear arsenals, and Japan could quickly go nuclear if it felt threatened by China. These countries are likely to form the core anti-China balancing coalition, that will not be easy for China to push around as long as they have nuclear weapons.
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