

'The Development of Realism and Neorealism'

- 'Though classical realism has its roots in the writings of Thucydides, Kautilya and Machiavelli, its 20th century form evolved in the **aftermath of the Munich crisis and the fascist aggression of the late 1930s** when it was evident that the idealism of the post-World War I era had become unworkable; specifically, the **ineffectiveness of the League of Nations** (which did not have the US and USSR as members).
- 'In his 1939 book *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, E.H. Carr criticized the " **utopian thought [that] had dominated international relations in the inter-war years**" (Hollis and Smith, 1990, p. 5). Instead, Carr desired an analysis of international events that suggested **the ways things really were** as opposed to the way things ought to be. Unlike the unscientific utopian ideals of the interwar thinkers, **realism " places its emphasis on the acceptance of facts and on the analysis of their causes and consequences"** (Hollis and Smith, 1990, p. 21).
- 'In sum, **Carr began a process of viewing the world in a more realistic systemic manner** that attempted to get at the **essence of cause and effect relationships in international politics**.
- 'In the immediate aftermath of World War II, political scientists such as Hans Morgenthau championed realism. The Western democracies had experienced catastrophic world war only to be followed by a new ideological, political and military conflict with a growing superpower in the Soviet Union. The Cold War had already begun when Morgenthau wrote *Politics Among Nations* (1948). Morgenthau's realism is founded on six core principles:'
 1. **'Objective laws, rooted in human nature, guide realism.**
 2. **'The state is regarded as a unitary actor in the international system** and acts to pursue its interests through the acquisition and the use of power. Thus, " the concept of interests defined in terms of power" is the guide to determining the nature of the international system (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 5).
 3. **'Power is an objective category**, but not fixed as a constant.
 4. Fourth, Morgenthau explained that realism is conscious of the moral implications of political action, but **morality should not be applied to state actions**.
 5. Fifth, " **political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe**" (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 10-11).
 6. Finally, **realism purports to be objective in its analysis of international affairs.'**
- 'Neorealism was designed to address the shortcomings of the earlier classical realism. For instance, this structural interpretation of international events was an attempt to improve the classical view at the system level.
- 'Kenneth Waltz, author of *Theory of International Politics* (1979), attempted to create a **more parsimonious model of 'modern' or 'structural' theory**, " the system is anarchic

and decentralized rather than hierarchical" and " each unit (state) is formally equal" (Holsti, 1994, p. 39).

- 'Waltz built on the earlier work of Rousseau—the latter who advocated the idea that a **theory of war must include the system level** (" third image") and not just the first (theories of human nature) or second (state attributes) images.
- 'Waltz limited his theory to the structural level. Critical of Morton Kaplan, David Singer and Stanley Hoffman, Waltz charged them with reductionism because they attempted to define the system in terms of the attributes or interactions of the units. To avoid reductionism, Waltz suggested creating a theory " on the foundations of three core principles: a) **system ordering—is anarchic and decentralized rather than hierarchical**; b) **he uses each 'unit' to refer to the constituent members of the system—all provide for their own security**; c) **distribution of capabilities among the units**" (Holsti, 1994, p. 39).
- 'Waltz makes the argument that **bipolar systems are more stable because there is less uncertainty**, interdependence has declined in the 20th century and the proliferation of nuclear weapons may contribute to increased system stability (Holsti, 1994, p. 40). He later relented that states that possessed nuclear weapons can impact the system level. In Waltz's neorealism we see an effort to make realism more parsimonious and more easily able to operationalize the theory.
- 'In Waltz's configuration, the **system acts as an independent variable that produces outcomes in international politics**. As an illustration, if one were to operationalize this theory, anarchic or stable systems might produce war or peace or competition in the system.